Neath Port Talbot Council

'Let's Talk'

Report of findings (Questionnaire)

Opinion Research Services

November 2021

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The Strand · Swansea · SA1 1AF
01792 535300 | www.ors.org.uk | info@ors.org.uk

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The ORS Project Team

Project design and management

Kester Holmes

Kelly Lock

Facilitation and interviewing

Angharad Davies

Darren Ivey

Matt Lewis-Richards

Daisy Evans

Analysis and reporting

Matt Lewis-Richards

Kelly Lock

Alys Thomas

1. Executive Summary

Summary of main findings

Questionnaire findings

This report summarises the findings from the online questionnaire designed and hosted by the Council. In total, the questionnaire received **1,694 responses**.

What questionnaire respondents said about the impact of the pandemic

1.1   Most respondents (65%) reported that they had *personally* experienced a 'mixed' (i.e. both good and bad) personal impact as a result of the pandemic. Around a quarter (24%) described the impact as 'bad', and only a small proportion (6%) answered 'good' (the remaining 6% did not know).

1.2   Over half (54%) felt the pandemic had had a mixed impact on their *community*, with just over a fifth (22%) answering 'bad' and fewer (6%) answering 'good', while nearly a fifth (18%) did not know.

1.3   Some of the main negative impacts of the pandemic identified by respondents were as follows: feelings of loneliness/isolation and being unable to meet with others; a decline in mental health; disruptions to education/schooling; difficult conditions for businesses, shops and high streets; and financial worries, concerns about jobs etc.

1.4   In general, questionnaire respondents identified more examples of negative impacts than of positive ones. However, some respondents did identify ways in which they or their community had benefited since the pandemic, such as: more time with family/friends, and getting to know neighbours; increased community spirit and opportunities for 'getting involved' - with people supporting and looking out for one another, etc; and benefits due to working from home (e.g. less commuting).

What questionnaire respondents said matters to them: now and in the future

1.5   Around a third of those who provided comments about what matters to them *now*, mentioned friends/family; this was also the most mentioned theme in relation to what matters *for the future* (20%).

1.6   Many respondents' immediate priorities related to the pandemic and returning to a more familiar way of life, for example: a return to normality/easing restrictions, health (of oneself, or one's family/friends), staying/keeping safe and education/schooling (including schools remaining open) among the others biggest priorities for now.

1.7   When asked to think about what matters for the future, respondents placed slightly more emphasis on the economy (including local jobs/businesses) and environmental issues (such as climate change, recycling, and maintaining green spaces), while education and schools were again widely mentioned.

What questionnaire respondents said about levels of community spirit

1.8   More then half of respondents (54%) felt there had been more community spirit in their immediate neighbourhood as a result of the pandemic, compared with just over a third (36%) across the wider local area, and just over a quarter (28%) across the whole county borough (that said, close to a third – 31% – were unable to give a view on levels of community spirit across the entire county borough).

What questionnaire respondents said could be done in the community to improve residents' lives

1.9 When respondents were asked to identify things that could be done to improve life for residents, the most common themes included: more funding for the community e.g. to support community events/projects; cleaner and better-maintained streets, green spaces, beaches etc; measures to address crime and ASB; investing in and/or providing more, or cheaper, outdoor facilities, and more support for young people.

2. The Consultation Process

Background to the Let's Talk Consultation

2.1   2020-21 has been a time of unprecedented change and uncertainty. The economic and social impacts of COVID-19 have been significant, with many people's sense of isolation and loneliness increasing as a result of several lockdowns. However, the increased time spent at home has also had more positive impacts, with many people feeling better connected to their families and local areas as a result.

2.2   It has been widely suggested that the effects of the pandemic on the British public presents a potential opportunity to re-evaluate what is important to people in their day-to-day lives. Neath Port Talbot County Council (NPTCBC) ran the 'Let's Talk' project reported here to capitalise on this opportunity.

2.3   'Let's Talk' is an open-ended consultation, acting as an opportunity for the public to talk about what matters to them. The aim of the consultation has been to understand what residents feel is important to nd how the Council can equip the communities of Neath Port Talbot to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic as positively as possible.

The commission

2.4   Opinion Research Services (ORS) - a spin-out company from Swansea University with a UK-wide reputation for social research - was appointed to analyse and report the findings of an online questionnaire which was designed, setup and hosted by NPTCBC.

2.5   This consisted of a small number of closed questions (asking about the impact of the pandemic on individuals and their communities; as well as how levels of community spirit had been impacted in the immediate neighbourhood, wider local area, and across the county borough) and also open-ended questions designed to elicit views on what matters to respondents (both now and in terms of the future) and ways in which life could be improved for residents. In total, the questionnaire received 1,694 responses.

The report

2.6   This report summarises the findings from the online questionnaire designed and hosted by the Council.

3. Main Quantitative Findings

Findings from the online questionnaire

Questionnaire approach

3.1   The 'Let's Talk' questionnaire was designed by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and was made available to complete online via the Council's website between 19 July 2021 and 30 September 2021. Printed copies were also made available via libraries and outreach work, and despite the constraints of the ongoing pandemic, 328 paper responses were received. Following the closure of the questionnaire, the dataset was transferred securely to ORS for analysis and reporting. A total of 1,694 questionnaires were completed.

3.2   The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out about what matters to people living and working in Neath Port Talbot. The feedback will be used to develop a recovery plan based for the county borough. The consultation was promoted online (via: regular social media activity on corporate and service accounts, email marketing, internal council channels, and customer touch points); offline (via: radio, press releases, posters, leaflets, 'Let's Talk/Sgwrsio' large letters and selfie boards, and exhibition displays/roll ups in locations with higher footfall); and by outreach activity via NPT Community of Practice on Involvement and Engagement (e.g. SHEP programme, Your Voice - Cadaxton Community Centre and Ponty Friends branches, Young Parents' Group, Libraries, Welsh Language Youth Club etc.)

Response profile

3.3   The response profile to the questionnaire is summarised below (please note that due to low numbers, some very small categories have been grouped together; more detail has been provided in the footnotes).

Table 1: Summary of respondent demographics, including Welsh language ability and area lived in

Characteristic		All Responses	
		Number of Responses	%
BY AGE	Under 16	239	15%
	16 to 24	86	5%
	25 to 29	70	4%
	30 to 39	282	17%
	40 to 49	322	20%
	50 to 59	332	21%
	60 to 69	163	10%
	70 to 74	76	5%
	75 or over	45	3%
	Total	**1,615**	**100%**
	Not known	*79*	*–*
BY GENDER	Male	506	32%
	Female	1,074	68%

	Other[1]	7	
	Total	**1,580**	**100%**
	Not known	*107*	*-*
BY DISABILITY	Has a disability	212	22%
	No disability	746	78%
	Total	**958**	**100%**
	Not known	*736*	*-*
BY ETHNIC GROUP	White British	952	96%
	Other[2]	39	4%
	Total	**991**	**100%**
	Not known	*703*	*-*
BY RELIGION	Christian	479	50%
	Other religion[3]	20	2%
	No religion	467	48%
	Total	**966**	**100%**
	Not known	*728*	*-*
BY PREGNANT / PROVIDING MATERNITY CARE	Yes	27	3%
	No	942	97%
	Total	**969**	**100%**
	Not known	*725*	*-*
BY SEXUAL ORIENTATION	Heterosexual	869	94%
	Gay	16	2%
	Lesbian	19	2%
	Bisexual	19	2%
	Other	4	*
	Total	**927**	**100%**
	Not known	*767*	*-*
BY WELSH LANGUAGE ABILITY	Fluent or fairly fluent speaker & writer	74	8%
	Fluent or fairly fluent speaker	52	5%
	Learner	213	22%
	Little or no knowledge	644	66%
	Total	**983**	**100%**
	Not known	*711*	*-*
BY AREA LIVED IN	Afan Valley	146	9%
	Amman Valley	27	2%

[1] Including 1 respondent identifying as transgender, and 6 answering 'other' (of which two responses were from a male and a female submitting a joint response as a couple).
[2] Including 12 respondents from Gypsy and Traveller communities, 9 from a mixed background (4 White and Asian, 3 White and Black African, 2 White and Black Caribbean), 4 White Irish, 4 from Asian backgrounds (1 Indian, 1 Bangladeshi, 1 Pakistani and 1 Filipino), and 10 'others' (mainly other White backgrounds)
[3] Including 3 respondents who were Buddhist, 2 Hindu and 2 Muslim respondents, and a further 13 answering 'other religion'

Dulais Valley	37	2%
Neath	519	31%
Neath Valley	88	5%
Port Talbot	484	29%
Swansea Valley	168	10%
Outside of Neath Port Talbot	190	11%
Total	**1,659**	**100%**
Not known	*35*	*-*

Table 2: Summary of the ways in which respondents described themselves and their relationship to NPT (NB respondents could choose more than one option, so percentages will sum to more than 100 per cent; not all respondents answered).

	Characteristic	All Responses	
		Number of Responses	%
RESPONDENT TYPES…	A resident of NPT	926	66%
	Work for NPT Council	526	38%
	Use services provided by NPT Council	293	21%
	Work in NPT	254	18%
	Retired	187	13%
	A volunteer in NPT	102	7%
	An unpaid carer	76	5%
	Own or run a business in NPT	60	4%
	Unemployed	52	4%
	College or university student	38	3%
	Work for a 3rd sector/voluntary org in NPT	33	2%
	An Armed Forces veteran	23	2%
	A NPTCBC elected member, community cllr, MP/AS	15	1%
	A member of the Armed Forces	4	*
	Other	58	4%
	Total respondents answering	**1,397**	**100%**
	Not answered	*297*	*-*

Interpretation of the Data

3.4 Graphics are used extensively in this report to make it as user friendly as possible. The pie charts and other graphics show the proportions (percentages) of respondents making relevant responses. Where possible, the colours of the charts have been standardised with a 'traffic light' system in which:

- Green shades represent positive responses

- Yellow or beige represents neither positive nor negative responses

- Red shades represent negative responses

3.5 Where percentages do not sum to 100, this may be due to computer rounding, the exclusion of "don't know" categories, or multiple answers.

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on <u>you</u>

How has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted you?

3.6   Close to two thirds of respondents (65%) reported that they had experienced a mixed impact (i.e. both good and bad) due to the pandemic.

3.7   Around a quarter (24%) felt the impact had been bad, while just over one-in-twenty thought it had been good (6%), and the same proportion (6%) did not know.

Figure 1: Responses to the question asking about the personal impact of the pandemic. Base: 1,389
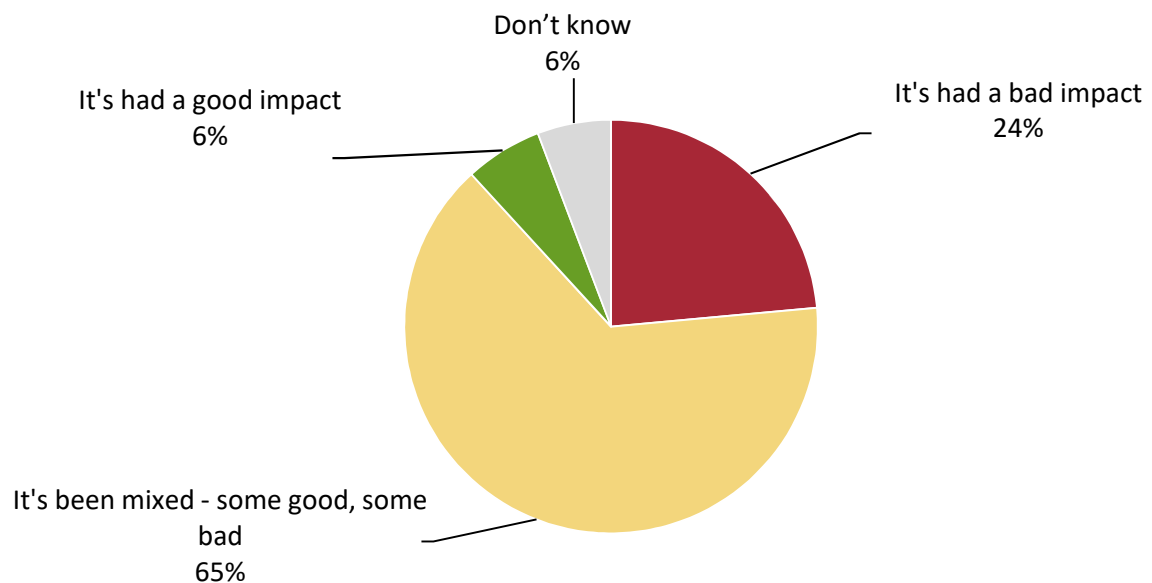
3.8   Figure 2 shows the results to the question about the personal impact of the pandemic, by selected sub-groups. Overall, there was a good deal of similarity in views between the groups; however it is worth noting that a higher proportion of younger people aged 16-24 (41%, compared with 24% overall) stated that there had been a negative impact.

Figure 2: Responses to the question asking how the pandemic has impacted on you personally, by selected sub-groups.
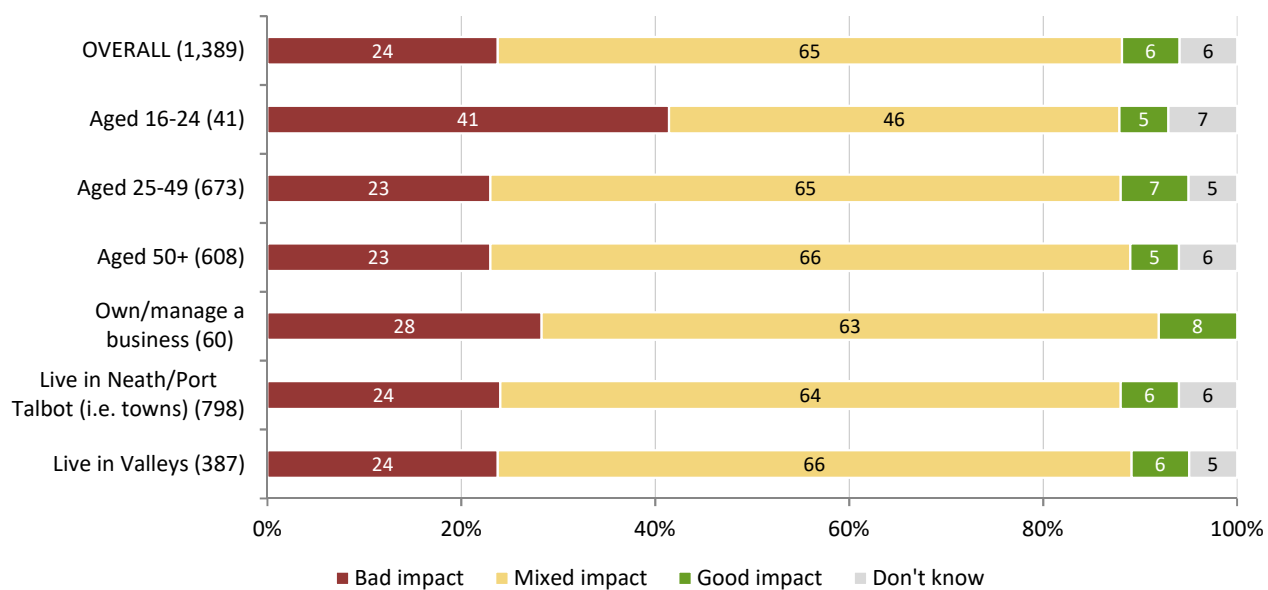
Text comments about the personal impacts of the pandemic

Can you tell us the reasons why the Covid-19 Pandemic has had a [bad/mixed/good] impact on you?

3.9   Figure 3: Can you tell us the reasons why the Covid-19 Pandemic has had a [bad/mixed/good] impact on you?

Base: All respondents who stated the pandemic had had a bad, mixed or good impact and provided comments   (1,041)

NB – themes raised by fewer than 2% of respondents have been excluded from chart

3.10   Figure 3 overleaf summarises the main themes mentioned when respondents were asked to explain why the pandemic had had either a good, bad or mixed impact on them.

3.11   In general, far more negative impacts were identified than positive ones. The main negative, or 'bad' impacts were loneliness, isolation and being unable to meet with people (31%) and a decline in mental health (18%). These were followed by negative impacts on education/schooling (9%), on finances (7%), and as a result of the death(s) of loved ones (7%).

3.12   However, around a fifth of those who commented felt there had been a 'good' impact due to increased family time and/or opportunities to make new friends and get to know neighbours better (19%), while around a tenth or more made comments about increased community spirit/opportunities to 'get involved' and 'be kind' etc (13%), a reduction in travel and commuting due to working from home (12%) and having more time to reflect and/or make changes or decisions (9%).

3.13   Due to lack of space, some themes raised by smaller numbers of respondents (i.e. 1% or less) have been excluded from the chart, these include:

> Negative impacts: lack of support with mental health/pandemic issues in general (1%); reduced cleanliness in the area (e.g. overflowing bins, more rubbish, poorer upkeep of parks and open spaces) (1%); being unable to attend important events such as funerals, weddings and birthdays, and/or having to cancel events (1%); an increase in drug-related issues locally (1%); and impacts on personal relationships (arguments, break-ups etc) (<1%).

Figure 3: Can you tell us the reasons why the Covid-19 Pandemic has had a [bad/mixed/good] impact on you?
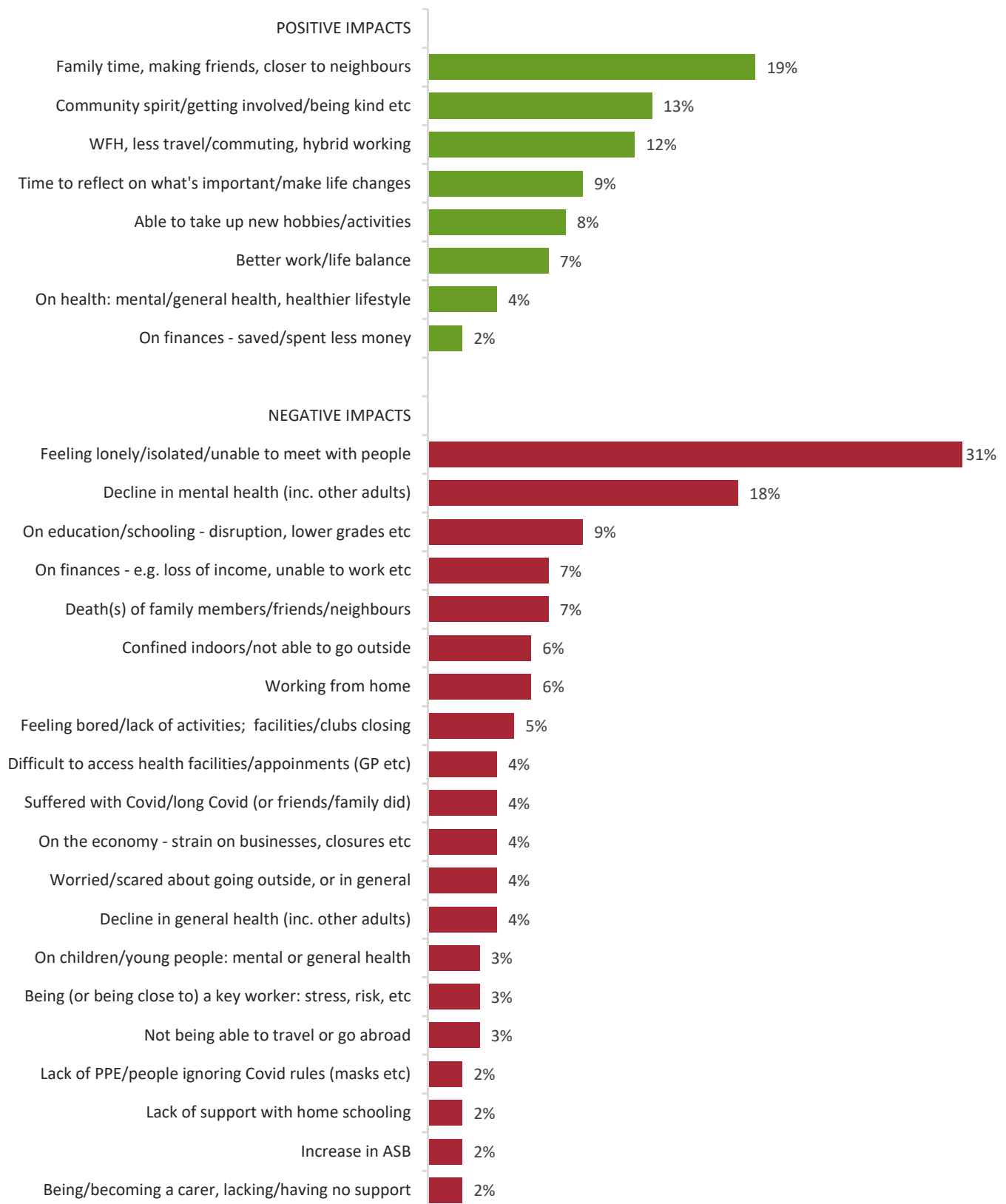**Base: All respondents who stated the pandemic had had a bad, mixed or good impact and provided comments (1,041)**
NB – themes raised by fewer than 2% of respondents have been excluded from chart

POSITIVE IMPACTS

Theme	%
Family time, making friends, closer to neighbours	19%
Community spirit/getting involved/being kind etc	13%
WFH, less travel/commuting, hybrid working	12%
Time to reflect on what's important/make life changes	9%
Able to take up new hobbies/activities	8%
Better work/life balance	7%
On health: mental/general health, healthier lifestyle	4%
On finances - saved/spent less money	2%

NEGATIVE IMPACTS

Theme	%
Feeling lonely/isolated/unable to meet with people	31%
Decline in mental health (inc. other adults)	18%
On education/schooling - disruption, lower grades etc	9%
On finances - e.g. loss of income, unable to work etc	7%
Death(s) of family members/friends/neighbours	7%
Confined indoors/not able to go outside	6%
Working from home	6%
Feeling bored/lack of activities; facilities/clubs closing	5%
Difficult to access health facilities/appoinments (GP etc)	4%
Suffered with Covid/long Covid (or friends/family did)	4%
On the economy - strain on businesses, closures etc	4%
Worried/scared about going outside, or in general	4%
Decline in general health (inc. other adults)	4%
On children/young people: mental or general health	3%
Being (or being close to) a key worker: stress, risk, etc	3%
Not being able to travel or go abroad	3%
Lack of PPE/people ignoring Covid rules (masks etc)	2%
Lack of support with home schooling	2%
Increase in ASB	2%
Being/becoming a carer, lacking/having no support	2%

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on <u>your community</u>

How has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted your community?

3.14   Over half of respondents (54%) felt the impact of Covid-19 on their community had been a mixed one.

3.15   More than a fifth (22%) felt the impact had been bad, while just over one-in-twenty thought it had been good (6%).

3.16   However close to a fifth of respondents (18%) stated that they did not know what impact the pandemic had had on their community.

Figure 4: Responses to the question asking how the pandemic has impacted on the community. Base: 1,331
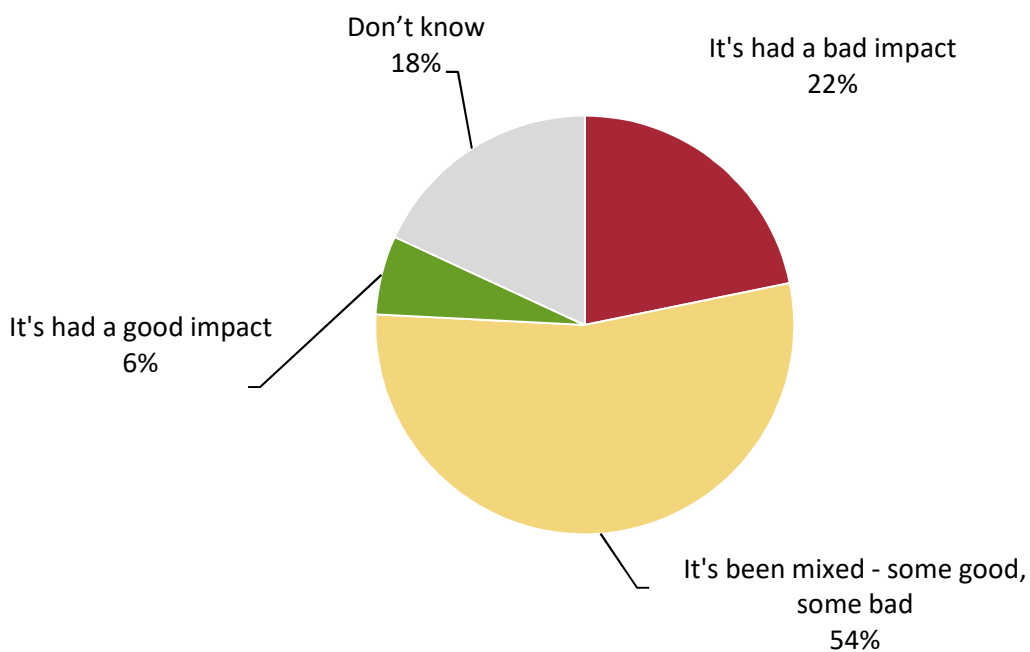
3.17

3.18 Figure **5** overleaf shows that A higher proportion of younger residents (aged 16 to 24) stated that there had been a bad impact on their community as a result of Covid (38%, compared with 22% overall); none of these respondents felt the impact had been a good one.

Figure 5: Responses to the question asking how the pandemic has impacted on the community, by selected sub-groups.
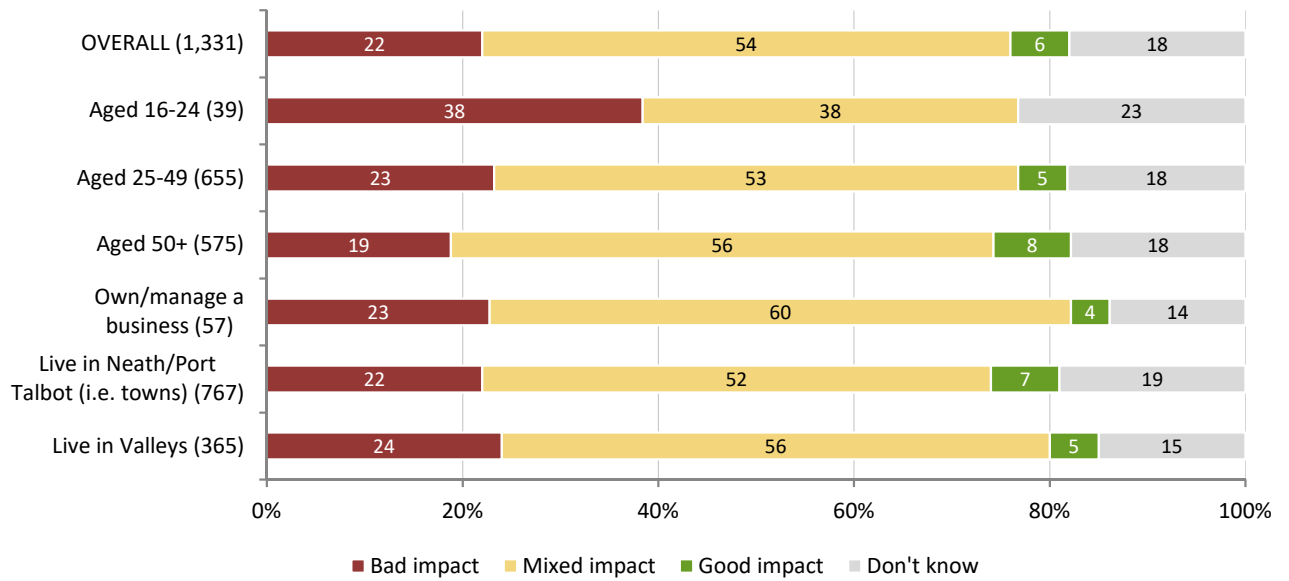
Text comments about the impacts of the pandemic on the community

Can you tell us the reasons why the Covid-19 Pandemic has had a [bad/mixed/good] impact on your community?

Figure 3: Can you tell us the reasons why the Covid-19 Pandemic has had a [bad/mixed/good] impact on <u>you</u>?
Base: All respondents who stated the pandemic had had a bad, mixed or good impact and provided comments (1,041)
NB – themes raised by fewer than 2% of respondents have been excluded from chart

3.19   Figure 6 overleaf summarises the main themes mentioned when respondents were asked to explain why the pandemic had had either a good, bad or mixed impact on their community.
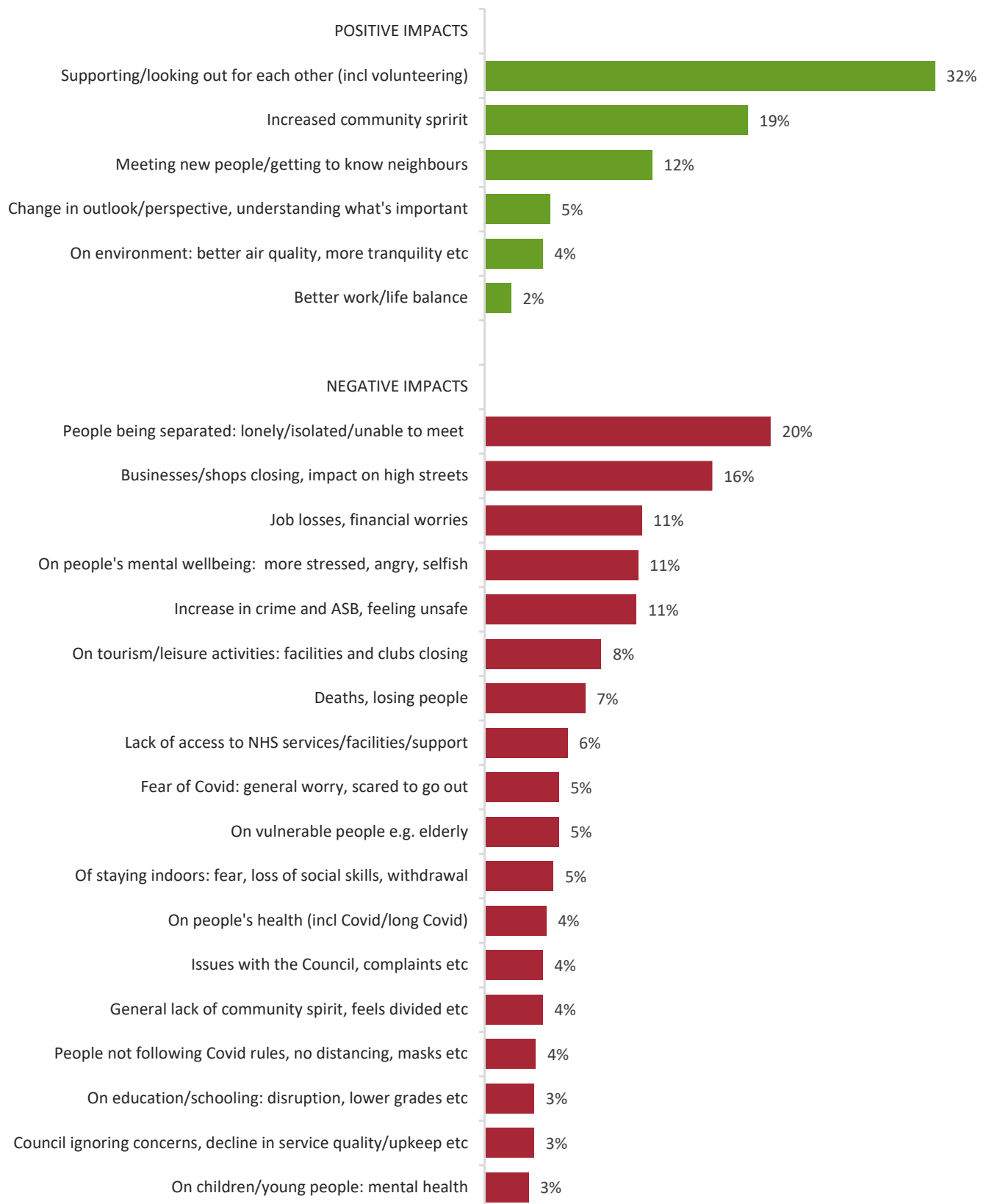
3.20   Again, more negative (or 'bad') impacts were identified than positive (or 'good') ones, with the main negative impacts relating to: people being separated, lonely or isolated etc (20%); businesses and shops closing, or a negative impact on high streets (16%); job losses and financial worries (11%); impacts on personal wellbeing e.g. stress and/or people behaving more angrily or selfishly (11%); and feeling the community is more unsafe e.g. perceiving that levels of crime/ASB have increased (11%).

3.21   However, around a third of those who commented felt there had been a positive impact due to members of the community supporting and looking out for one another (32%), while several respondents commented on an increase in community spirit (19%) or opportunities to meet new people or get to know neighbours (12%).

3.22   Due to lack of space, some themes raised by smaller numbers of respondents (i.e. 1% or less) have again been excluded from the chart, these include:

Positive impact: improvements in hygiene levels (handwashing etc) (1%);

Negative impacts: On public transport (1%), due to council tax being high (1%), inability to travel or go on holiday abroad (1%), increases in homelessness/begging (<1%) and issues with the emergency services (e.g. slower response times, less presence etc) (<1%).

Figure 6: Can you tell us the reasons why the Covid-19 Pandemic has had a [bad/mixed/good] impact on your community?
Base: All respondents who stated the pandemic had had a bad, mixed or good impact and provided comments (803)
NB – themes raised by fewer than 2% of respondents have been excluded from charts

POSITIVE IMPACTS

Supporting/looking out for each other (incl volunteering)	32%
Increased community spririt	19%
Meeting new people/getting to know neighbours	12%
Change in outlook/perspective, understanding what's important	5%
On environment: better air quality, more tranquility etc	4%
Better work/life balance	2%

NEGATIVE IMPACTS

People being separated: lonely/isolated/unable to meet	20%
Businesses/shops closing, impact on high streets	16%
Job losses, financial worries	11%
On people's mental wellbeing: more stressed, angry, selfish	11%
Increase in crime and ASB, feeling unsafe	11%
On tourism/leisure activities: facilities and clubs closing	8%
Deaths, losing people	7%
Lack of access to NHS services/facilities/support	6%
Fear of Covid: general worry, scared to go out	5%
On vulnerable people e.g. elderly	5%
Of staying indoors: fear, loss of social skills, withdrawal	5%
On people's health (incl Covid/long Covid)	4%
Issues with the Council, complaints etc	4%
General lack of community spirit, feels divided etc	4%
People not following Covid rules, no distancing, masks etc	4%
On education/schooling: disruption, lower grades etc	3%
Council ignoring concerns, decline in service quality/upkeep etc	3%
On children/young people: mental health	3%

Things that matter: now and in the future

> *What matters to you now?*
>
> *What matters to you for the future?*

3.23 Respondents were asked two open-ended questions about the things that matter to them now, and the things that matter to them for the future – the themes that were raised by at least 2% of those who commented are summarised in Figure 7 and Figure 8.

3.24 Around a third mentioned that friends/family matter to them *now* (32%); this was also the most commonly mentioned theme in relation to what matters *for the future* (20%).

3.25 Many respondents' priorities in the immediate term related to the pandemic and returning to a more familiar way of life: a return to normality/easing restrictions (18%), health (of oneself, or one's family/friends) (15%), staying/keeping safe (14%) and education/schooling (including schools remaining open) (14%) were the next biggest priorities for *now*.

3.26 When asked to think about what matters *for the future*, respondents placed slightly more emphasis on the economy (including local jobs/businesses) (18%) and environmental issues (such as climate change, recycling, and maintaining green spaces) (12%), while education and schools were again widely mentioned (13%).

Figure 7: What matters to you now? Base: All respondents who provided comments (1,456)
NB – themes raised by fewer than 2% of respondents have been excluded from charts
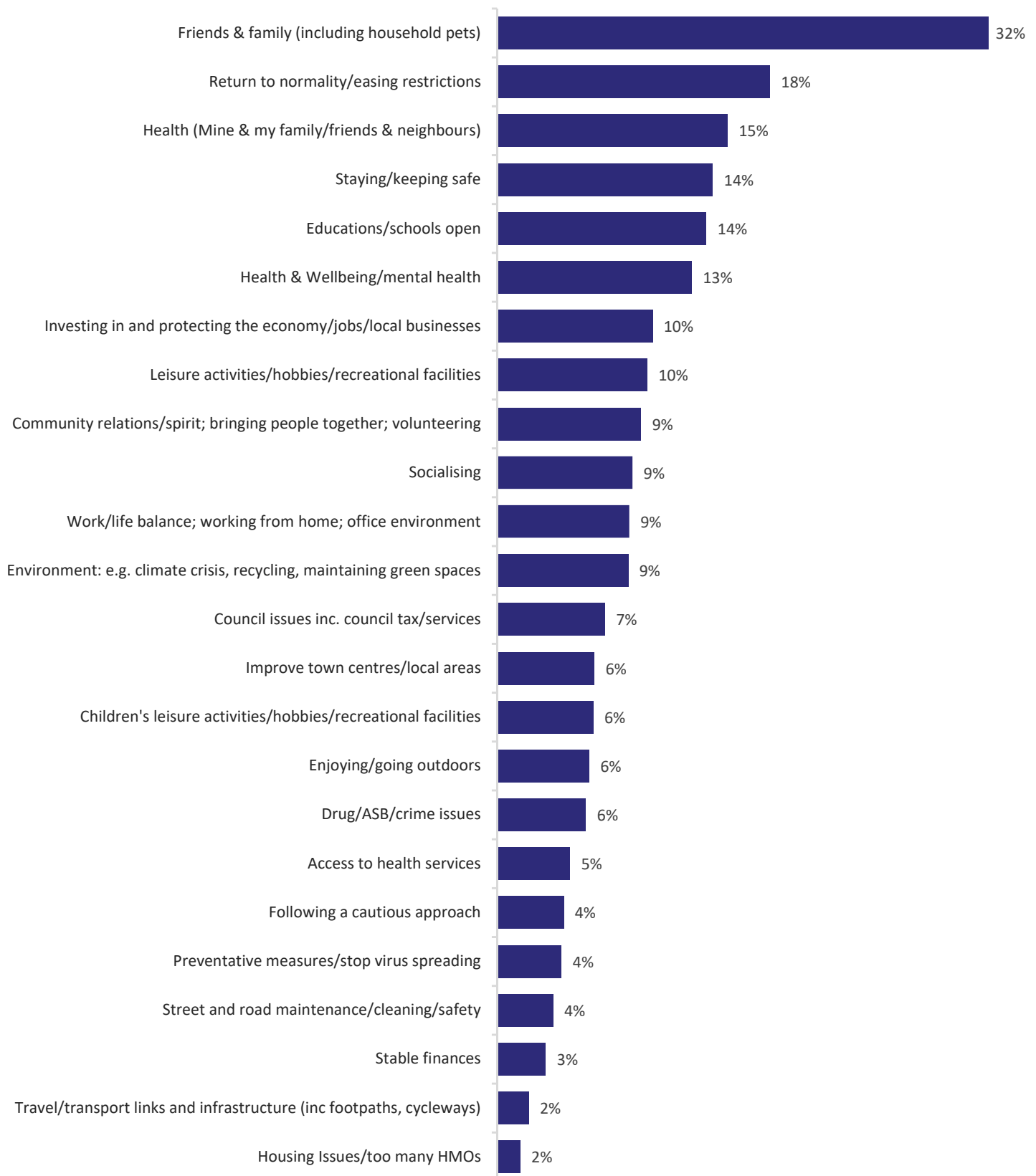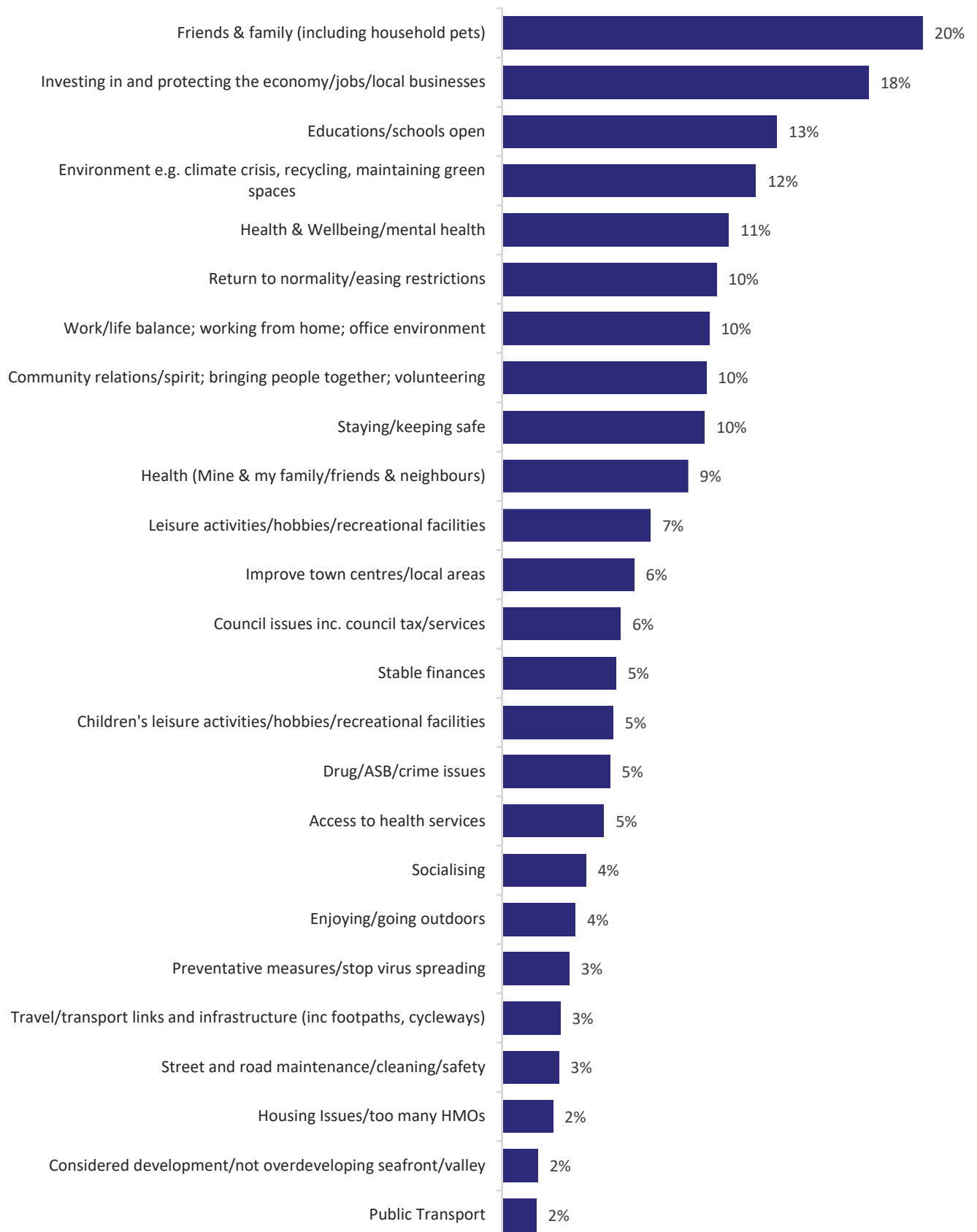
Theme	%
Friends & family (including household pets)	32%
Return to normality/easing restrictions	18%
Health (Mine & my family/friends & neighbours)	15%
Staying/keeping safe	14%
Educations/schools open	14%
Health & Wellbeing/mental health	13%
Investing in and protecting the economy/jobs/local businesses	10%
Leisure activities/hobbies/recreational facilities	10%
Community relations/spirit; bringing people together; volunteering	9%
Socialising	9%
Work/life balance; working from home; office environment	9%
Environment: e.g. climate crisis, recycling, maintaining green spaces	9%
Council issues inc. council tax/services	7%
Improve town centres/local areas	6%
Children's leisure activities/hobbies/recreational facilities	6%
Enjoying/going outdoors	6%
Drug/ASB/crime issues	6%
Access to health services	5%
Following a cautious approach	4%
Preventative measures/stop virus spreading	4%
Street and road maintenance/cleaning/safety	4%
Stable finances	3%
Travel/transport links and infrastructure (inc footpaths, cycleways)	2%
Housing Issues/too many HMOs	2%

Figure 8: What matters to you <u>for the future</u>? Base: All respondents who provided comments (1,391)
NB – themes raised by fewer than 2% of respondents have been excluded from charts

Theme	%
Friends & family (including household pets)	20%
Investing in and protecting the economy/jobs/local businesses	18%
Educations/schools open	13%
Environment e.g. climate crisis, recycling, maintaining green spaces	12%
Health & Wellbeing/mental health	11%
Return to normality/easing restrictions	10%
Work/life balance; working from home; office environment	10%
Community relations/spirit; bringing people together; volunteering	10%
Staying/keeping safe	10%
Health (Mine & my family/friends & neighbours)	9%
Leisure activities/hobbies/recreational facilities	7%
Improve town centres/local areas	6%
Council issues inc. council tax/services	6%
Stable finances	5%
Children's leisure activities/hobbies/recreational facilities	5%
Drug/ASB/crime issues	5%
Access to health services	5%
Socialising	4%
Enjoying/going outdoors	4%
Preventative measures/stop virus spreading	3%
Travel/transport links and infrastructure (inc footpaths, cycleways)	3%
Street and road maintenance/cleaning/safety	3%
Housing Issues/too many HMOs	2%
Considered development/not overdeveloping seafront/valley	2%
Public Transport	2%

3.27 Some themes were raised by smaller numbers of respondents (i.e. less than 2%), and these have not been included in the figures above for space reasons.

> For the first question (i.e. what matters **now**) these themes were: considered development of/not overdeveloping areas (1%); protecting local heritage/historical sites (1%); more, free or cheaper parking (1%); better public transport (1%); improving infrastructure and access for people with disabilities (1%); addressing issues around homelessness (<1%), and issues relating to flooding (<1%) – in addition, around 6% of respondents made other, more miscellaneous comments.

> For the second question (i.e. what matters **for the future**) they were: maintaining a cautious approach (1%), protecting local heritage/historical sites (1%); more, free or cheaper parking (1%); improving infrastructure and access for people with disabilities (1%); addressing issues around homelessness (<1%) and issues relating to flooding (<1%) – in addition, around 15% of respondents made other, more miscellaneous comments.

Sub-group differences

3.28 To better understand the priorities of particular demographic groups or different areas, Table 3 overleaf provides a summary of the themes that were most commonly raised by: different age groups (including younger people, defined here as aged under 25; and older people, defined as aged 50 or above), business owners and representatives, residents of the main towns in the county borough (i.e. Neath and Port Talbot), residents of the valleys/other parts of the county borough (i.e. the Afan, Amman, Dulais, Neath and Swansea Valleys), NPTCBC service users, NPTCBC members of staff, and respondents who work in the county borough.

3.29 Only those themes raised by at least a tenth of respondents who commented are shown in the table.

3.30 Overall, there was a good deal of commonality between the groups: friends and family were very common priorities, along with issues such as education/schooling and protecting the economy.

3.31 Younger people were somewhat more likely to mention issues such as leisure activities and facilities (including those intended for children), and socialising, while physical and mental health and wellbeing issues were important for the 50+ age group.

3.32 Business owners and representatives (perhaps understandably) placed highest importance on protecting the economy. They were also likely to mention environmental issues (including recycling and green area maintenance) and town centre or other local area improvements.

3.33 Several respondents who were members of staff working for NPTCBC made comments about work-life balance, and around home working etc.

Table 3: Things that matter now/in the future, by sub-group (only shows themes mentioned by <u>at least a tenth</u> of respondents in the sub-group)

Sub-group	Matters now	Matters for the future
Young people (aged under 25) (Base sizes: 313, 291)	• Friends/family (incl pets) (69%) • Education/schools open (31%) • Leisure/recreation facilities (20%) • Socialising (15%) • Children's leisure activities/facilities (13%)	• Friends & family (incl pets) (38%) • Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (31%) • Educations/schools open (27%) • Stable finances (12%) • Leisure/recreation facilities (10%) • Work/life balance; working from home; office environment (10%)
People aged 25-49 (Base sizes: 586, 567)	• Friends & family (incl pets) (26%) • Return to normality/easing restrictions (17%) • Health (mine & family/friends) (17%) • Wellbeing/mental health (16%) • Staying/keeping safe (14%) • Work/life balance; working from home; office environment (13%) • Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (13%) • Education/schools open (12%) • Environmental matters (11%) • Community relations/spirit; bringing people together (10%)	• Friends & family (incl pets) (21%) • Environmental matters (15%) • Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (13%) • Wellbeing/mental health (13%) • Education/schools open (13%) • Work/life balance; working from home; office environment (12%) • Staying/keeping safe (11%) • Community relations/spirit; bringing people together (10%)
Older people (aged 50+) (Base sizes: 500, 479)	• Return to normality/easing restrictions (27%) • Staying/keeping safe (20%) • Friends & family (incl pets) (17%) • Health (mine & family/friends) (17%) • Community relations/spirit; bringing people together (12%) • Wellbeing/mental health (11%) • Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (11%)	• Return to normality/easing restrictions (18%) • Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (15%) • Environmental matters (13%) • Staying/keeping safe (13%) • Community relations/spirit; bringing people together (12%) • Wellbeing/mental health (12%) • Health (mine & family/friends) (11%) • Friends & family (incl pets) (10%)
Own or run a business in NPT (Base sizes: 58, 56)	• Protecting/Investing economy/jobs/local business (28%) • Friends/family (incl pets) (19%) • Environmental matters (17%) • Drug/ASB/Crime (16%) • Improving town centres/local areas (14%) • Health (mine & family/friends) (14%)	• Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (25%) • Environmental matters (21%) • Council issues e.g. council tax/services (16%) • Community relations/spirit; bringing people together (16%) • Improve town centres/local areas (14%)

	• Enjoying/going outdoors (12%) • Education/schools open (12%) • Leisure/recreation facilities (12%) • Staying/keeping safe (12%) • Work/life balance; working from home; office environment (12%) • Community relations/spirit; bringing people together (10%)	• Staying/keeping safe (13%) • Leisure/recreation facilities (13%) • Return to normality/easing restrictions (11%) • Transport links and infrastructure (11%) • Education/schools open (11%) • Health (mine & family/friends) (11%)
Live in Neath or Port Talbot towns (Base sizes: 897, 850)	• Friends/family (incl pets) (33%) • Return to normality/easing restrictions (17%) • Health (mine & family/friends & neighbours) (16%) • Staying/keeping safe (14%) • Educations/schools open (14%) • Wellbeing/mental health (12%) • Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (10%) • Leisure activities/recreation facilities (10%)	• Friends/family (incl pets) (21%) • Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (18%) • Educations/schools open (14%) • Environmental matters (12%) • Staying/keeping safe (10%) • Wellbeing/mental health (10%) • Return to normality/easing restrictions (10%)
Live in the Valleys (Base sizes: 397, 383)	• Friends/family (incl pets) (32%) • Return to normality/easing restrictions (19%) • Educations/schools open (14%) • Community relations/spirit; bringing people together (13%) • Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (12%) • Wellbeing/mental health (12%) • Staying/keeping safe (11%) • Health (mine & family/friends) (11%) • Leisure/recreation facilities (11%) • Environmental matters (10%)	• Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (20%) • Friends/family (incl pets) (19%) • Education/schools open (15%) • Environmental matters (13%) • Community relations/spirit; bringing people together (11%) • Wellbeing/mental health (10%)
Use NPTCBC services (Base sizes: 273, 263)	• Friends & family (incl pets) (25%) • Return to normality/easing restrictions (23%) • Wellbeing/mental health (17%) • Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (15%) • Health (mine & family/friends) (15%) • Environmental matters (14%) • Community relations/spirit; bringing people together (14%) • Staying/keeping safe (13%) • Council issues inc. Council tax/services (11%) • Education/schools open (11%)	• Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (18%) • Environmental matters (18%) • Community relations/spirit; bringing people together (15%) • Friends & family (incl pets) (14%) • Return to normality/easing restrictions (13%) • Improve Town centre/local areas (12%) • Wellbeing/mental health (11%) • Staying/keeping safe (10%) • Education/schools open (10%) • Council issues inc. council tax/services (10%)

	• Enjoying/going outdoors (10%)	
Work for NPTCBC (Base sizes: 398, 387)	• Return to normality/easing restrictions (25%) • Friends & family (incl pets) (25%) • Staying/keeping safe (24%) • Work/life balance; working from home; office environment (24%) • Health (mine & family/friends) (21%) • Wellbeing/mental health (20%)	• Work/life balance; working from home; office environment (20%) • Return to normality/easing restrictions (18%) • Wellbeing/mental health (18%) • Friends & family (incl pets) (17%) • Health (mine & family/friends) (12%) • Staying/keeping safe (12%) • Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (10%)
Work in NPT (Base sizes: 236, 231)	• Friends & family (incl pets) (27%) • Staying/keeping safe (19%) • Return to normality/easing restrictions (19%) • Wellbeing/mental health (17%) • Health (mine & family/friends & neighbours) (17%) • Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (15%) • Environmental matters (14%) • Community relations/spirit; bringing people together (12%) • Enjoying/going outdoors (10%)	• Environmental matters (23%) • Protecting/Investing in the economy/jobs/local business (16%) • Friends & family (incl pets) (15%) • Return to normality/easing restrictions (12%) • Wellbeing/mental health (11%) • Community relations/spirit; bringing people together (11%) • Work/life balance; working from home; office environment (11%) • Staying/keeping safe (10%) • Education/schools open (10%)

Other comments/illustrative quotations

3.34 A few respondents spoke about a need to promote equality and fair treatment for all, as being among the things that mattered either now or in the future. Specifically, there was some discussion about how to improve the area for people who have disabilities:

> *The happiness of my child and that they get accepted for who they are and have the ability to express themselves freely without judgement or bullying.*
>
> *Need to eliminate racism and restore a spirit of mutual support in society. Need to educate our young people to have respect for themselves and ensure that violence against women is prevented*
>
> *Person centred housing options for disabled people. Further and higher education options for disabled people. Work opportunities for disabled people. Equity and equality for all.*
>
> *It's impossible for wheelchair users to go out during bin day as most people work, so can't collect their bins off the kerb side for a few hours…. Be more diverse, thoughtful and accepting of those who are less able.*

3.35 Some responses focused on facilities and opportunities for younger people, including those with additional needs and/or from low-income families:

> *It is important to me that in the future there are more activities for children and babies under the age of one for families on low income, and also that there are appropriate activities and places to go for teenagers aged 13 and up in my local area, such as a skate park or bike track. I would also like for there to be more educational opportunities for children under the age of 3 that can't attend a Flying Start programme due to not being in the catchment area and [whose families] cannot afford to send them to a crèche.*
>
> *Opportunities for our young people with additional needs.*

3.36 Some discussed investing in local infrastructure (including both improvements to existing roads and new active travel routes) and promoting the areas a tourist destination

> *Investing in local infrastructure (including active travel)*
>
> *I'd like to see more cycling infrastructure going to the Pontardawe area and increased funding to get rid of potholes that are stupidly deep.*
>
> *Better roads and resurfacing of the A465 as the pollution from this road is having a huge impact on residents' mental and physical health.*
>
> *All of the people coming to NPT for the beaches, walks etc. will still come now that the pandemic is easing. I hope NPTCBC recognise this and realise the important improvements required so that locals and tourists can enjoy what NPT has to offer. We need more parking, but not extortionate rates or ticket machines that break down. We need investment in the beachfront, Margam Park, Gnoll Park and Afan Argoed, more cafes, decent food options. Also [there are] no decent electric car facilities in the key attractions.*
>
> *I want this area to be community-led towards becoming an area of excellence, particularly for mountain biking and similar activities. Afan, Aberavon and the surrounding areas are a marketer's dream as a tourist destination. Where else are you in the mountains and still only 10 minutes from the beach?*

3.37 Some comments expressed concern about environmental issues, and/or concerns about perceived overdevelopment. While many supported green projects, there were also some reservations about projects like 'Y Bryn' windfarm.

> *The loss of green space around the county as it gives way to construction. See housing development at Tonna, Rhos and the proposed site at Aberavon beach.*
>
> *I would like to see large green projects such as the Swansea Lagoon go ahead. I do have very strong reservations about some renewable energy projects that are not so environmentally friendly. I am also becoming very concerned about the overcommitted drive for wind power. We cannot afford to put all eggs in one basket. Projects like Y Bryn being an example of this overcommitment.*

3.38 Small numbers of comments expressed support for the third sector and the maintenance of community assets. One respondent called for more frequent reviews of service user needs to address some of the burdens currently being faced by those working as carers:

> *In the future, I want to be a part of ensuring more funding to third sector services in NPT to not only continue the support for those who are struggling, but expand the support to include everybody who needs it.*
>
> *The ability to keep community assets open*
>
> *I feel strongly that care provisions are not being reviewed effectively to ensure the right staffing and [that] duration of calls are appropriate to meet identified need. As a result there is an over use of carers where they are not required. Functional needs change quite often particularly after recovery from illness, so regular reviews are needed …*

3.39 There were also a few comments opposed to the proposed 'superschool' in Pontardawe, as well as one comment about Welsh medium education:

> *It is also important for us to respond to the problem facing Welsh medium education locally. Because of the pandemic, many families experienced difficulties in maintaining Welsh-medium education for their children, [because] the parents were not Welsh speakers. As a result, many parents have decided to withdraw their children from Welsh-medium schools*

Changes in community spirit

Do you feel that there has been a change in the level of community spirit (e.g. the willingness and desire to participate in activities that promote/support a community) as a result of the COVID pandemic in your local area (estate, village, town or the county borough as a whole)?

3.40 More than half of respondents (54%) felt that there was more community spirit in their immediate neighbourhood as a result of the pandemic, while a further quarter (25%) felt it had stayed the same.

3.41 In general, respondents were more likely to observe a positive impact in their immediate neighbourhood, than they were across a wider area (that said, more than a third – 36% - felt community spirit had improved across the wider local area, and more than a quarter – 28% - felt it had improved across the whole county borough).

3.42 Close to a third (31%) were unable to answer about whether there had been a change in community spirit across the whole county borough.
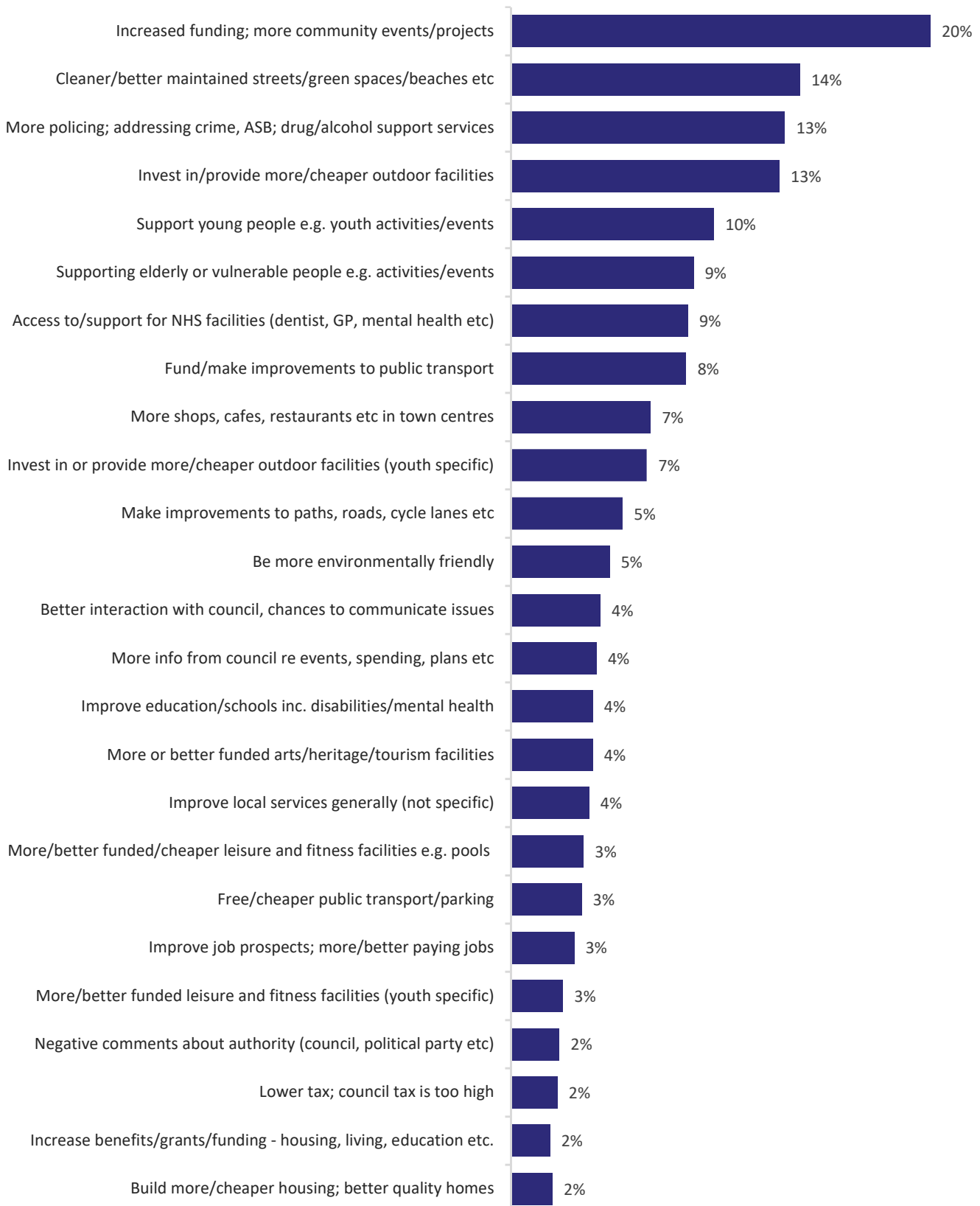
Figure 9: Summary of views around changes in levels of community spirit

Legend: ■ More community spirit ■ Stayed the same ■ Less community spirit ■ Don't know
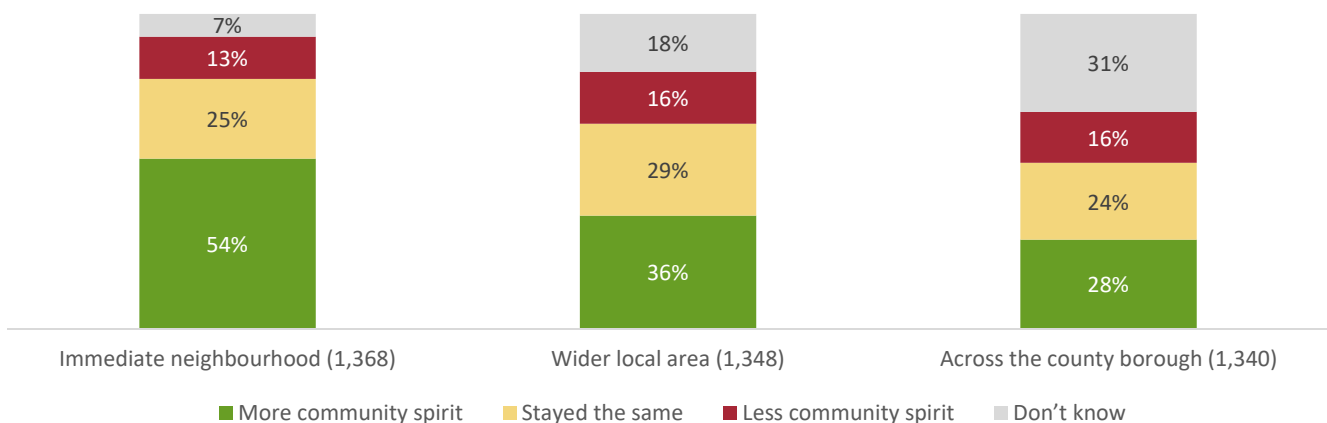
Ways to improve life for residents

What could be done in your community to improve life for residents (these could be physical things or services)?

3.43 When respondents were asked to identify things that could be done to improve life for residents, the most common themes included:

More funding for the community e.g. to support community events/projects (20%);

Cleaner and better-maintained streets, green spaces, beaches etc (including reductions in litter/fly tipping, and improvements in bin provision, maintenance etc) (14%);

Measures to address crime and ASB, including more policing, as well as extra support for drug and alcohol services (13%);

Investing in and/or providing more, or cheaper, outdoor facilities (13%);

More support for young people e.g. events and activities.

Figure 10: What could be done in your community to improve life for residents (these could be physical things or services)?
Base: All respondents who provided comments (1,117)
NB – themes raised by fewer than 2% of respondents have been excluded from charts

Theme	%
Increased funding; more community events/projects	20%
Cleaner/better maintained streets/green spaces/beaches etc	14%
More policing; addressing crime, ASB; drug/alcohol support services	13%
Invest in/provide more/cheaper outdoor facilities	13%
Support young people e.g. youth activities/events	10%
Supporting elderly or vulnerable people e.g. activities/events	9%
Access to/support for NHS facilities (dentist, GP, mental health etc)	9%
Fund/make improvements to public transport	8%
More shops, cafes, restaurants etc in town centres	7%
Invest in or provide more/cheaper outdoor facilities (youth specific)	7%
Make improvements to paths, roads, cycle lanes etc	5%
Be more environmentally friendly	5%
Better interaction with council, chances to communicate issues	4%
More info from council re events, spending, plans etc	4%
Improve education/schools inc. disabilities/mental health	4%
More or better funded arts/heritage/tourism facilities	4%
Improve local services generally (not specific)	4%
More/better funded/cheaper leisure and fitness facilities e.g. pools	3%
Free/cheaper public transport/parking	3%
Improve job prospects; more/better paying jobs	3%
More/better funded leisure and fitness facilities (youth specific)	3%
Negative comments about authority (council, political party etc)	2%
Lower tax; council tax is too high	2%
Increase benefits/grants/funding - housing, living, education etc.	2%
Build more/cheaper housing; better quality homes	2%

3.44   Other themes raised by fewer respondents (1% or fewer) were as follows: better facilities/access for people with disabilities (e.g. ramps etc) (1%); greater enforcement of Covid-19 prevention measures (1%)[4]; healthy eating/diets, with access to healthy food options, etc (1%); improved educational opportunities (1%); consideration of issues around equalities and protected characteristics e.g. ethnicity, gender, sexuality and so on (1%), and keeping loved ones safe {<1%}. In addition, around 10% of respondents made other, more miscellaneous comments.

Other comments/illustrative quotations

3.45   There was an emphasis on safeguarding the local area: its green spaces, heritage sites, public buildings and so on:

> *Maintain, improve and add to the accessible natural green spaces and nature reserves in the area - ensuring people can enjoy them, gain health benefits from them, learn and engage in, participate in volunteering and feel a stewardship for [them]. Generally increase the nature value of all public owned land and buildings.*
>
> *Places look after people as much as people look after places… I really want the community in Neath to be able to discover their heritage; Covid has led to people wanting to discover their past. A heritage and art centre must be built. NPTCBC holds many artefacts and works of art. Why aren't these displayed to improve people's lives? This place would improve wellness, mental and physical health. Heritage centres are places of peacefulness and serenity, yet they stimulate as well.*
>
> *Have lots of environmental and rewilding projects, address our heritage.*
>
> *Bins in parks being emptied more often, more bins [for] recycling, planting more trees and free help for people to grow their own*

3.46   There was a further emphasis on activities for young people, as well as extending 'Flying Start' for small children:

> *A better park for the older children. My children are 12 and 9 and there is very little to do in the park on our estate. We need sports clubs and activities to keep our children healthy.*
>
> *Flying start catchment area to be updated, to be more inclusive as so many children are missing out on this amazing service.*
>
> *Support youth services in the Amman Valley.*

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[4] Though it should also be noted that a couple of respondents advocated the opposite i.e. ending Covid prevention measures

3.47   Some respondents' comments related to aspects of community safety (e.g. traffic calming measures, anti-crime measures etc):

> *Speed bumps or other traffic calming measures on Bryngurnos Street, Bryn.*
>
> *Put a zebra crossing on Commercial Road, Taibach to make it safer and easier to cross the road and to help slow down traffic. This is a much-needed safety measure and will help support our local shops by making them more accessible it would be good to see police make an occasional appearance! CCTV in areas known to be regular dumping grounds for tipping and to keep our lanes safe during the dark nights.*
>
> *Deal decisively with anti-social behaviour*

3.48   There was support for helping businesses (including measures that might be outside the council's remit e.g. reducing taxes and business rates), while some advocated investing in education and skills to help strengthen the local economy and alleviate social issues:

> *More grants to rebuild. Skilled assistance with technical tasks (planning, development, tourism). Assistance to train people with a view to giving them future jobs (apprentice work, training schemes).*
>
> *Make greater use of school buildings during half term and holiday closures, one of the most effective ways to get somebody out of poverty is education. Use empty buildings to support the most vulnerable.*

3.49   There was some support for improving infrastructure, including roads and active travel, while others called for investment in regeneration projects and renewable energies:

> *Consider supporting the provision of an active travel route down from the Amman valley to Pontardawe. Move forward with the proposals for Coalfield Regeneration Fund business units on the old washery site… ensure appropriate conditions on any planning applications relating to the de registered common land to ensure community issues are dealt with.*
>
> *Stop asset stripping the valley, improve transport links (including road widening and the depleted bus service), bring the existing roads and pathways up to an acceptable standard for users, take a long-term view for strategic improvements, make better use of the natural resources, find an effective way to use the water in the valley to generate electricity…*

3.50   There was some support for a community-led approach:

> *Our community of Cwmavon has been a leading force during the pandemic and I hope this can be sustained.*
>
> *I wish people would look after 'their patch' more and take responsibility for the way things look - instead of waiting for 'the council' to sort things out…let's appreciate what we have and make the most of it.*