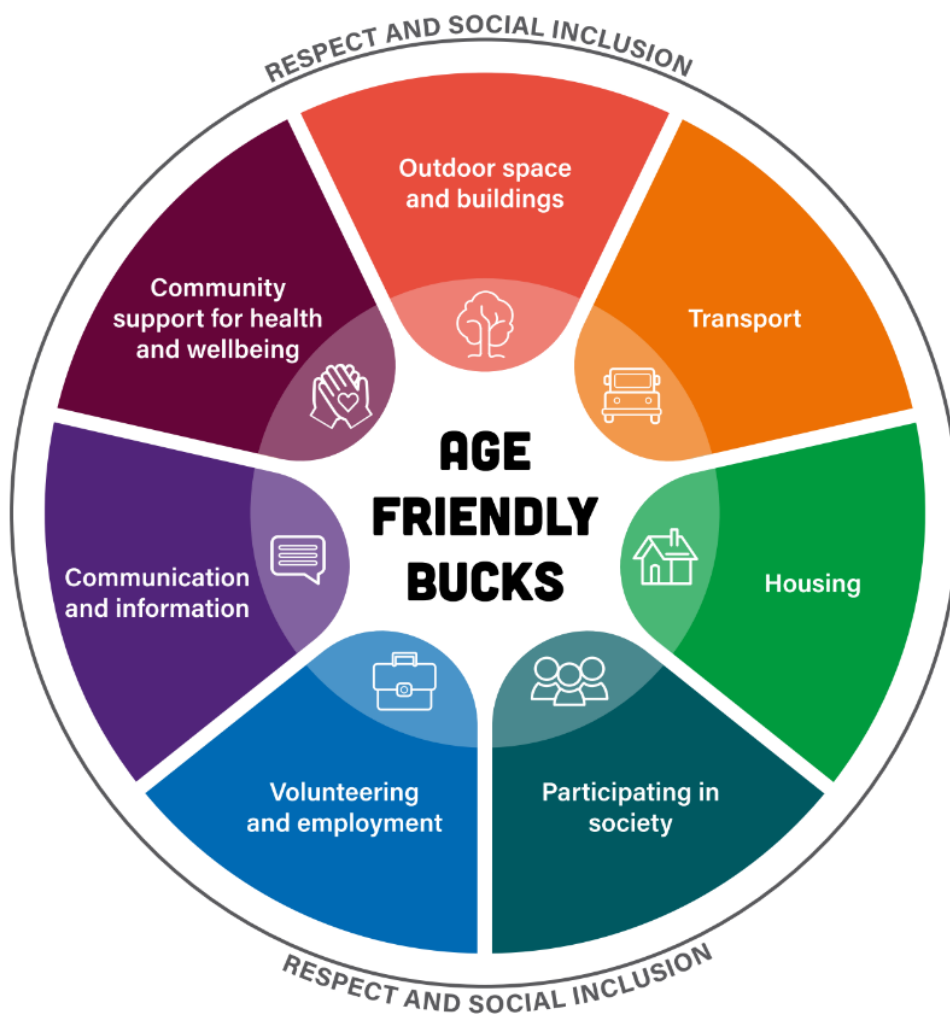


Age Friendly Buckinghamshire

Insight Report 2024



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Introduction

Buckinghamshire is dedicated to becoming more age-friendly, supporting individuals to live healthy, fulfilling, and independent lives for as long as possible – enabling them to ‘age well’.

Buckinghamshire is part of the national Network of Age Friendly Communities, supported by the Centre for Ageing Better and the Age Friendly Communities framework developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO). The Healthy Ageing Strategy for Buckinghamshire (2024-2029) outlines the Council's commitment to helping older people live healthy, active, and independent lives. The strategy includes an action plan focusing on Outdoor Spaces and Buildings and Participating in Society as key priorities for the first year. Looking ahead to year two, the aims of this survey were to understand how we are doing on key issues raised by residents in the first survey (completed in 2023), understand how people perceive the age friendliness of their community across all domains now, and identify opportunities for improvement. This will guide the priorities for year two of the Healthy Ageing Strategy and our supporting action plan.

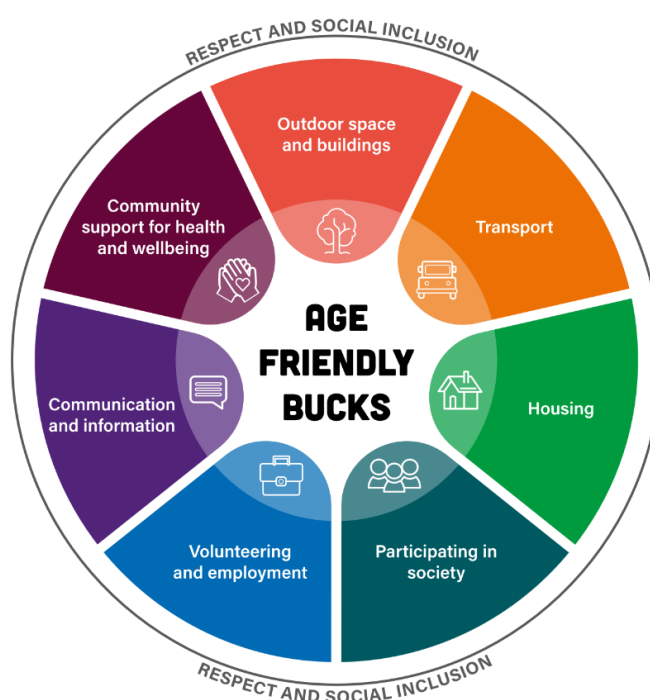


Figure 1. Eight domains of age-friendly communities

The [Healthy Ageing survey](#) was conducted from 16th September to 11th November 2024. This timeframe included the International Day of Older People, and the survey served as a central element of our communications campaign. Building on lessons from the 2023 survey, we expanded the scope of the current survey to encompass all eight Age Friendly domains. This approach provided a comprehensive baseline to inform our [Healthy Ageing Strategy](#) and Age Friendly work programme.

Key Insights

Overall, respondents were positive about the age friendliness of their communities in Buckinghamshire. However, the survey helped identify challenges residents may face, as well as opportunities to support them to age well. This year, the four key areas identified by respondents to enhance the age-friendliness of their communities were: Transport, Housing, Outdoor spaces and buildings, and Participating in society. Additional feedback was provided around Volunteering and employment, Communication and information, Community support for health and wellbeing, and Respect and social inclusion.



Transport

Older people may feel transport and travel infrastructure do not wholly meet their needs for a variety of reasons. 78% of respondents drive and 68% walk to get around their community, while 27% use public transport. Respondents told us improving pedestrian facilities would ensure walking and mobility scooting remain popular active travel options. 36% of respondents either did not intend to get a bus pass or did not know if they intend to (once eligible).

Respondents told us that their active travel decisions are influenced by:

- Flexibility, convenience, and reliability
- How direct the route is
- Travelling with one or more people
- Feelings of safety
- The physical strain



Housing

56% of respondents felt confident they would be able to live independently as they grow older. However, their confidence was influenced by:

- Uncertainty about costs of living in the future
- Availability of suitable housing stock, including being able to downsize
- Becoming less mobile with age

Respondents felt it was important now and as they grow older that their home be energy efficient, low carbon, and meet their health needs around mobility, warmth/coolness, and noise levels. They also felt it was beneficial if their home and/or location allowed for opportunistic as well as planned socialising and physical activity (including active travel). Becoming less mobile and/or having to move in later life led to fears of becoming socially isolated



Outdoor spaces and buildings

62 - 68% of respondents felt that pavements were neither well maintained nor safe. 73% felt there were not enough public toilets. For respondents with a disability / long term condition(s) or living in Opportunity Bucks wards, the percentages were higher. 77% felt there were well maintained and safe greenspaces within a walking distance from their home.

Respondents told us about the need for improved maintenance and accessibility of pavements, enhanced safety measures, additional public amenities and better public transport connectivity, it was felt these would enhance the quality of life for community members and ensure that public spaces are safe, welcoming, and accessible for everyone.



Participating in society

47% of respondents felt that venues for activities and meetings are conveniently located and 71% felt they had easy access to shops, services and their local communities. However respondents told us about the need to remove barriers to allow social connectedness and people to be able to participate in their society, these issues were highlighted across the survey and included the need for better transport, improvement to footpaths, more affordable community activities and better promotion.

Respondents felt social connectedness was a key factor to ageing well.



Volunteering and employment

Of those who responded to the survey 48% were in paid employment and 43% were retired. 27% reported to be volunteers. Only 45% said they feel/felt well prepared for retirement. There were concerns related to financial instability, resulting in people being unable to retire, respondents felt ageism was causing challenges for older people's employment. Respondents wanted opportunities for older adults to volunteer and engage in employment. Respondents wanted flexible employment options, better promotion, and support for volunteering opportunities, as well as robust financial planning and advice services.



Communication and information

Since the vast majority of respondents completed the survey online, it is not surprising to see 83% of respondents felt they were confident using technology, 69% of respondents find out about services or groups in their community via word of mouth and 65% via social media. Respondents told us there was a need to ensure older adults have access to the information they need to live well and stay connected with their communities. Our findings indicate that older adults seek information from a variety of sources, depending on the topic. While respondents indicated that many of them are comfortable using computers/tablets, mobile phones and the internet, it is important to ensure comms do not digitally exclude those who are less confident or do not have access to devices/internet.



Community support for health and wellbeing

Just under half of respondents (46%) take part in activities in their community at least once a week, and 28% don't take part in *any* activities that support their health and wellbeing. This was despite reporting good access to a range of preventive health programmes. Respondents indicated that information may be hard to find, and transport connections and cost were additional barriers. In addition, affordable access to quality health services like GPs, dentists, and pharmacies, was a barrier to looking after one's health and wellbeing. Health and wellbeing and social connectedness were cross-cutting themes in respondents feedback that were linked with other age-friendly domains such as Participating in Society.



Respect and social inclusion

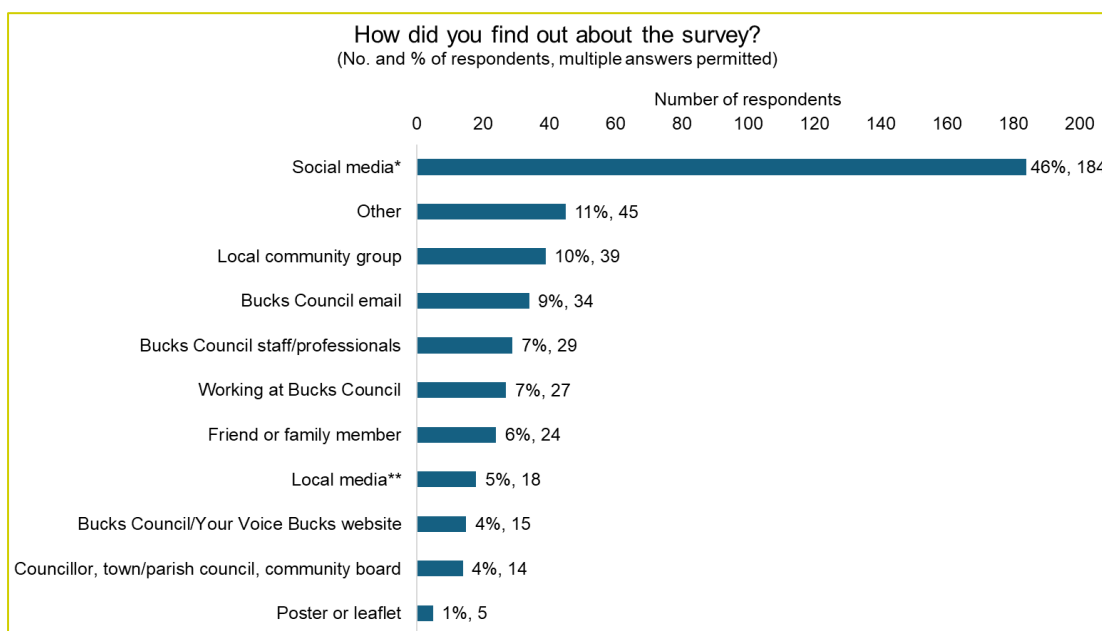
There was a call for more community support, such as buddy schemes and intergenerational activities, to foster a sense of belonging and reduce isolation. This could be achieved via improvements to public transport, more activities and services for older people, better marketing and awareness, financial considerations, and increased community engagement.

Methodology

408 members of the public completed the Healthy Ageing 2024 survey. This was a self-selecting survey aimed at adults 40+ and carried out online using the Your Voice Bucks platform (paper copies were also available). The survey was shared via our networks and cross-promoted during the International Day of Older People campaign. 77% of respondents were over the age of 50, and 52% over the age of 60. 97% of respondents lived in Buckinghamshire and 35% worked in Buckinghamshire. 15% of respondents lived in Opportunity Bucks wards.

How did people find out about the survey?

- 45% found out about the survey via social media, this included organic and boosted posts.
- Other ways they found out were through Retirement village, Library, Age UK Bucks, Bucks Older Peoples Action Group (BOPAG), and Golden Years exhibition.



N.B. *Social media (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, Nextdoor or LinkedIn); **Local media (newspaper, radio, TV, website or newsfeed); Other = Retirement village, Library, AgeUK Bucks, Bucks Older People's Action Group (BOPAG), and Golden Years exhibition.

Figure 2. How did you find out about the survey?

About the Respondents

Age

- There was good representation from a range of ages 40 to 85+ years.
- 50% of respondents were between 51-70 years.

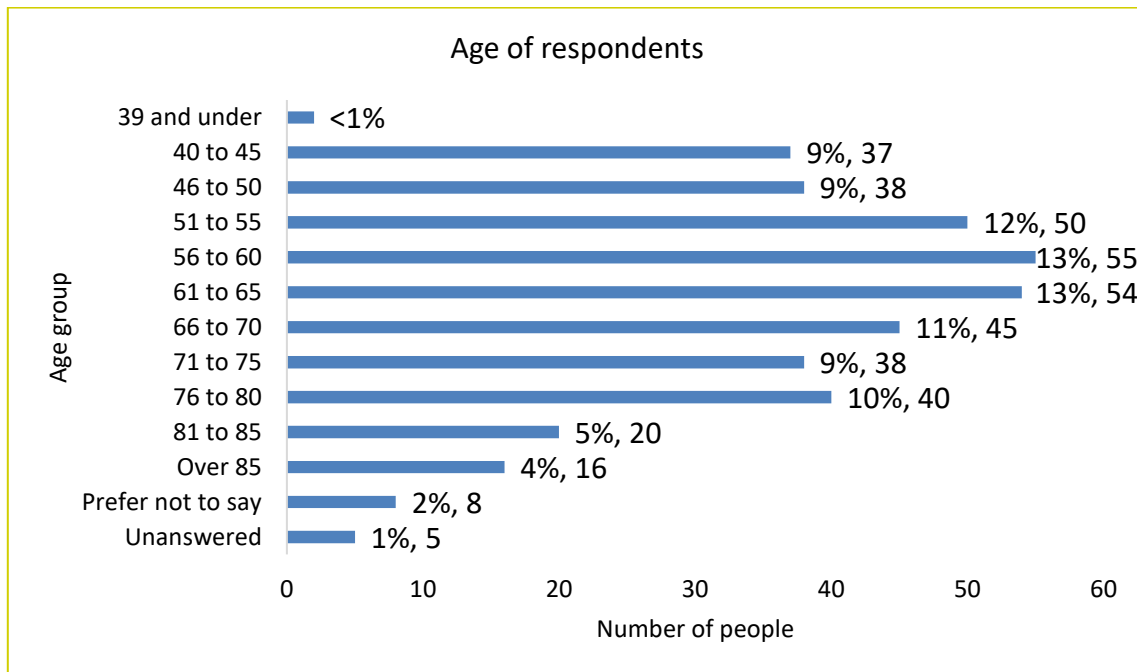


Figure 3. Age of respondents

Sex

- 68% were female and 29% were male.

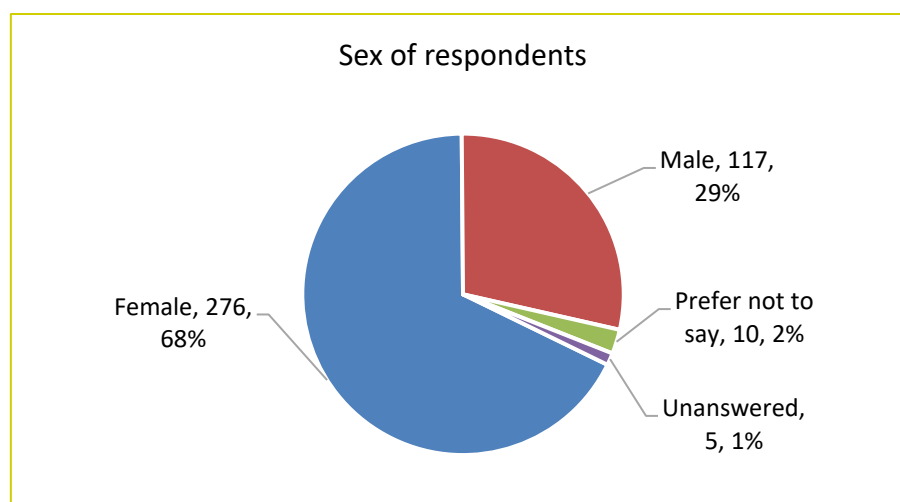


Figure 4. Sex of respondents

Ethnicity breakdown

- 89% of respondents were White.

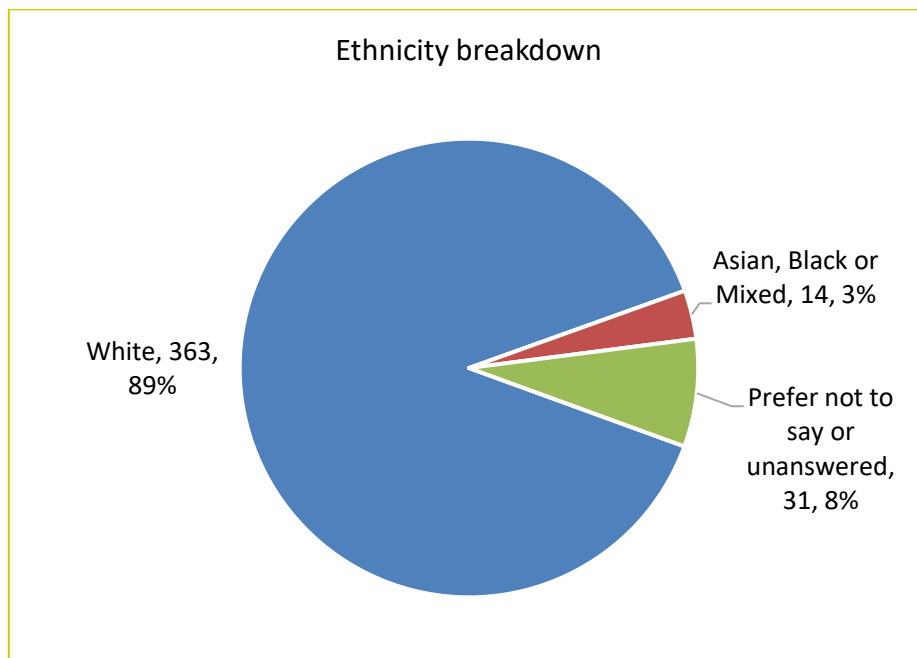


Figure 5. Ethnicity of respondents

Opportunity Bucks

- 15% of respondents, who provided a postcode, lived in Opportunity Bucks wards.

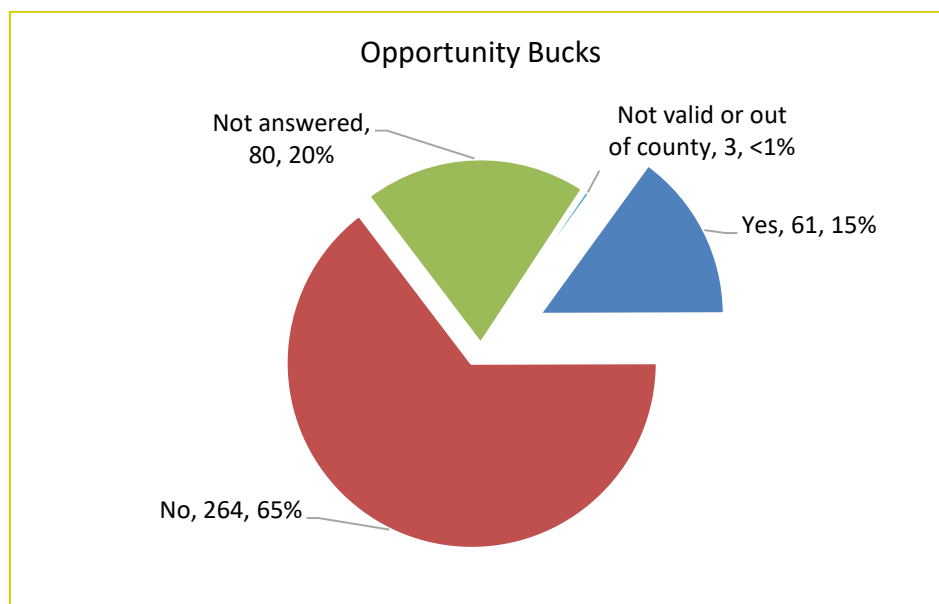


Figure 6. Percentage of respondents from Opportunity Bucks wards

Rural / Urban

- 56% lived in urban areas compared with 25% in rural areas (N.B. 20% of respondents did not provide a postcode).

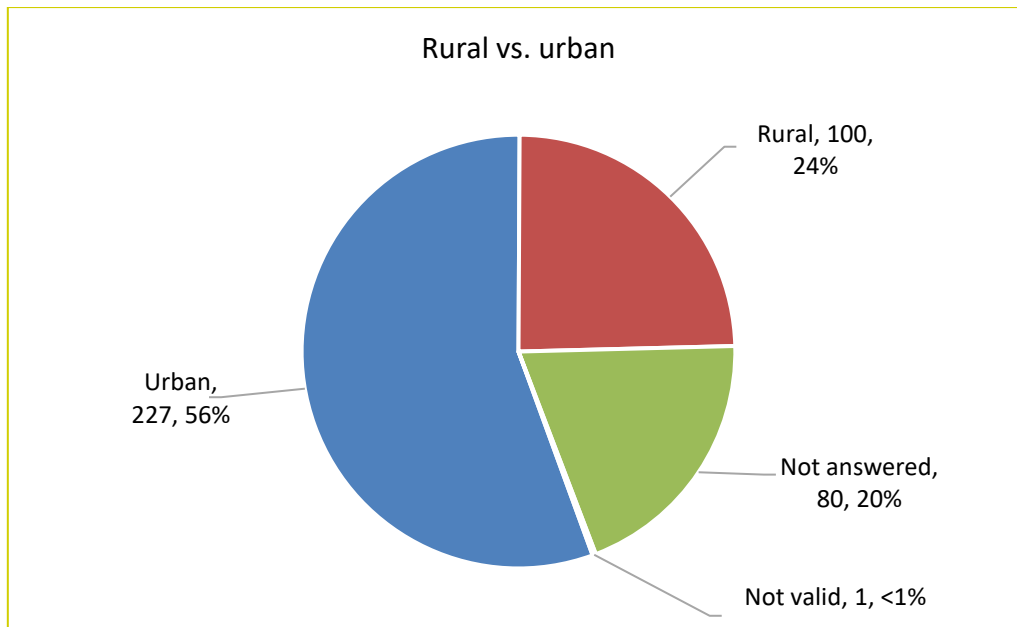


Figure 7. Urban vs rural

Disability and/or long-term conditions

- 38% had a disability, impairment or long-term health condition.

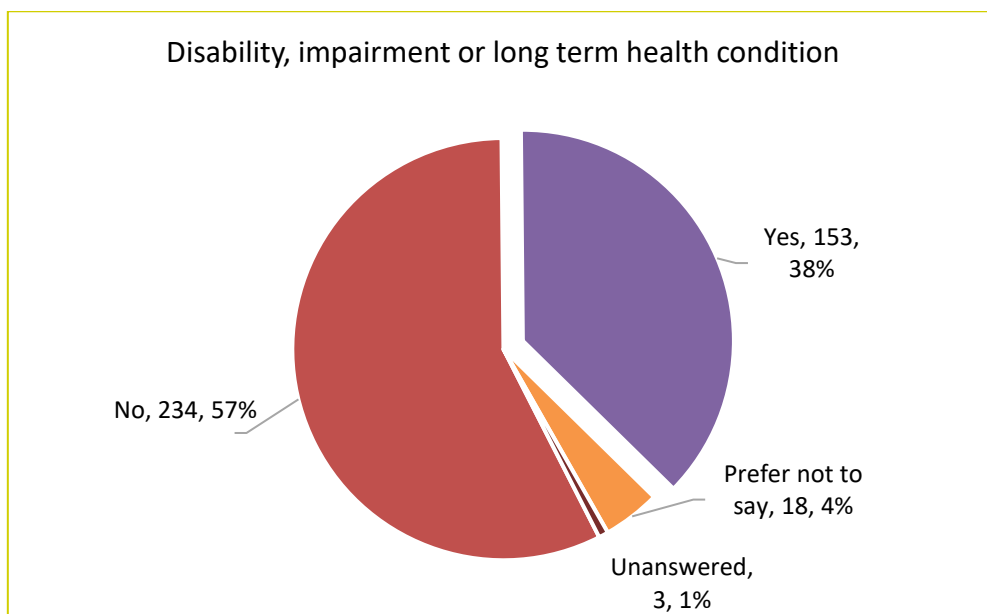


Figure 8. Disability, impairment or long-term health condition

Carers

- 8% identified as a carer

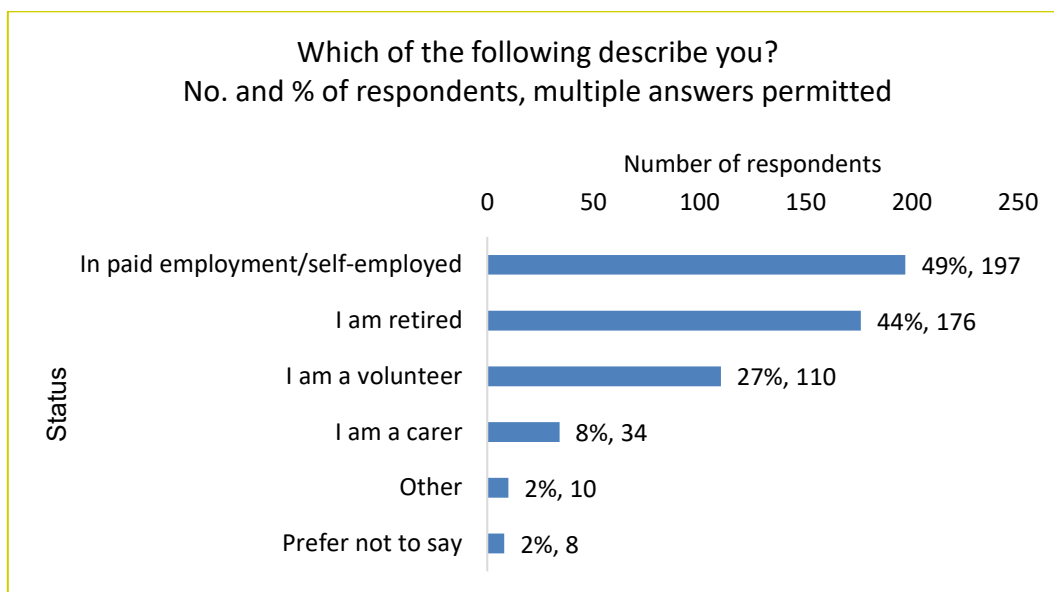


Figure 9. Carer, employment, retirement and volunteer status

In what capacity are you completing this survey?

- 98% live in Buckinghamshire and 35% work in Buckinghamshire (N.B. multiple answers permitted).

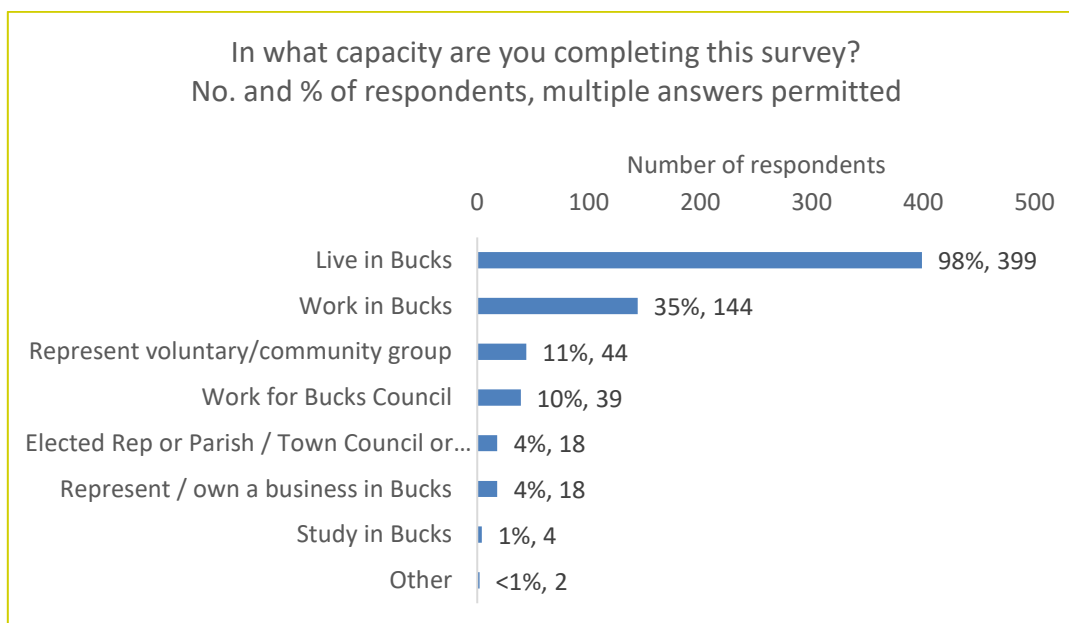


Figure 10. In what capacity are you completing this survey?

Overall age-friendliness

- 65% felt their community was good, very good, or excellent as a place for people to live as they grow older.

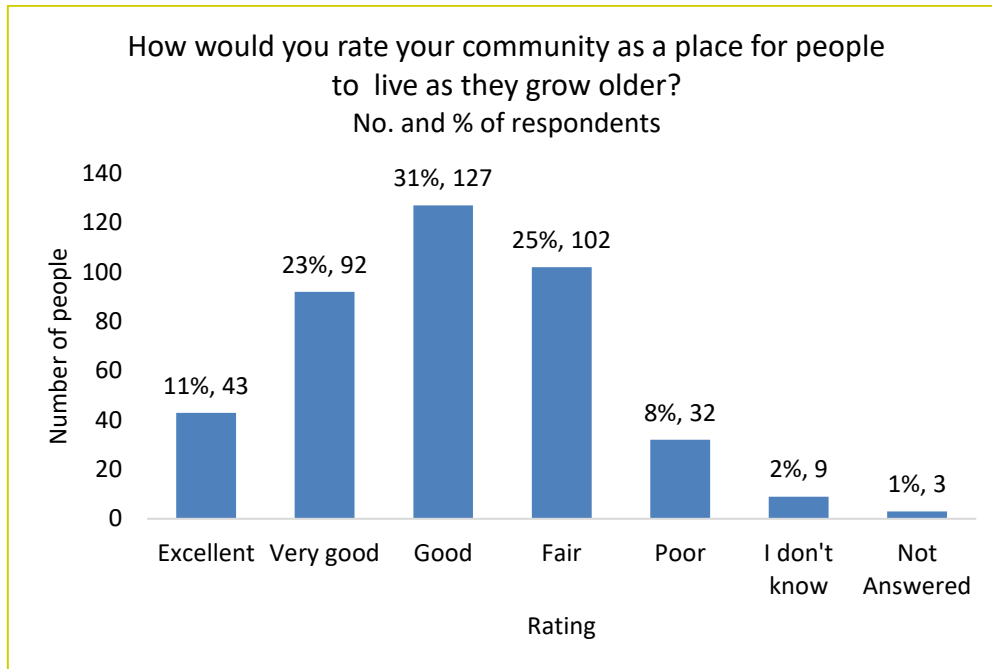


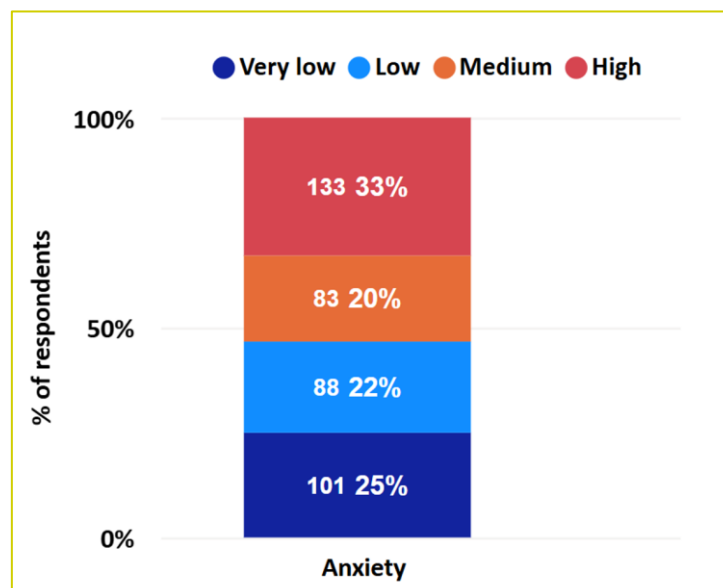
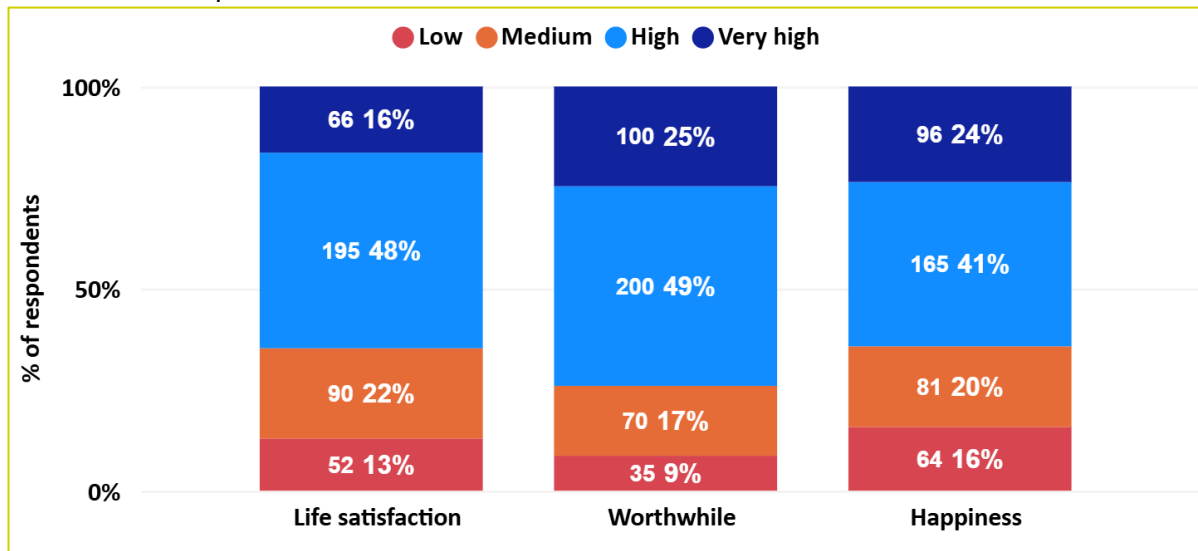
Figure 11. Age friendliness of your community

Personal wellbeing

- 64% and over had high or very high feelings of life satisfaction, worthwhile feelings and happiness. 47% had low or very low anxiety.

Personal wellbeing

No. and % of respondents



Key:

- Life satisfaction (Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?)
- Worthwhile (Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?)
- Happiness (Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?)
- Anxiety (Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?)

Figure 12. Personal wellbeing (ONS4)

Anxiety in older people in Bucks

- In the current survey, 33% of respondents reported experiencing high anxiety, compared to 22% for Buckinghamshire UA, 24% for South-east England, and 23% for England overall, based on the latest 2022/23 data from the [Fingertips](#) Annual Population Survey (APS).
- 32% of respondents with high anxiety also reported high happiness, worthwhile feelings, and life satisfaction. This suggests that the wording of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) question may lead to confusion, especially for online respondents, in contrast to the clarity provided in telephone or face-to-face surveys. Additionally, it is possible to experience anxiety alongside positive feelings. Self-reported well-being may be influenced by the context of the healthy ageing survey and the respondents' experiences and perceptions.

Those with low positivity / high anxiety

For those respondents reporting 'low positivity / high anxiety' (N=69), there were observed differences in age, sex, disability, employment, and carer status. **However, these should be interpreted with caution because of the small sample size.**

For 'low positivity / high anxiety':

- 70% were under 65 (compared with 58% of all respondents)
- 46–50 and 61–65-year-olds (19% and 20%) had the highest representation
- A higher percentage of men represented compared with all respondents (38% vs. 29%)
- 52% reported disability, impairment, or long-term condition compared with 38% of all respondents
- More are in paid work (60% vs. 48%)
- Fewer are retired (26% vs. 43%)
- More are carers (15% vs. 8%)

We asked: What three things are most important for your own health and wellbeing now and as you grow older?

You said:

Theme 1: Socialising

Socialising was frequently mentioned (28%) as a crucial element for wellbeing, underscoring the importance of maintaining relationships, engaging in community activities, and avoiding loneliness.

Answers included *"Regular socialising"*, *"Socialising, affordability, being able to eat"*, *"Meeting with family & friends"*

Theme 2: Access to Quality Healthcare

22% of respondents mentioned access to healthcare services, especially the availability of GP appointments and quality of care, was a prominent concern among respondents, highlighting the need for reliable healthcare infrastructure.

Answers included *"Access to GP", "Access to doctors and hospitals", "Getting fast health treatment when I am unwell"*

Theme 3: Regular Physical Activity

19% of respondents mentioned regular exercise and physical activity as vital for maintaining physical health, mental well-being, and overall quality of life.

Answers included *"Keeping active", "Regular Exercise", "Exercise, access to countryside, tranquillity"*

Theme 4: Eating a Healthy Diet

16% of respondents emphasized the importance of a healthy diet in promoting overall health, managing weight, and preventing chronic diseases.

Answers included *"Healthy diet", "Good food, gardening and plenty of outings/holidays with the grandchildren", "Vegan diet"*

Theme 5: Feeling Financially Secure

Financial stability was frequently mentioned as a key factor for wellbeing, enabling access to necessary resources and reducing stress related to financial uncertainties (12%).

Answers included *"Being able to pay the bills and eat without worrying", "Finances", "Financial security, feeling safe, good food and access to exercise"*

Summary

Respondents reported that socialising, access to quality healthcare, and regular physical activity, were the most important factors for their health and wellbeing now and as they grow older.

A healthy diet and financial security were also mentioned quite frequently.

These findings highlight the need for community-based initiatives, improved healthcare access, and support to keep active to ensure that individuals can maintain a healthy and fulfilling life as they age.

Future actions should focus on addressing these key areas to enhance overall wellbeing.

Feedback on the Age Friendly Domains

The following sections provide more detailed information on the responses received to each of the age friendly domains.



Transport

Aim

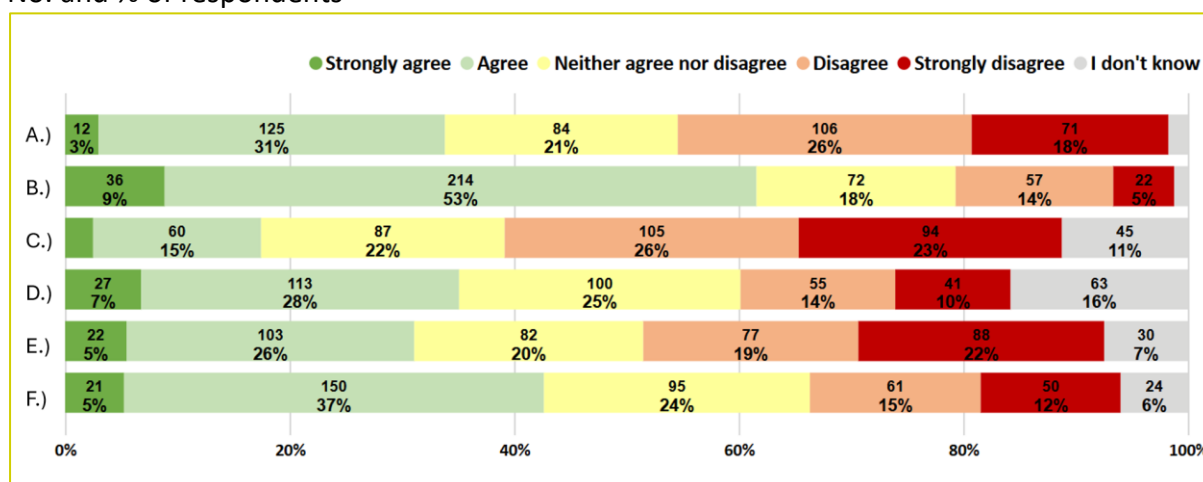
To promote accessible, affordable and appropriate travel options allowing people to access services they need.

Overall feedback

- 62% agreed or strongly agreed that there is adequate time to cross the roads safely at crossings.
- 49% disagreed or strongly disagreed that public transport gets them to where they need to go.
- 78% of respondents drive and 68% walk to get around their community. 27% use public transport.
- 40% of respondents were eligible for a bus pass.
- 33% have a bus pass.
- 36% either don't intend to get a bus pass or don't know if they intend to get one.

Thinking about how you get around your community, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

No. and % of respondents



Key:

- A.) There are well-lit, safe streets and crossings for all users (pedestrians, cyclists, drivers)
- B.) There is adequate time to safely cross the road at pedestrian crossings or traffic lights
- C.) Public transport gets me to where I need to go
- D.) Public transport is affordable
- E.) Public transport is convenient to where I live
- F.) There is conveniently located public parking including disabled parking

Figure 13. Transport Feedback

How do you usually get around your community?

No. and % of respondents, multiple answers permitted

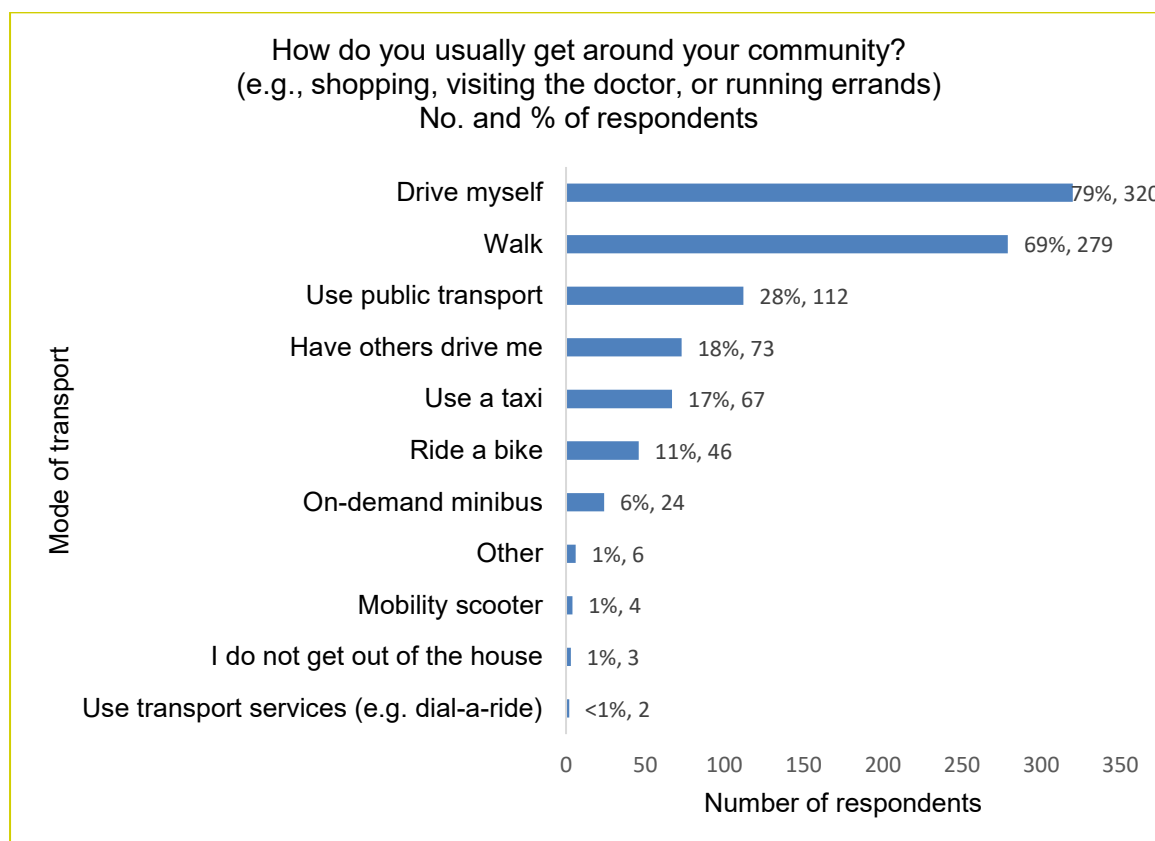


Figure 14. How do you usually get around your community?

We asked: 'If you use a car, what would you need to be able to transform some of your everyday car journeys into active travel journeys more of the time?'

You said:

Theme 1: Improved Public Transport (26%)

Respondents frequently mentioned the need for more reliable, frequent, and accessible public transport services. Enhancements such as regular bus services, better links between towns, and services that run throughout the day and week were highlighted as necessary improvements.

"I need a car to reach places nearby but too far to walk there and back. Also, I cannot get a bus back from pubs and restaurants as they stop running or just don't go anywhere except Hemel or Wycombe."

Theme 2: Better Cycling Infrastructure (23%)

Respondents suggested that improved cycling infrastructure, such as purpose-built cycle routes, safer cycle lanes, and secure bike storage, would encourage them to cycle more often instead of using a car.

"More purpose-built cycle routes, and roads which are wide enough with proper cycle lanes that don't endanger you every time you pass through a narrow restriction."

Theme 3: Enhanced Walking Facilities (20%)

Many respondents emphasized the need for better walking facilities, including safer pavements, better footpaths, and more benches, to make walking a more viable and attractive option.

- "Better footpaths and more benches."
- "A pavement to walk on. A 20-mph speed limited area. Drivers do 60-mph along here and there are no pavements, street lighting around blind corners."

Theme 4: Convenient and Direct Transport Routes (16%)

Respondents frequently cited time constraints and the convenience of using a car as significant barriers to adopting active travel. Many mentioned that their busy schedules and the need for quick and direct travel made it difficult to rely on public transport or active travel modes.

- "Time! Being time poor means increased car use."
- "Taking the car is more convenient, it's like a faithful friend. It's there whenever you need it."
- "Something that would be just as quick as using my car."

Theme 5: Safe and Accessible Transportation (13%)

Several respondents highlighted accessibility and safety concerns, such as the need for safe crossing facilities, well-maintained roads and pavements, and better lighting, to make active travel more feasible and attractive.

- "Safer pavements and more accessible services such as more frequent buses."
- "Walking to High Wycombe shopping centre is hazardous from my location in Hughenden as crossing the roads to get to town becomes difficult with the number of speeding motorists ignoring the speed limit and no pedestrian crossing in Hughenden Road / Boulevard."

Barriers to bus pass uptake

Intention to get a bus pass

- 80% of respondents eligible for an Older Person's bus pass had one.
- Of the 32 respondents eligible for a bus pass but did not have one, 56% said they did not intend to get one or did not know if they intend to.

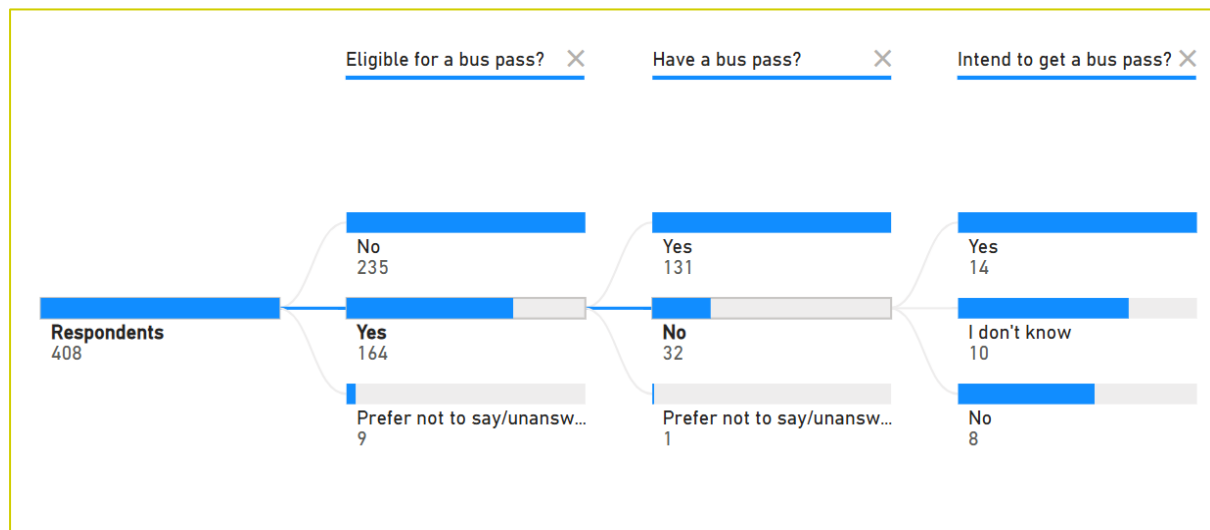


Figure 15. Intention to get an Older Person's bus pass

The reasons why those who were eligible and don't intend to get one were:

I prefer the convenience and flexibility of using my car.

"Most of the journeys I need to make, such as trips to local shopping centres and train stations, are not easily accessible by public transport. The convenience and flexibility of using my car far outweigh the limited bus routes available"

"Not sure what is happening to the village bus service as Arriva have stopped running. Will have to see what replacements there are."

I frequently travel with my wife, who does not qualify for a bus pass.

My household owns multiple cars, and I frequently travel with my wife, who does not qualify for a bus pass. Driving or walking to my chosen destinations is not only practical but also more efficient than relying on the limited bus services. Moreover, as someone who still works almost full-time, the flexibility of a personal vehicle is invaluable.

"Easier to use my car at the moment. It gives me flexibility."

I find it challenging to get on and off buses.

The physical strain and lack of confidence in the current bus infrastructure deter me from considering this mode of transport. The ease of using my car, tailored to my needs, makes it a more viable option for daily commutes.

"Being disabled I struggle with getting on and off buses."

Summary

Improving public transport services, enhancing cycling and walking infrastructure, direct routes, and ensuring safety and accessibility are crucial to encouraging active travel. These insights suggest potential actions such as increasing the frequency and reliability of buses, developing dedicated cycle routes, and improving pedestrian facilities. By addressing these barriers, it may be possible to transform more car journeys into active travel journeys.



Housing

Aim

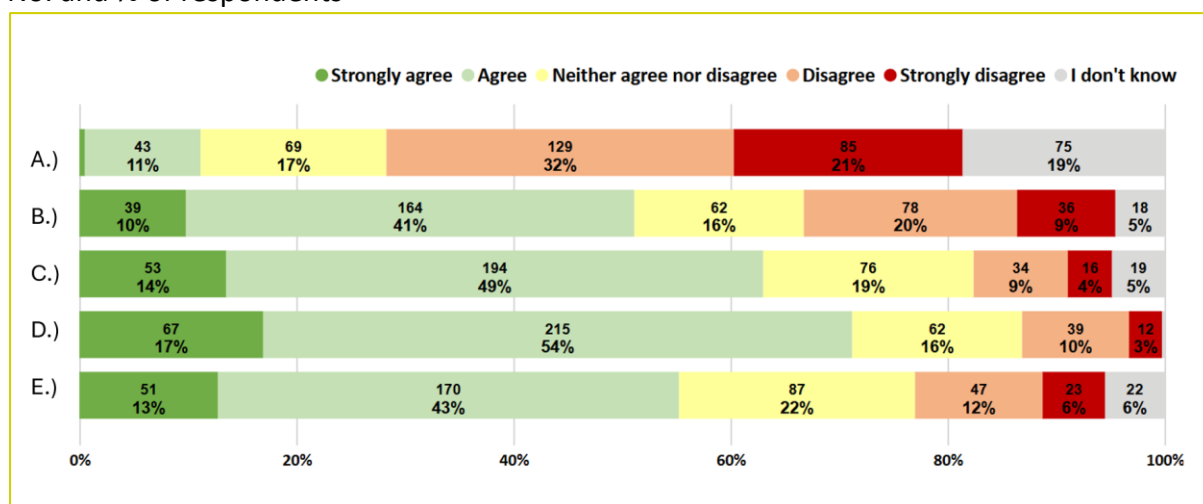
To support the improvement and development of accommodation for people to live safely and comfortably, and which can improve physical and mental health, wellbeing, and social connections.

Overall feedback

- 53% disagreed or strongly disagreed that there were affordable housing options for people as they grow older.
- 51% agreed or strongly agreed that their homes are or could easily be adapted to their needs as they grow older.
- 63% agreed or strongly agreed that their homes are or could be made energy efficient.
- 71% agreed or strongly agreed that they could afford to pay their household bills.
- 56% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident they will be able to live independently as they grow older.

Thinking about your home/living arrangements, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

No. and % of respondents



Key:

- A.) There are affordable housing options for people as they grow older
- B.) My home is, or could easily be, adapted to my needs as I grow older (e.g., no step entrance, wider doorways, grab bars in bathrooms, and first floor bedrooms and bathrooms)
- C.) My home is, or could be made, energy efficient
- D.) I can afford to pay my household bills (e.g., electricity, phone bill, house insurance)
- E.) I feel confident I will be able to live independently in my own home as I grow older

Figure 16. Housing feedback

Feedback from specific groups

Similar responses were provided regardless of living in urban or rural areas, for those with a disability or long-term condition and for those who were retired. Respondents from Opportunity Bucks wards only 42% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident they will be able to live independently as they grow older, compared to 56% of all responses. Of those who were carers, 29% selected 'I do not know' for the question 'there are affordable housing options for people as they grow older'.

We asked: 'What is most important to you when considering your home/living arrangements now and as you grow older?'

You said:

Theme 1: Affordability (21%)

Many respondents expressed concerns about the affordability of housing, rent, and other living expenses as they grow older. This includes concerns about high rents, the cost of downsizing, and the ability to afford necessary modifications to their homes.

- "Rent affordability"
- "High rents! Even Fairhive rents are expensive."
- "Affordability of care in the home"
- "Energy efficiency, low carbon, warm and comfortable."

Theme 2: Accessibility and Mobility (18%)

Accessibility and the ability to move freely within and outside the home were significant concerns for many respondents. This includes concerns about stairs, the need for ground-floor amenities, and the ability to get around the community safely.

- "Trying to keep fit to cope with stairs"
- "Downstairs toilet"
- "Steps into home"
- "Accessibility to public services."
- "Downsizing when I am fit and able to and not leaving it too late."

Theme 3: Independence (16%)

Maintaining independence was a recurring theme. Many respondents emphasized the importance of being able to live independently in their own homes, potentially with support as needed.

- "To maintain my independence."
- "Ability to live independently"
- "Being able to remain independent and live in my own home, possibly bringing in carers as and when they were needed."
- "Self-reliance as I cannot trust official bodies to provide for me"

Theme 4: Social Connectivity and Community Support (14%)

Social connectivity and the availability of community support were important to many respondents. This includes the ability to access friends, community groups, and local amenities.

- "Having access to friends and shops"
- "Access to friends and community"
- "To be able to get out and about safely. Good street lighting, even pavements, free parking facilities"
- "Access to local shops, doctors, and being able to maintain the garden"
- "Being able to access shops and leisure independently"

Theme 5: Safety and Security (13%)

Safety and security were highlighted as key concerns. This includes the safety and security of the home itself, as well as the surrounding environment.

- "Security"
- "Feeling safe, both inside and outside."
- "Safe area"
- "Safety and comfort"
- "Ensuring I don't get socially isolated. Provide benches outside so I can get out and sit down."

Summary

Residents told us about the importance of accessibility, affordability, independence, social connectivity, and safety when considering their home/living arrangements as they grow older.

Respondents also mentioned green credentials and making home improvements.



Outdoor spaces and buildings

Aim

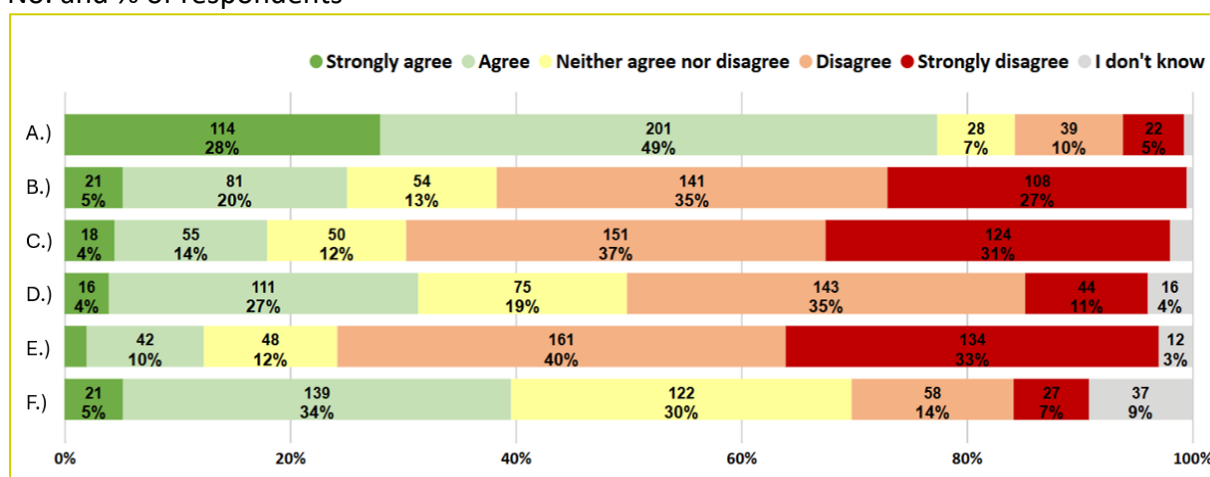
To create high quality, accessible and social public spaces which are safe and help people to move around independently.

Overall feedback

- 77% agreed or strongly agreed that there are well maintained and safe greenspaces within a walking distance from their home.
- 62% and 68% disagreed or strongly disagreed that pavements are either well maintained or safe, respectively.
- 73% disagreed or strongly disagreed that there are enough public toilets.

Thinking about your community, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

No. and % of respondents



Key:

- A.) There are well-maintained and safe greenspace/parks that are within walking distance of my home
- B.) Footpaths/pavements are well maintained
- C.) Footpaths/pavements are safe for pedestrians, wheelchairs, and mobility vehicles
- D.) There are enough places (benches and warm venues) to rest when I'm out and about
- E.) There are enough public toilets when I'm out and about
- F.) Public buildings and facilities are well maintained and are accessible to people of different physical abilities

Figure 17. Outdoor space and buildings - All respondents

Feedback from specific groups

Feedback was similar across different groups (e.g. rural / urban, carers, retired), however for those with a disability / long term condition(s) 80% said there were not enough public toilets, 54% said there were not enough resting benches and 74% said footpaths were not safe or mobility friendly. 84% of respondents from Opportunity Bucks wards said there were not enough public toilets.

We asked: 'How can the outdoor spaces and public buildings in your community be improved?'

You said:

Theme 1: Regular Maintenance of Pavements (28%)

One of the most mentioned issues was the poor condition of pavements. Respondents highlighted uneven and narrow footpaths, overgrown vegetation, and obstructions caused by parked cars as key concerns. These issues were seen as particularly problematic for older adult residents, wheelchair users, and those with mobility issues.

- "The pavements are severely disrupted by tree roots and fallen leaves, causing problems especially in wet weather."
- "Footpaths need to be kept clear; we need public toilets at the recreation ground and in different parts of Aylesbury."
- "Footpaths that are level and wide enough so that walkers do not have to step into the road."

Theme 2: Safe and Accessible Public Spaces (24%)

A significant number of responses focused on the need for improved accessibility and safety in public spaces. This included better street lighting, more drop curbs for wheelchair users, and measures to prevent obstructive parking. Enhanced safety patrols and better maintenance of public toilets were also suggested.

- "Better lighting, clearing away bushes and trees overhanging pavements, improving uneven pavements."
- "More safety patrols in parks etc., especially in isolated areas."
- "Public buildings have zero accessibility for neurodivergent people."

Theme 3: Public Amenities That Support Relaxation and Socialisation (20%)

Respondents expressed a desire for more public amenities, including benches, litter bins, and public toilets. There was also a call for more community gardens and green spaces where residents can relax and socialize.

- "More benches available and pavements repaired as a danger to pedestrians."
- "Increased provision of litter bins and more litter clearing."
- "More green areas to walk, picnic and relax, with benches. More clean public toilets and amenities."

Theme 4: Designated Dog Walking Areas (14%)

Several respondents mentioned the need for designated dog walking areas to prevent fouling in public spaces. Concerns were raised about the lack of safe and accessible areas for dog owners to walk their pets.

- "Have designated areas for dog walkers in places like Walkwood to restrict fouling."
- "Basically, there is nowhere for dog owners to enjoy."
- "Dog waste bins at either end of the dog paddock in Bourton Park."

Theme 5: Improved Public Transport to Key Locations (14%)

Feedback also highlighted the need for better public transport connectivity, especially to key locations such as hospitals and parks. Respondents mentioned difficulties in accessing these areas due to limited bus services and poor transport links.

- "There are no buses which go from the villages to Stoke Mandeville hospital."
- "Increased provision of public transport, especially to hospitals."
- "Better walking & cycle routes from our village (Long Crendon) to Thame, and Haddenham to make it easier to catch the train."

Summary

The survey responses indicate a clear need for improved maintenance and accessibility of pavements, enhanced safety measures, additional public amenities, designated dog walking areas, and better public transport connectivity. Addressing these concerns will greatly enhance the quality of life for community members and ensure that public spaces are safe, welcoming, and accessible for everyone.



Participating in society

Aim

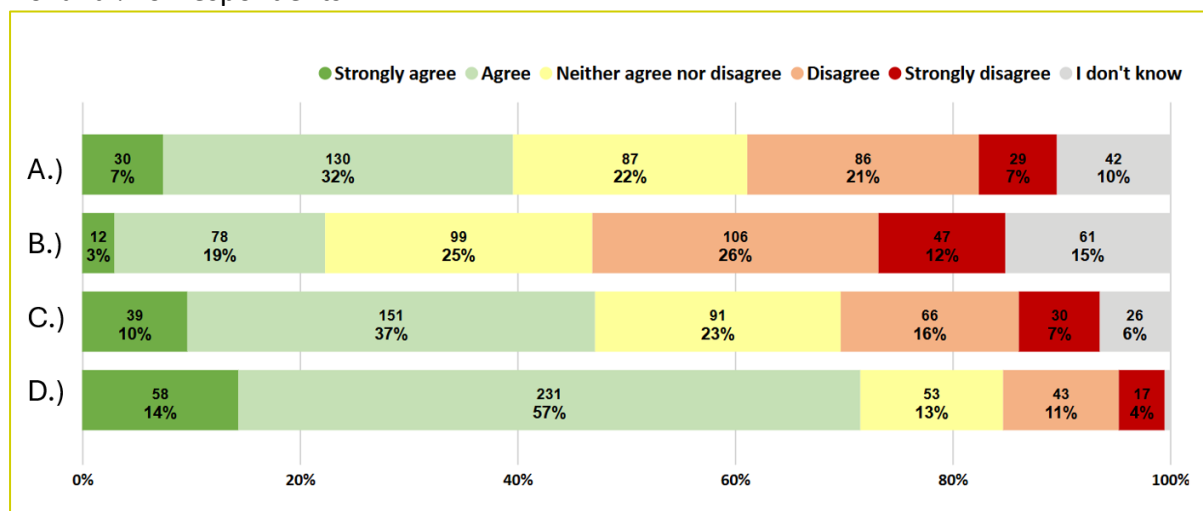
To reduce and remove barriers to participation to foster engagement with activities and events which build a sense of belonging.

Overall feedback

- 47% agreed or strongly agreed that venues for activities and meetings are conveniently located.
- 71% agreed or strongly agreed that they have easy access to shops, services and their local communities.

Thinking about your community, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

No. and % of respondents



Key:

- A.) There are enough social activities that are enjoyable and affordable
- B.) There are enough activities that involve both younger and older people
- C.) Venues for activities, meeting others, and/or entertainment are conveniently located
- D.) I have easy access to the shops, services, and my local community (either in person or online)

Figure 18. Participating in society

We asked: 'Please tell us about any challenges you face to fully participating in your community, and what might help to overcome them.'

You said:

Theme 1: Social Isolation and Community Engagement Challenges (27%)

A significant number of respondents expressed concerns about social isolation, the need for more inclusive community activities, and better communication about available events. Suggestions included more social groups, better advertising of activities, and community hubs.

- "There are not enough services to ensure community and prevent loneliness."
- "Need more activity centres and co-operation with churches and other community venues."
- "I'm not really aware of anything that I'm interested in, or indeed anything at all that goes on in my community."

Theme 2: Transportation Challenges (23%)

Many respondents reported difficulties with transportation, including unreliable public transport, the high cost of parking, and challenges for those who cannot drive. Improved public transport and affordable parking were frequently mentioned as necessary improvements.

- "Fear of being unable to drive is the main concern. Will depend on reliable public transport."
- "Public transport is not good enough in some parts."
- "Free parking in small market towns will increase the use of local shops and businesses."

Theme 3: Accessibility and Mobility Challenges (20%)

Respondents highlighted issues related to physical accessibility, such as narrow footpaths, poor road conditions, and a lack of amenities for those with mobility issues. Improvements in infrastructure and facilities were suggested to enhance accessibility.

- "Footpaths too narrow with cars parked on pavements."
- "Have arthritis so can't walk far. Not interested in activities. Most of us old folk [sic] don't want to spend all our time with 'old folk'!"
- "Pavement parking can make access a nightmare."

Theme 4: Costs and Affordability Challenges (18%)

The cost of participating in community activities was a common theme among respondents. High fees for events, day centres, and activities were seen as barriers, with calls for more affordable options and subsidized programmes.

- "Most activities have a cost implication, and a lot of people can't afford them."
- "Participation in swimming which is good for older people is expensive and this prevents regular involvement."
- "It is currently unaffordable to go to any event as money is very tight."

Theme 5: Safety and Security Challenges (10%)

Safety concerns, including crime, poor lighting, and antisocial behaviour, were highlighted by some respondents. Suggestions for improvement included better street lighting, increased police presence, and safer environments for community activities.

- "Antisocial behaviour of many people. People who set off fireworks etc at the village hall, the toxic smell of drug taking and more."
- "Streetlights to make it safer when travelling home alone at night in Holmer Green."
- "Visual impairment, paths unsafe and poor lighting."

Summary

The survey responses reveal several key challenges to community participation, including transportation issues, social isolation, accessibility, costs, and safety concerns. Addressing these obstacles through improved public transport, affordable activities, better infrastructure, and enhanced safety measures could significantly enhance community engagement and participation.



Volunteering and employment

Aim

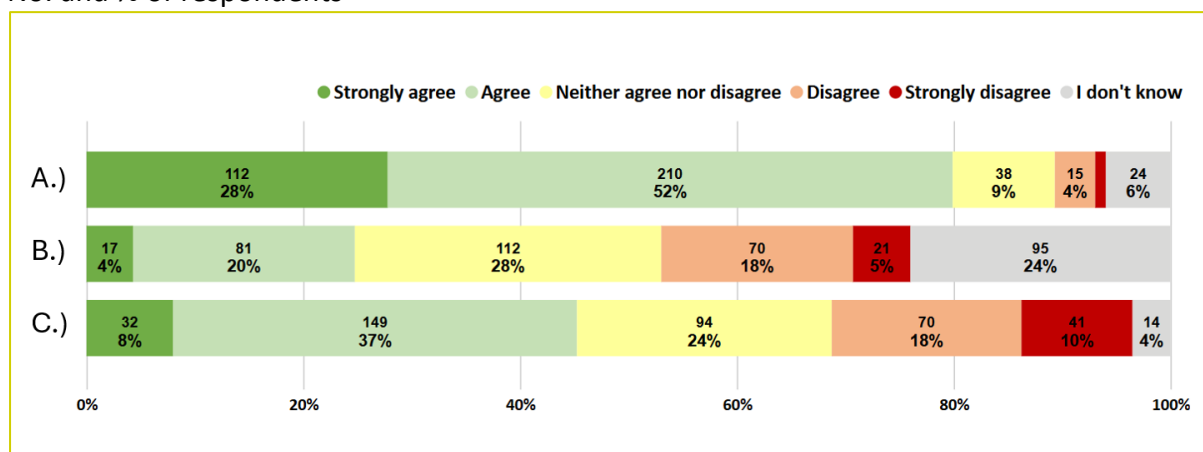
To explore how to support older adults to continue in or re-enter employment in the face of falling older adult employment rates, as well as how to facilitate volunteering.

Overall feedback

- 80% agreed or strongly agreed that there are opportunities to volunteer.
- 45% agreed or strongly agreed that they feel/felt well prepared for retirement.
- 48% of respondents are in paid employment and 43% are retired. 27% are volunteers.

Thinking about your community, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

No. and % of respondents



Key:

- A.) There are opportunities for me to volunteer if I wanted to
B.) There are opportunities for flexible and fairly paid employment if I wanted it
C.) I feel/felt well prepared for retirement

Figure 19. Volunteering and employment

We asked: 'Please tell us about any challenges you face to volunteering, employment, and/or planning for retirement, and what might help to overcome them.'

You said:

Theme 1: Financial Uncertainty (21%)

Many respondents highlighted financial challenges as a significant barrier to retirement planning and employment. Concerns include insufficient pension savings, high living costs, and the need to continue working past the expected retirement age due to financial necessity.

- "Not enough money to retire"
- "Financially unprepared for retirement"
- "Financial concerns"
- "The cost-of-living surge, and the high cost of housing means that I don't know when or if I will be able to retire."

Theme 2: Employment Challenges for Older Adults (19%)

Respondents over the age of 50 frequently mentioned difficulties in finding employment due to age discrimination and the lack of flexible working conditions. Many expressed concerns about the perception that older workers are less capable or less technologically savvy.

- "I work in construction, but I am 70 how much longer can I work? Then I face total poverty, some choice eh?"
- "Employment for women over the age of 50 can be fraught. There is a perception of women over 50 being too old to employ - not tech savvy, 'oh she'll be retiring soon' etc."
- "I was made redundant at the age of 59, and there seem very few or no opportunities for further employment for me."
- "Employment-wise I'm sorry to say that ageism is rife"

Theme 3: Health and Mobility Issues (15%)

Health problems and reduced physical capabilities were mentioned frequently as barriers to both employment and volunteering. Respondents expressed the need for flexible roles that could accommodate their health conditions.

- "As a carer it's difficult to find a flexible job, because I don't have close relatives to help me with my responsibilities and am not a driver, so it's difficult to travel to work."
- "Physical capabilities are reduced, affecting what I can do on a day-to-day basis. An automatic car would enable me to get around more easily."
- "I am disabled so employers are unable to offer me work. I am also over 65."
- "Worries about health conditions which creep up as you age"

Theme 4: Government Policies and Support (14%)

Numerous respondents expressed frustration with government policies that they felt negatively impacted their financial stability and retirement plans. This includes changes to pension ages, inadequate pension schemes, and a lack of support for older adults.

- "Bring back pensioners' fuel allowance."
- "Planning for retirement. Where do I find high quality, trustworthy reliable, independent advice and support?"
- "Pension advice. Advice from central Government is inadequate"
- "I am a woman whose retirement plans were ruined by the move to increase the state pension age without any notification."

Theme 5: Volunteering Visibility and Accessibility (11%)

While there are numerous opportunities to volunteer, respondents noted that these are often not well advertised or accessible to those without internet access or transportation. The need for better promotion and support for older volunteers was emphasised.

- "There are plenty of opportunities to volunteer but you have to search around. I feel that sometimes these positions are not widely advertised and if you don't have a computer then it's almost impossible to find them."
- "Access to volunteering for those who don't drive."
- "I volunteer [...] at Hughenden Manor but cannot safely visit [...] - grassy uneven slopes."
- "Visibility of volunteering opportunities"

Summary

The survey responses reflect significant concerns related to financial instability, employment challenges for older adults, accessibility to volunteering, health issues, and dissatisfaction with government policies. These insights suggest a need for flexible employment options, better promotion, and support for volunteering opportunities, as well as robust financial planning and advice services to address the needs of the ageing population. Potential actions include developing targeted workshops, enhancing communication regarding available opportunities, and advocating for policy changes to better support older adults.



Communication and information

Aim

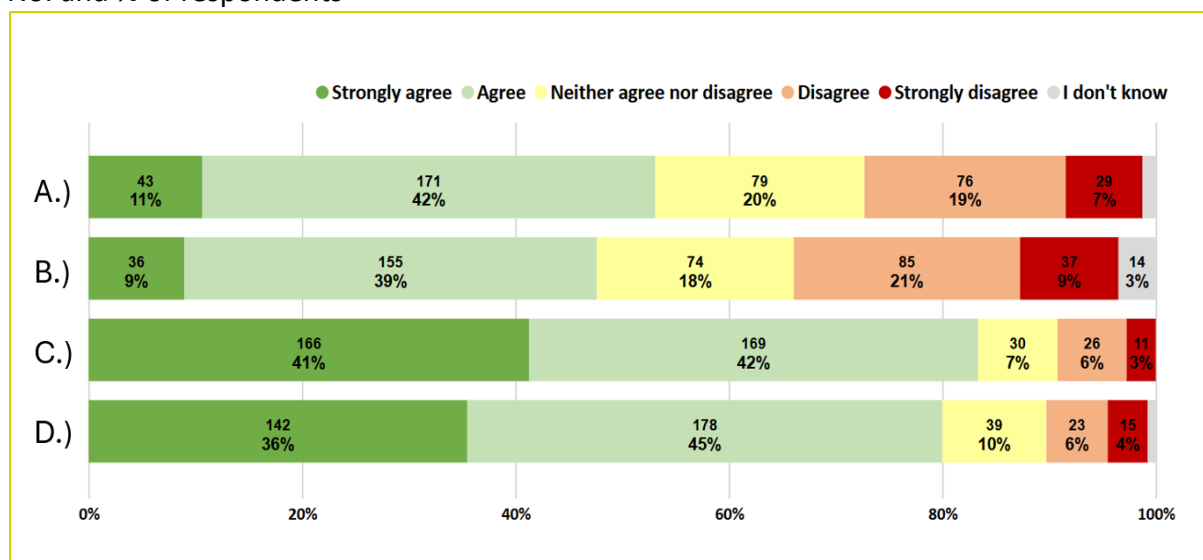
To build positive and accessible communications and campaigns, and challenge negative stereotypes and stigma.

Overall feedback

- 83% agreed or strongly agreed that they were confident using technology.
- 81% agreed or strongly agreed that they have access to reliable, high-speed internet.
- 69% of respondents find out about services or groups in their community via word of mouth and 65% via social media.

Thinking about how you get information in your community, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

No. and % of respondents

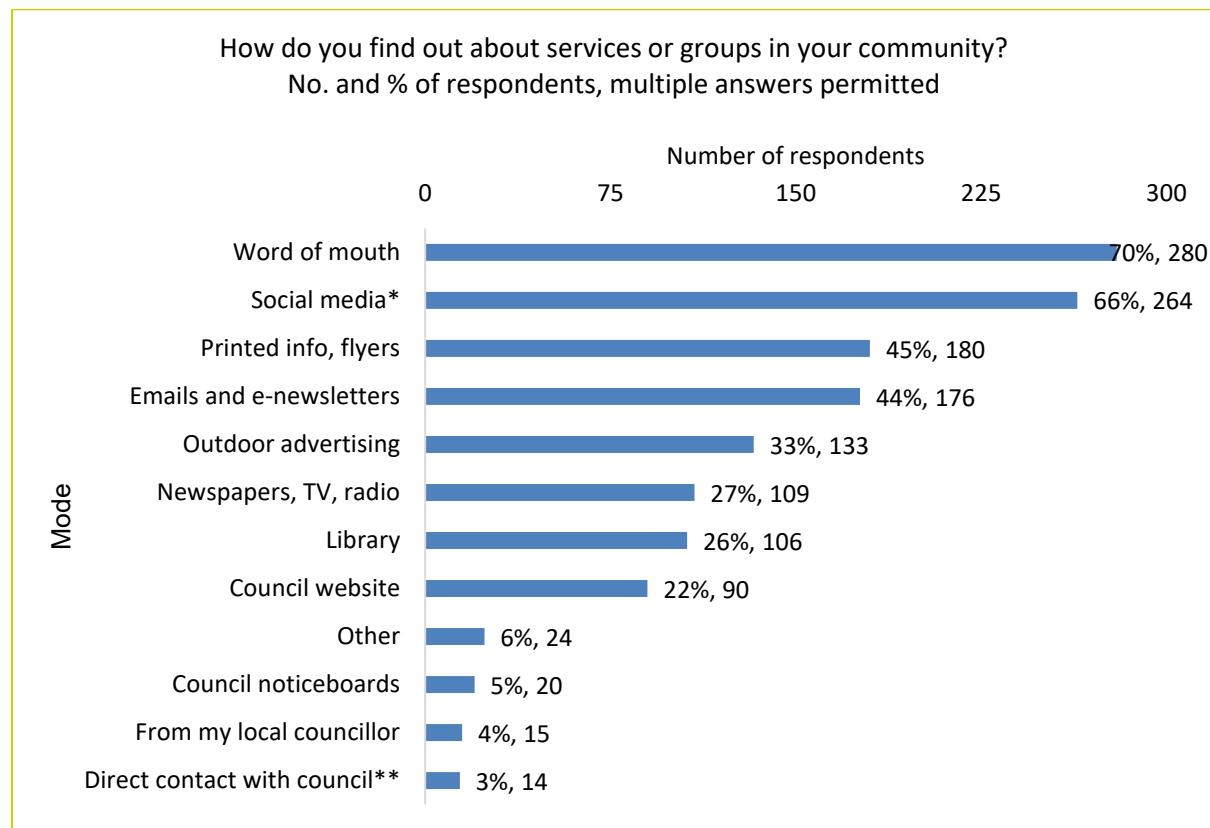


Key:

- A.) It is easy to find out about local events, activities, and health information in my community
- B.) I know how to find out about what services and entitlements I am eligible for
- C.) I am confident using technology such as mobile phones, laptops, and/or the internet
- D.) I have access to reliable, high-speed internet

Figure 20. Communication and information feedback

How do you find out about services or groups in your community?



N.B. *e.g., Facebook, X, Instagram; **e.g., contact with staff, public meetings, and events.

Figure 21. How do you find out about services or groups in your community?

Summary

Overall, people felt they had access to and were confident finding the information they needed. They used a variety of ways to find that information ranging from word of mouth to social media to libraries. Given the current survey was mainly completed online, these respondents may be more comfortable using digital technologies for communication and information. It is important to consider digital equity when designing communications and information for residents.



Community support for health and wellbeing

Aim

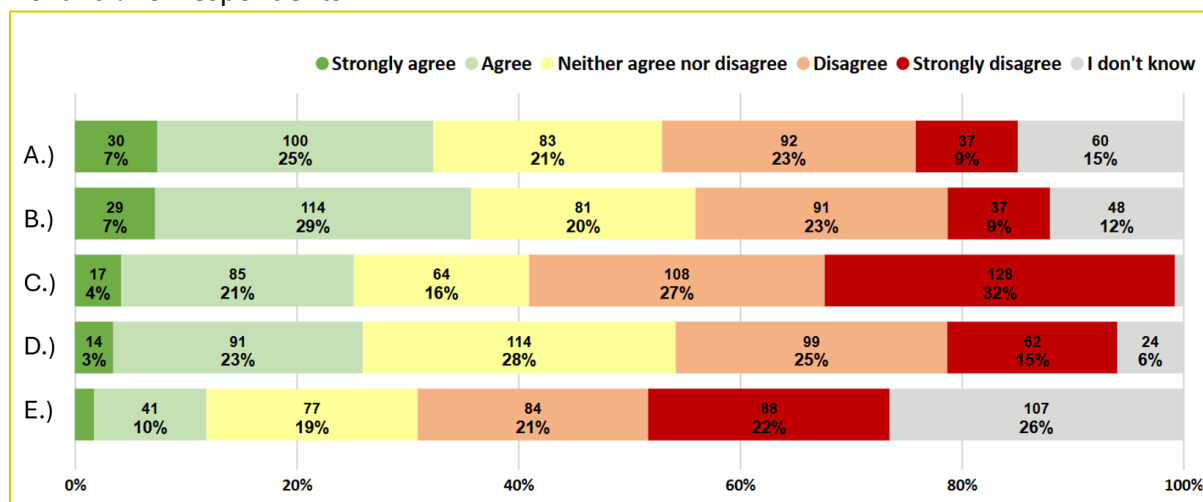
To strengthen the health and wellbeing of communities and support the network of community-based groups.

Overall feedback

- 59% disagreed or strongly disagreed that health services were accessible and affordable.
- 46% of respondents take part in activities in their community several times or at least once a week. 28% don't take part in any activities.

Thinking about your community, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

No. and % of respondents



Key:

- A.) There is a good range of preventive health programmes in the community (e.g. physical activity classes)
- B.) There is good access to activities to improve health and wellbeing
- C.) Health services like GPs, dentists, and pharmacies, are accessible and affordable
- D.) Information on local health and support services is easy to find
- E.) There is available and affordable care to support people to remain independent

Figure 22. Community support for health and wellbeing feedback

How often do you take part in activities in your community that support your health and wellbeing?

No. and % of respondents, one answer permitted

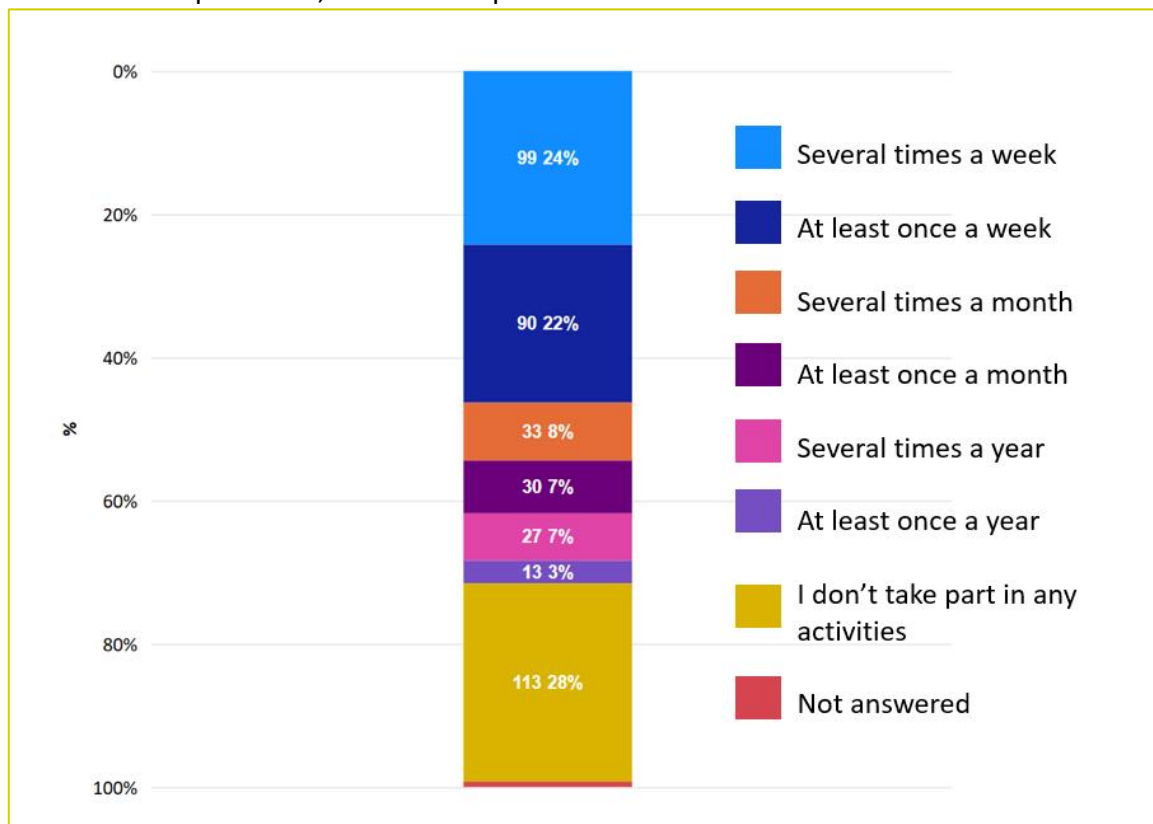


Figure 23. How often do you take part in health and wellbeing activities?

We asked: 'Please tell us about any challenges you face to regularly taking part in activities in your community that support your health and wellbeing, and what might help to overcome them.'

You said:

Theme 1: Financial Constraints (20%)

Many respondents highlighted financial constraints as a significant barrier to participating in health and wellbeing activities. The costs associated with gym memberships, classes, and even transportation were frequently mentioned.

- "Cost"
- "We should have access to free swimming as many other councils offer"
- "Money to get to places, money to take part."

Theme 2: Access to Healthcare Services (17%)

Access to GP surgeries, dentists, and other healthcare services was another major concern. Many respondents found it difficult to get appointments or faced long wait times.

- "Impossible to see a GP, extortionate to see a dentist."
- "Need better access to health services particularly doctors"
- "Long wait to get a doctor's appointment, almost impossible"

Theme 3: Availability and Timing of Activities (16%)

The availability and timing of activities were frequently mentioned as challenges. Many activities were not scheduled at convenient times for those with work or family commitments.

- "Timing of classes are not always suitable"
- "The activities that I mostly want to take part in are during office hours."
- "More could be available at weekends."

Theme 4: Information and Awareness (14%)

A lack of information and awareness about available activities was a common theme. Respondents often did not know what activities were available in their community.

- "Not knowing what is available"
- "Finding them"
- "If you don't know about any activities or events, you can't participate."

Theme 5: Physical and Logistical Barriers (12%)

Physical and logistical barriers, such as transportation issues and physical limitations, were also significant challenges for many respondents.

- "Transport. Finding out what's going on."
- "Driving in the dark in the winter, and bad weather, when street lighting is poor."
- "I can only get to my gym by car, as there is no public transport available here."

Summary

The survey responses highlighted several key challenges faced by respondents in participating in health and wellbeing activities, including financial constraints, access to healthcare services, availability and timing of activities, information and awareness, and physical and logistical barriers. Addressing these challenges will require a multi-faceted approach, including increasing the availability of affordable activities, improving access to healthcare services, providing better information about available activities, and addressing transportation and other logistical issues.



Respect and social inclusion

Aim

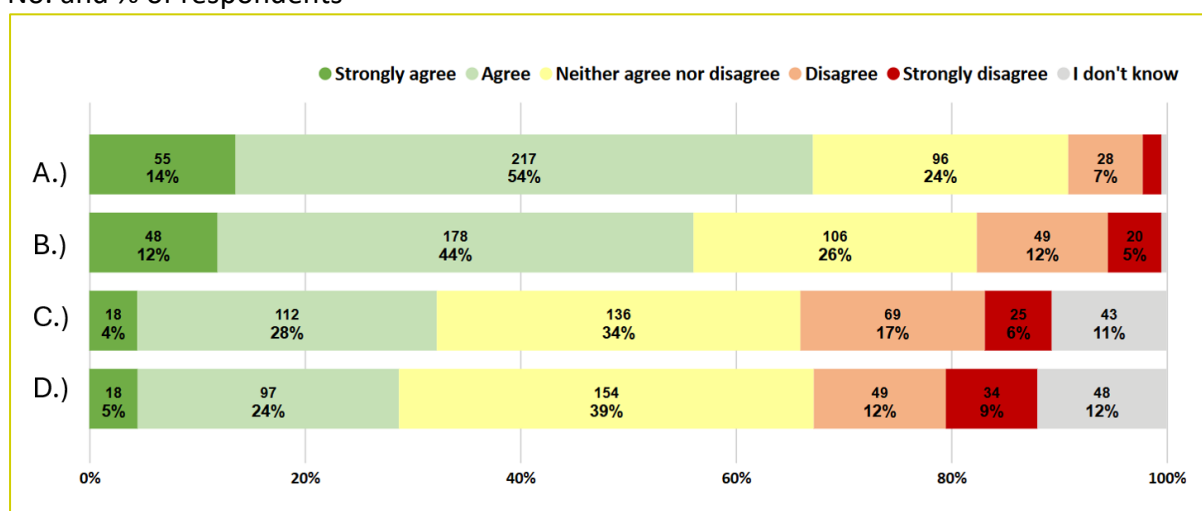
All age-friendly activities within our themes must ensure that individuals from all backgrounds are supported to age with respect and dignity.

Overall feedback

- 68% agreed or strongly agreed that people treat them with respect.
- 56% agreed or strongly agreed that they feel part of their local community.

Thinking about your community, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements:

No. and % of respondents



Key:

- A.) People treat me with respect
- B.) I feel part of my local community
- C.) I regularly see positive images of older people in Bucks (publications, newspapers, online, and other marketing)
- D.) My cultural heritage is celebrated in Buckinghamshire (e.g. through events or culturally appropriate services)

Figure 24. Respect and social inclusion feedback

We asked: 'Please tell us one thing that would make your community more inclusive and reduce isolation for people in Buckinghamshire. For example, services, activities, marketing.'

You said:

Theme 1: Activities and Services for Older People (15%)

A significant number of responses indicated a need for more activities and services targeted at older people. This includes social clubs, exercise classes, and dementia support.

- "Activities and services for older people, currently no local services in my area"
- "More services for people as they get older - services targeting the younger end of the 'older' category!"
- "More social activities for the elderly [sic], especially for those living with dementia"

Theme 2: Improved Public Transport (9%)

Many respondents highlighted the need for better public transport services, particularly to rural areas and villages. Improved bus services would help people access services and activities more easily, reducing isolation.

- "More bus services to rural villages"
- "A local network to connect people who are getting older and to make sure they are ok."
- "Transport for people who can't easily reach different services/activities."

Theme 3: Marketing and Awareness (9%)

Several respondents noted that there are likely plenty of activities available, but finding out about them is difficult. Better marketing and awareness campaigns are needed to inform the community about available services and activities.

- "I expect there are plenty of activities but finding out about them (other than ticketed events) is tricky."
- "Better marketing"
- "Marketing so I know what's happening before the events!"

Theme 4: Financial Accessibility (6%)

The cost of community activities was a common concern. Respondents suggested that more affordable or free options should be available to ensure inclusivity for all economic backgrounds.

- "Cheap or free community groups would be good for a start."
- "More free clubs or low cost"
- "Clubs for the elderly [sic] with free or subsidised activities"

Theme 5: Community Support and Volunteering (8%)

There was a call for more community support structures, such as buddy schemes and intergenerational activities, to foster a sense of belonging and reduce isolation.

- "A buddy scheme pairing older and younger people"
- "More befriending opportunities"
- "Get young and older mixing more."

Summary

The survey responses highlighted several key areas where improvements could be made to enhance community inclusivity and reduce isolation in Buckinghamshire. Improved public transport, more activities and services for older people, better marketing and awareness, financial accessibility, and increased community support and volunteering were the main themes identified. Addressing these issues could significantly improve the quality of life for residents and foster a more inclusive and connected community.

Conclusions

The Healthy Ageing Survey 2024 has helped us understand how we are doing on key issues raised by residents in the first survey (in 2023), understand how people perceive the age friendliness of their community across all domains now, and identify opportunities for improvement. The responses show the interconnectedness of domains, with action in one area likely to have far reaching impacts. Respondents told us the four key domains of Transport, Housing, Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, and Participating in Society, are important to being able to live well as they grow older. These will inform Year 2 of the Healthy Ageing Strategy. The survey findings provide a behavioural insights evidence base that the Council and partners can draw on to make Buckinghamshire an age-friendly place to live and grow older.

Further reading

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