Ageing Well in Bath & North East Somerset
2024 Community Survey Report

Ageing Well
BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET

Bath & North East Somerset
age UK

ST JOHN'S FOUNDATION EST. 1174

3SG
B&NES 3rd Sector Group

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1. Introduction & The WHO Age-Friendly Communities Framework

The 2024 Ageing Well Survey was conducted to gather the views of residents aged 55 and over in Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES). It explored key areas such as housing, transport, social inclusion, and access to services, aligning with the World Health Organisation's (WHO) Age-Friendly Communities framework. This report analyses the findings, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement in fostering healthy and active ageing.

The survey sampled the estimated 64,000 residents aged 55+ in B&NES in 2024. To contextualise the results, 10% of respondents agreeing with a statement equates to roughly 6,400 residents in this age group sharing that view.

Note: Graph labels are shortened versions of the survey questions. For a full copy of the questionnaire, please email ageingwell@ageukbanes.co.uk.

The WHO initiative focuses on eight key domains:

1. **Outdoor Spaces and Buildings**
2. **Transportation**
3. **Housing**
4. **Social Participation**
5. **Respect and Social Inclusion**
6. **Civic Participation and Employment**
7. **Communication and Information**
8. **Community Support and Health Services**

With Thanks to You…

At Ageing Well Bath & North East Somerset, we're committed to ensuring that older adults can live independently, safely, and with dignity as they age. This report serves as an initial insight into the results of our 2024 Community Survey, to be followed by a lengthier and more in-depth 'State of Ageing' Report and launch of the B&NES Older People's Voice forum in 2025.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all our partners, local organisations, and community groups who helped share the Ageing Well B&NES 2024 Community Survey across Bath & North East Somerset. Your support was instrumental in reaching our older communities and gathering valuable insights, resulting in 1,384 responses from a mixture of online, by post, and in-person events.
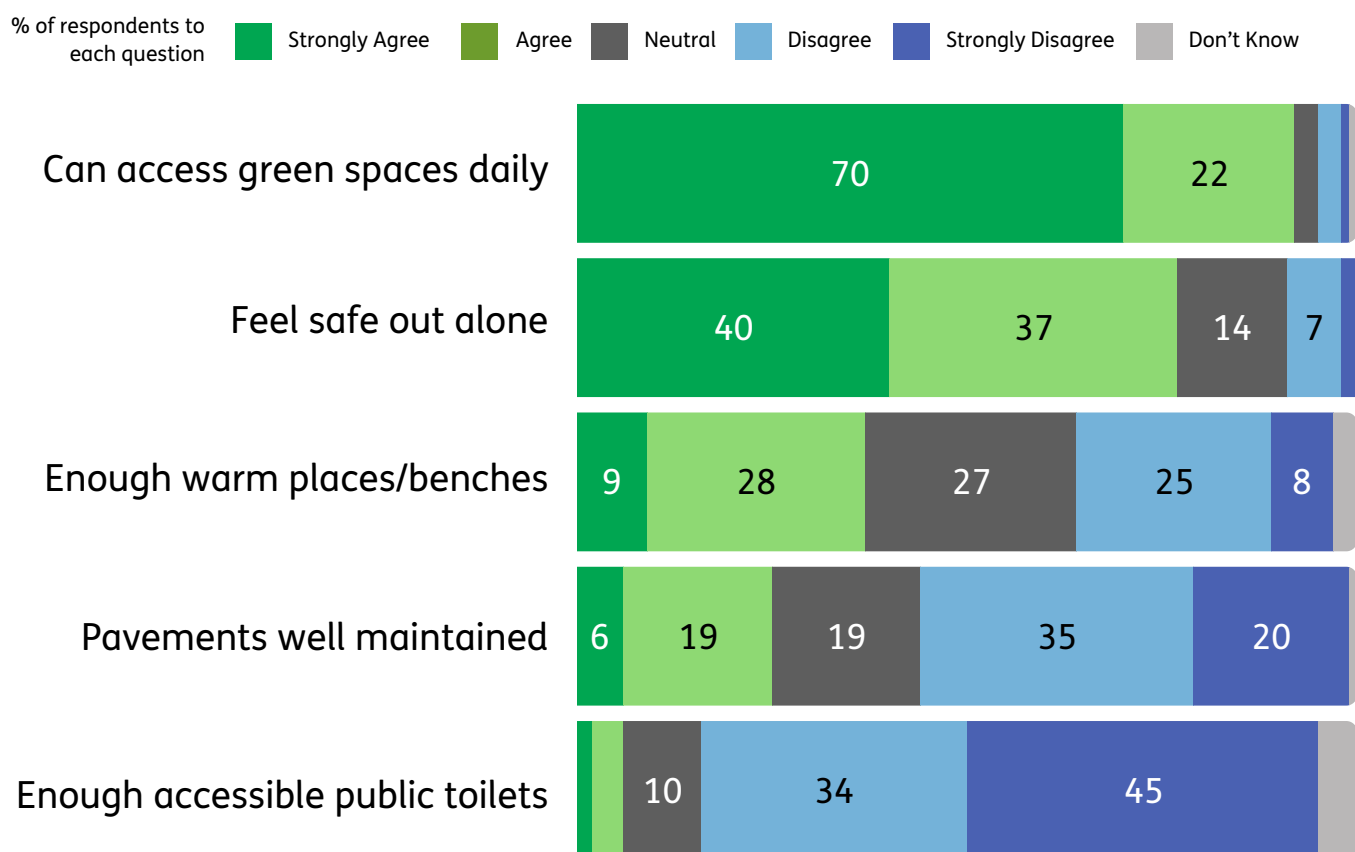
A special thank you goes to the many residents who took the time to respond. Your voices and perspectives are not only at the core of this report, but of all the work we do, guiding us towards a more age-friendly community for all who live in our county.

For more information contact the Ageing Well Bath & North East Somerset team at ageingwell@ageukbanes.co.uk or 01225 466135

THANK YOU!

2. Results by WHO Domain
2.1 Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

% of respondents to each question

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Don't Know

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Can access green spaces daily	70	22				
Feel safe out alone	40	37	14	7		
Enough warm places/benches	9	28	27	25	8	
Pavements well maintained	6	19	19	35	20	
Enough accessible public toilets			10	34	45	

For reasons of space, graphs don't show numbers, if number is 5(%) or less

1. All chart labels in this report present summarised response options. For example, the chart above uses the label "Can access green spaces daily" to summarise the survey question: "I am able to access a green space or park at least once a day."

▶ **92% of respondents strongly agree that they can access green spaces or parks daily. This was the single item in the survey attracting the highest levels of agreement.**

▶ **A large majority feel safe when out and about alone.**

▶ **In contrast, access to public toilets is the single issue attracting lowest 'levels of satisfaction' in the entire survey.**

▶ **Condition of pavements is an issue with very low levels of satisfaction.**

2.1 Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

These percentages projected onto the older population of B&NES mean...

50,000 think there are not enough accessible public toilets.

35,000 think pavements are not well maintained.

5,000 don't feel safe when out alone.

21,000 would like more warm spaces, benches etc to rest.

3,000 are unable to access a green space or park daily.

Although not explicitly addressed in the survey, many respondents highlighted significant challenges in accessing outdoor spaces and amenities by car in their free-text responses. These included issues with road schemes, roadworks, road conditions, and parking.

Further Analysis
Councils regularly measure resident satisfaction with pavements and ease of access to various amenities, in a more detailed way. These results of the Ageing Well B&NES 2024 Community Survey suggest the need for a deeper analysis of this data, including trends over time and comparisons with other regions.

Qualitative Insights

Pavements

In their free text answers, respondents pointed out different aspects of pavements that concern them. The most commonly raised issue is poor maintenance making them hard to use and, in some cases, dangerous. Also the dangers of having to share pavements with fast-moving vehicles. As well as this people wanted to see an environment that promotes active travel.

"Many footpaths and pavements need to be repaired as they are a tripping hazard for older people"

"It would be helpful if pavements were pedestrian only and remained free of cyclists, scooters and other fast moving projectiles that can startle and hurt slower moving infirm and older pedestrians"

"I would love to live somewhere with good provision for walking and cycling (as active transport). I know from visits abroad that this can dramatically transform people's lives, including into late old age and disability. Sadly locally cycling and walking are seen as leisure activities not transport options. Cars are always prioritised"

A few respondents also highlighted additional considerations, including hedge cutting, the installation of benches, and improved lighting to enhance pedestrian accessibility and safety.

Public Toilets

As well as the low levels of satisfaction, toilets was one of the most frequently mentioned problems in free text responses. There was less variation here, with the simple demand for more, sometimes pointing out how the lack of them disproportionately affects older people:

"Lack of toilet facilities in towns. Ageing brings on lack of control, as you will find out"

"Public toilets are a big priority for me due to a medical condition that causes IBS. There are not enough around Bath accessible when shops and cafes are closed. All business should allow access to non-customers"

Key Takeaways

While access to outdoor green spaces is generally very good, safety concerns related to pavements and provision of public toilets are key priorities for respondents.

2.2 Transport

% of respondents to each question

Legend: ■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Don't Know

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Public transport is affordable	29	39	17	6		5
Easy to access & navigate public transport	18	37	15	15	10	
Bus stops are safe, clean & accessible	7	28	29	19	10	8
Frequent & reliable public transport options	9	24	20	24	18	6
Enough parking close to services and shops		20	23	28	16	9
Enough accessible parking close to services and shops		14	28	23	14	18
I rely on public transport	8	9	15	34	31	

▶ **Affordability is an issue for only 10% of respondents.**

▶ **Most respondents find it easy to access and navigate public transport with only 25% disagreeing.**

▶ **Opinions are split on the state of the bus stops with about the same number satisfied as dissatisfied.**

▶ **A large minority (42%) think that buses are not frequent and reliable.**

▶ **Parking is more salient as a problem, with clear margins dissatisfied that there are not enough parking spaces (and accessible spaces). About 5% think there needs to be more accessible spaces but do not think there need to be more standard parking spaces.**

2.2 Transport

These percentages projected onto the older population of B&NES mean...

11,000 older people rely on public transport in their day-to-day life.

26,000 aren't satisfied with the frequency and reliability of public transport.

18,000 aren't satisfied with the state of bus stops.

16,000 don't find it easy to use public transport.

6,000 older people don't find public transport affordable.

28,000 older people don't think there are enough parking spaces close to services and shops.

24,000 don't think there are enough accessible parking spaces close to services and shops.

About 3,000 older people feel there are enough standard spaces but not enough accessible spaces.

Transport needs are complex and vary greatly among respondents due to personal factors like location, disability status, and other demographics. This diversity makes summarising the issues challenging. Recognising its importance, we will conduct further analysis in our 2025 State of Ageing Report.

Qualitative Insights

In the survey as a whole, the top three issues spontaneously raised by respondents are all transport-related. They account for a third of all comments made, and the tone of many of them suggests deep dissatisfaction. These can be broken down into these main categories, in order of how often raised:

Bus Service and Infrastructure

"I live rurally and public transport is beyond a joke. The bus service is very poor, I don't drive due to a disability and I am unable to use public transport to go anywhere. It is an absolute disgrace"

"Too many bus stops with no seating"

"Bus services in the evenings and on Sundays are frankly inadequate. Taxi service is very unreliable. Those of us living up hills will be driven out of our homes by these issues"

"...in Bath, buses are often cancelled and then over full"

"There is now no service through our village….which vastly limits my ability to do anything or get anywhere as I am unable to walk to the bus stops on the outer edges of the village"

Driving – Active Travel Schemes and Parking

"[the Council] are destroying the fabric of our local society by blocking off roads in Bath to drivers. They want everyone to use bicycles. This is not possible for the vast majority of Bath residents, due to the hills we mostly live on, not everyone is fit enough or young enough to ride a bike"

"Central Bath is nightmare to get around if you have mobility/ disabilities. Rings steel [security bollards] if you rely on car with blue badge"
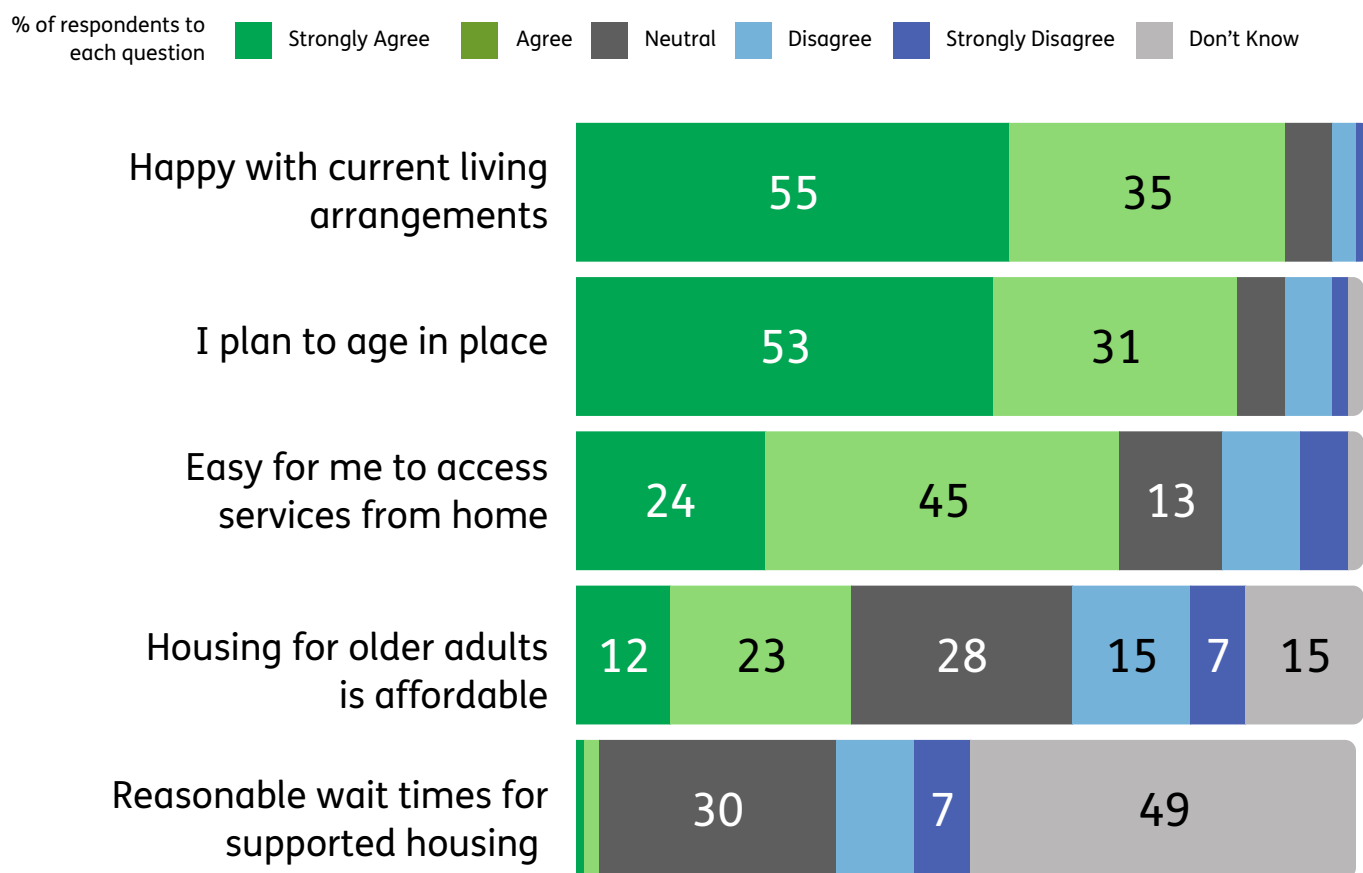
"Restricted parking especially on a Sunday is not balanced by frequent public transport"

"There are not enough blue badge parking spaces available in smaller towns. They are very often in one car park and then a long walk is required to reach your destination ie shops and services"

Key Takeaways

Significant improvements to bus services, especially in rural areas, could greatly enhance the lives of older adults. However, the issue is complex, requiring cross-sector solutions that account for all modes of transport and life stages. Respondents' needs vary, with some solutions conflicting, highlighting the need for strategic regional or national investment and reform.

2.3 Housing

% of respondents to each question

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Don't Know

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Happy with current living arrangements	55	35				
I plan to age in place	53	31				
Easy for me to access services from home	24	45	13			
Housing for older adults is affordable	12	23	28	15	7	15
Reasonable wait times for supported housing			30	7		49

▶ **90% of respondents are happy with their current housing situation, and only 4% unhappy. And a similar large majority want to age in their current home.**

▶ **Access to services and amenities from home is easy for most respondents.**

▶ **Affordability is more of an issue with 22% of respondents saying 'housing for older adults' is not affordable.**

▶ **The only housing issue where dissatisfaction outweighs satisfaction is the waiting times for supported housing, such as assisted living. However, it is important to note that many respondents were unable to provide a definitive answer, with a high proportion of "don't know" and neutral responses.**

2.3 Housing

These percentages projected onto the older population of B&NES mean...

10,000 older people do not find it easy to access services (e.g. such as GP, dentist, supermarkets, and hairdressers) from their home.

14,000 find housing for older adults unaffordable.

11,000 think the waiting times for housing that provides support to older adults are unreasonable.

Further Analysis:

Although exact comparison is not possible, according to census data, the respondent profile is similar to the older population of B&NES in terms of the percentage owning their own home.

Qualitative Insights
Housing

While most respondents are satisfied with their housing arrangements, the free text responses suggest that, for many older people, the main problem is at the level of housing policy: the lack of housebuilding or the types of housing that is being built.

"Housing, suitable for independent older people who wish to downsize from a large family home but do not require or want to be in a care home, is badly needed. This should be part of housing development which ensures a mix of age groups, with a choice of sizes & gardens"

"Housing - lack of bungalow in new builds"

"In the future we may want independent living with support. e.g. flat(s) with available and meals, laundry, etc. None appears in the area!"

"We can't keep building housing when we don't have the infrastructure to support them"

Housing: Bath Specific

Many comments suggest a specific set of issues for residents of Bath city especially the perception that development in Bath caters to the needs of the rich and to students rather than more widely to older people.
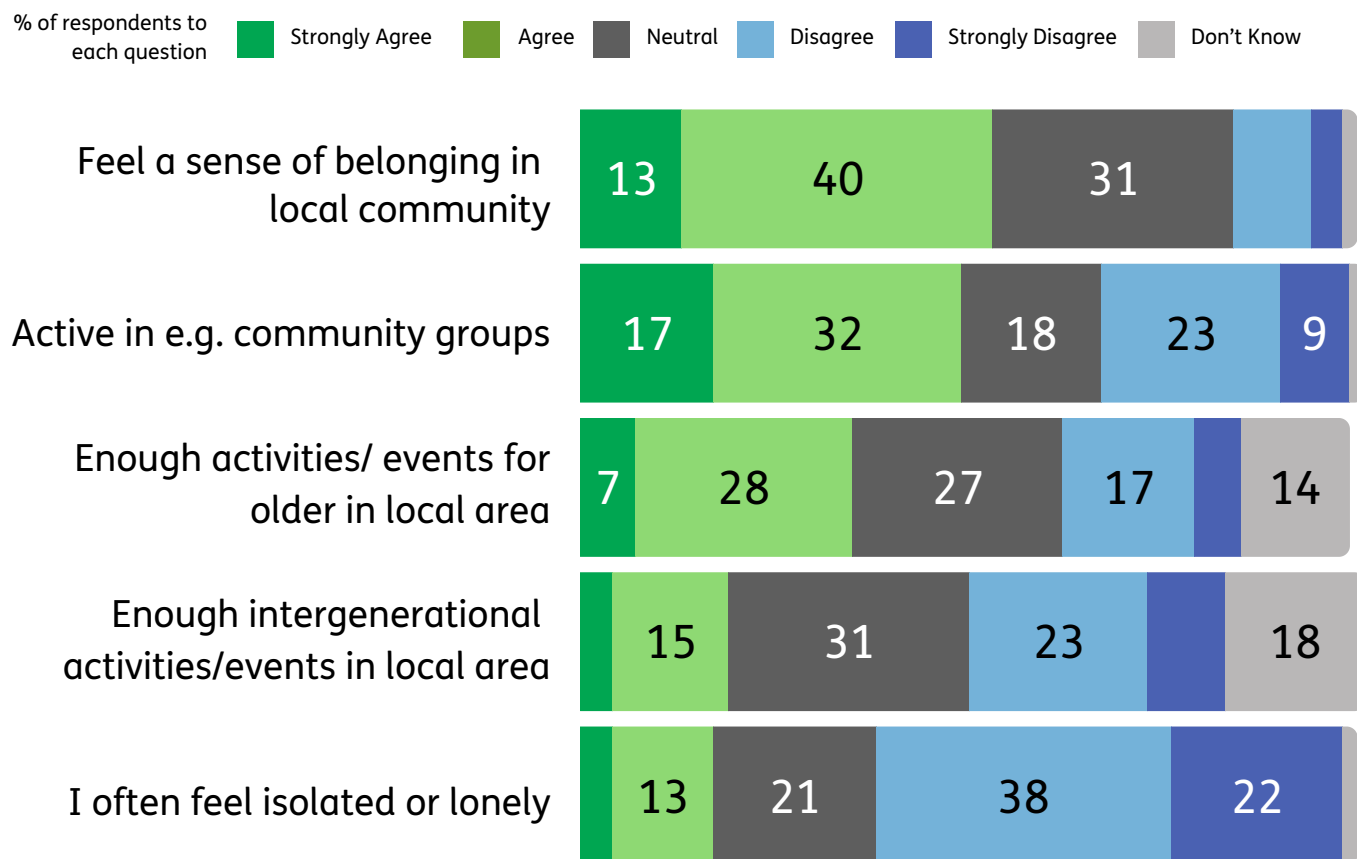
"I am due to retire in 6 and a half years and am extremely worried about my housing situation. I feel this city has gone way too far over the threshold with any new developments being totally unaffordable high end or for the purpose of student housing"

"We are fortunate to live in such a beautiful city as Bath. Unfortunately, it has become a city focused on physically able people who have the means to pay for exorbitant housing prices"

Key Takeaways

The main thrust of opinion was in favour of a housing policy that would provide more mixed development and a greater variety of homes suitable for older people. As the planning authority, respondents look to the Council for solutions.

2.4 Social Participation

% of respondents to each question

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Don't Know

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Feel a sense of belonging in local community	13	40	31			
Active in e.g. community groups	17	32	18	23	9	
Enough activities/ events for older in local area	7	28	27	17		14
Enough intergenerational activities/events in local area		15	31	23		18
I often feel isolated or lonely		13	21	38	22	

▶ The large proportion of neutral responses to this theme is difficult to interpret but the clearest finding here is that 60% do not feel isolated/lonely versus 17% saying they do.

▶ 53% of respondents feel a sense of belonging to their local community, with 14% disagreeing.

▶ Around half are active in community groups. More respondents think that there are enough affordable activities than do not.

▶ There appears to be unmet demand for intergenerational activities: one in three respondents think there is not enough.

▶ Levels of agreement are somewhat higher among older respondents for these questions (except for active membership of groups).

2.4 Social Participation

These percentages projected onto the older population of B&NES mean...

20,000 older people do not think there are enough intergenerational activities or events.

15,000 think there are not enough available and affordable activities or events specifically for older people in their local area.

11,000 often feel isolated or lonely.

Further Analysis:

Social participation is a challenge for significant minorities of respondents, with around one in fifteen experiencing acute difficulties. Those living alone report higher levels of isolation compared to those living with a family or partner.

While the sample may over-represent individuals living alone, potentially inflating estimates of social isolation, it may also under-represent the most isolated individuals who lacked access to the survey unless delivered directly to their residence; something we hope to be able to fund in future iterations of this survey.

Qualitative Insights

Social Participation

"I don't see many people regularly. It's hard to feel connected when you don't have family nearby"

I have answered as requested personally regarding my very local area (Newbridge) which I am very happy with and I know I am lucky. However many of the topics are affected by national policies and these are the ones I feel matter most for older people"
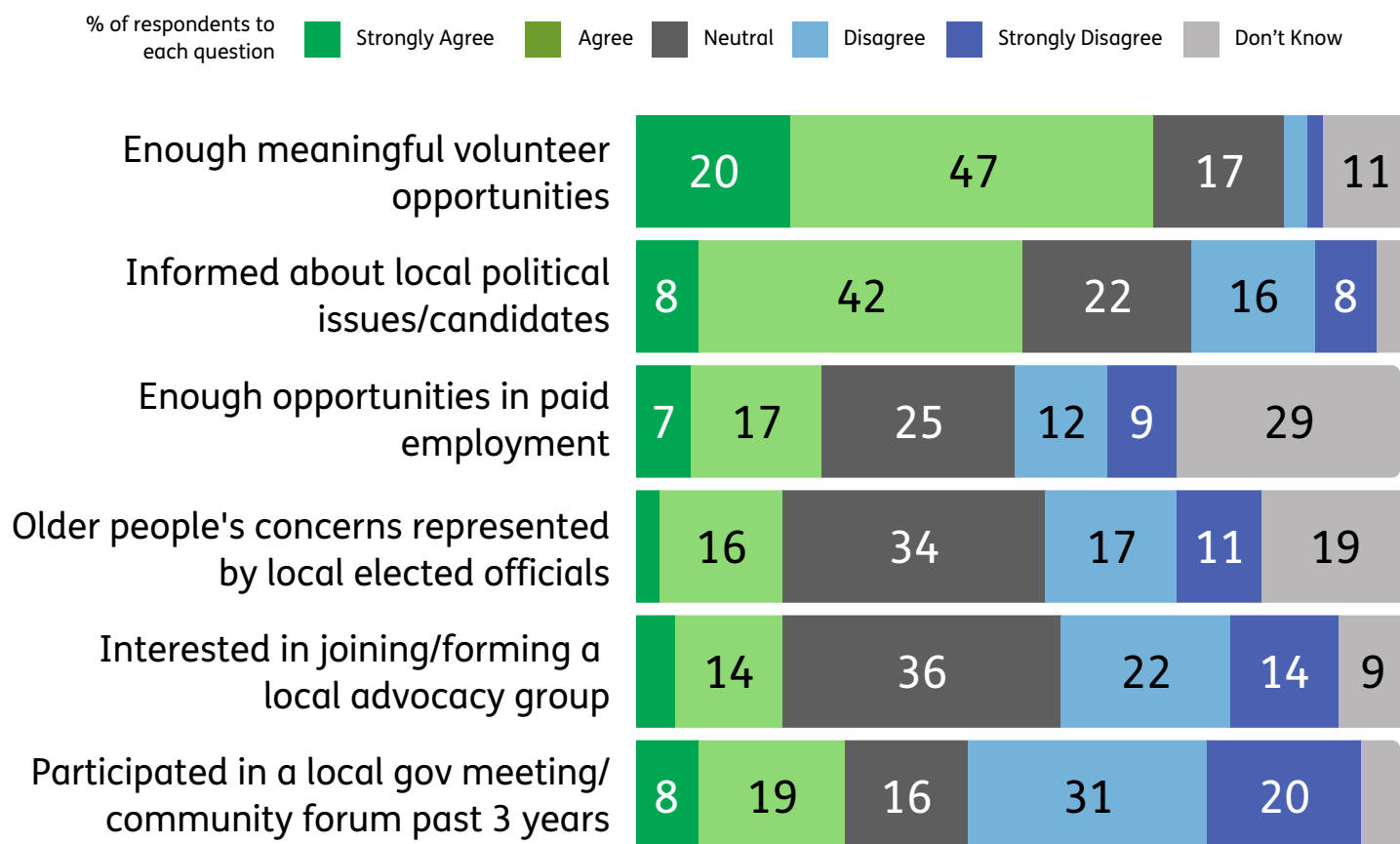
"Having lived in Saltford for 43 years I feel privileged to have had the benefits of a thriving community hub, none more so than in Covid"

"There aren't many social activities that interest me or are easy to get to"

Key Takeaways

There is a need for targeting programmes that reduce social isolation to the relative minority for whom it is a more serious problem. Expanding accessible and engaging activities for older adults could help foster a greater sense of belonging.

2.5 Civic Participation and Employment

% of respondents to each question | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree** | **Neutral** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** | **Don't Know**

Enough meaningful volunteer opportunities
20 | 47 | 17 | | | 11

Informed about local political issues/candidates
8 | 42 | 22 | 16 | 8 |

Enough opportunities in paid employment
7 | 17 | 25 | 12 | 9 | 29

Older people's concerns represented by local elected officials
16 | 34 | 17 | 11 | 19

Interested in joining/forming a local advocacy group
14 | 36 | 22 | 14 | 9

Participated in a local gov meeting/ community forum past 3 years
8 | 19 | 16 | 31 | 20

▶ **Only 5% feel there are not enough meaningful volunteering opportunities.**

▶ **There is more unmet demand for paid work, with 21% feeling that they lack opportunities.**

▶ **The only opinion measure with more disagreement than agreement is whether local elected officials represent older people effectively. However, over half of respondents gave no substantive response, indicating this issue may not be a significant concern for the majority.**

▶ **Around one in five said they 'would be interested' in participating in a local advocacy group for older people.**

2.5 Civic Participation and Employment

These percentages projected onto the older population of B&NES mean...

18,000 older people do not think the concerns and priorities of older people are effectively represented by local elected officials.

15,000 do not feel informed enough about local political issues and candidates.

12,000 would be interested in joining or forming a group advocating for the interests of older adults within my local community and/or local area.

14,000 would like more opportunities for paid employment and 4,000 don't think there are enough meaningful voluntary opportunities.

Further Analysis

In keeping with the findings on social participation (previous Section 2.4), there are large minorities choosing the neutral and don't know options, suggesting that this does not appear to be a hot-button issue for most respondents.

Qualitative Insights

Feeling Heard

Civic participation, while not a top-tier concern like transport or housing, is still an important issue for a minority of respondents. The clearest need expressed in this area is for local elected officials to give greater consideration to older people's needs and perspectives.

This was mentioned spontaneously by respondents, often framed in the context of broader, more pressing concerns. These include access to local amenities, public transport services like buses, and housing policies. The recurring mention of this issue suggests that many respondents see it as a critical factor in addressing the wider challenges they face in their daily lives.

"I feel that older people are not fully listened to by local authorities"

"The local Council seems to care nothing for older and less able people. It is fixated with bikes, roadblocks and making life difficult and expensive"

"B&NES are building unwanted housing for non-B&NES residents in Bath centre causing social and ageist discrimination. Moving older generation to villages with no support and transport away from known areas and friends"

Employment

A small number of respondents mentioned, without prompting, the lack of employment options that are appropriate for their current stage of life. These comments may highlight a gap in opportunities tailored to the needs and circumstances of older adults, such as flexible hours, part-time roles, or positions that accommodate health or caregiving responsibilities.

"I would like to continue working part-time, but there aren't many jobs suited to older people"
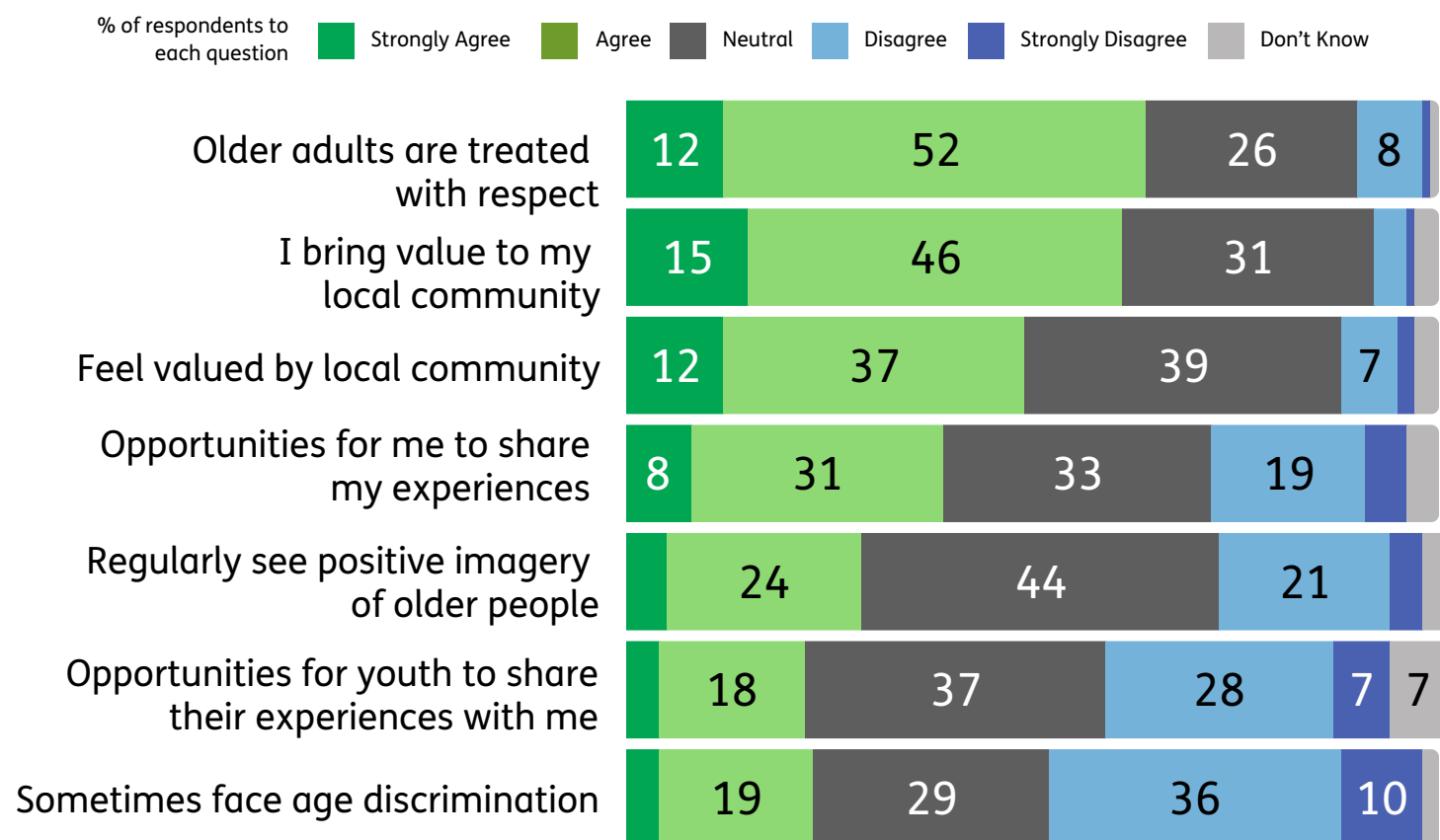
"Volunteering gives me purpose, but I wish there were more chances to use my skills in paid work"

Key Takeaways

Civic participation is not a hot-button issue, though there appears to be an appetite for better representation of older people's needs in local government thinking, and a need for more employment opportunities suited to older people.

2.6 Respect and Social Inclusion

% of respondents to each question

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Don't Know

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Older adults are treated with respect	12	52	26	8		
I bring value to my local community	15	46	31			
Feel valued by local community	12	37	39	7		
Opportunities for me to share my experiences	8	31	33	19		
Regularly see positive imagery of older people		24	44	21		
Opportunities for youth to share their experiences with me		18	37	28	7	7
Sometimes face age discrimination		19	29	36	10	

▶ **Large majorities feel valued and treated with respect.**

▶ **However, around 25% sometimes face age-discrimination, and a similar percentage feel the imagery of old people in media is not positive.**

▶ **35% disagree that there are opportunities for intergenerational exchanges, compared to 22% agreeing.**

▶ **Conversely, more respondents agree there are opportunities to share their experience than disagree.**

▶ **Levels of agreement are higher among older respondents except for 'facing age discrimination' and 'bring value to community', where agreement decreases with rising age.**

2.5 Civic Participation and Employment

These percentages projected onto the older population of B&NES mean...

22,000 older people do not think there are opportunities for younger generations to share their experiences, knowledge, and expertise with older people.

16,000 do not regularly see positive imagery of older people (e.g. in publications).

15,000 don't think there are opportunities to share their experiences, knowledge, and expertise with others.

15,000 sometimes face discrimination because of their age.

Further Analysis:

A considerable number of respondents selected neutral or "don't know" options when asked about these issues, indicating a lack of strong opinions or significant awareness for many.

Additionally, a notable proportion chose "agree," suggesting that there is no pervasive or deeply felt dissatisfaction. While some individuals may have specific concerns, the overall response pattern implies that these issues do not resonate as major or urgent problems for the majority of respondents, reflecting a general sense of ambivalence or mild approval in these areas.

Qualitative Insights

Diversity of Age Groups

There was more discussion of the definition of 'older people' as being 55 and older. Several comments questioned whether this is an operationally useful way of understanding older people's needs, as it covers such a range of life stages, from fully active, full time employed to people in nursing care. This issue ranks in the top ten, above isolation and safety, and is likely more widespread in the 55+ population due to the sample under-representing those aged 55-64

"I'm 57 and work full time. I have completed this survey but feel most questions directed at much older people who are retired"

"I feel there is focus on organising activities for older, retired people but not for people my age who are still working full time"

"There seems to be a lot going on but it assumes that we are all retired. As the State Pension age has been raised to 67 we are still working full time so more evening courses are required"

"I hate being thought of as older at 55, how rude! This made me feel more written off and forgotten about than anything else!"

"There are nowhere near enough opportunities for people of my age who still in full time employment to access the job exercise classes such as yoga and Pilates during the evenings or weekends. Only fully retired seniors can access these, but people in our situation require these arguably more"

Experiences of Discrimination

Many of the comments on other issues reveal feelings of being ignored or indirectly disrespected, for example in transport planning (See Section 2.2). Outright discrimination (or validation) as an older person was only occasionally raised in spontaneous comment.

"As an older resident my views are largely ignored or down-played as a sign of old-age"

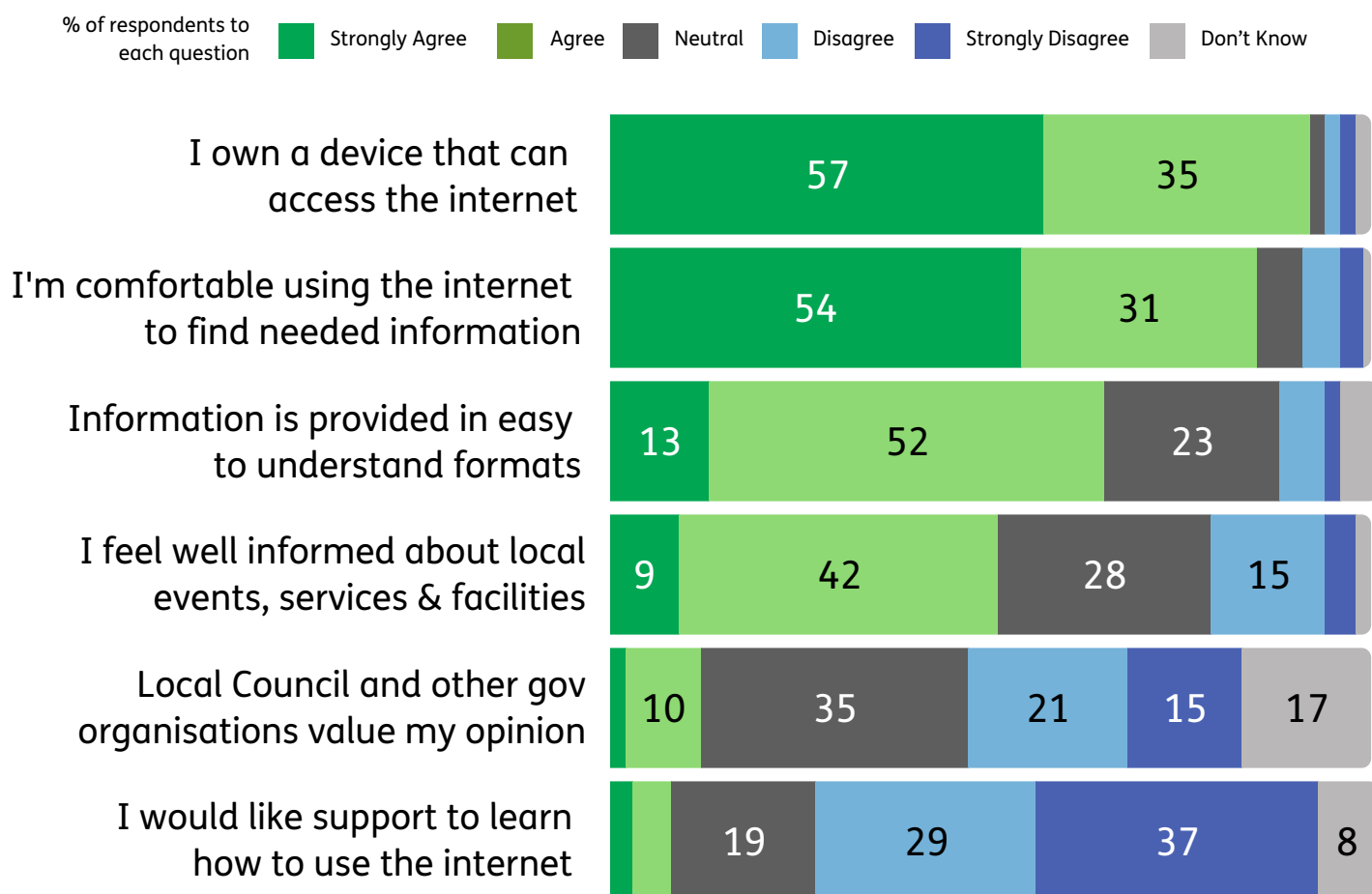*"I am 66 and already am starting to feel stereotyped"*

Key Takeaways

Efforts to increase intergenerational activities and promote positive representations of older adults in local media could help improve respect and inclusion.

Direct ageism is an issue for some, though generally it is felt to manifest as a lack of sufficient, separate, consideration from public service providers.

While '55 and over' may be a good (or the best) definition of older people for Ageing Well initiatives like this, it would benefit from more explicit clarification, acknowledging the vast differences between the age ranges covered by Ageing Well and Age Friendly initiatives. Planning activities need to consider more deeply that this population is highly segmented in terms of income-source, energy levels, spare time, caring responsibilities, digital confidence and access, and needs generally.

2.7 Communication and Information

% of respondents to each question

■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Don't Know

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
I own a device that can access the internet	57	35				
I'm comfortable using the internet to find needed information	54	31				
Information is provided in easy to understand formats	13	52	23			
I feel well informed about local events, services & facilities	9	42	28	15		
Local Council and other gov organisations value my opinion	10	35	21	15	17	
I would like support to learn how to use the internet		19	29	37	8	

▶ **Respondents show high levels of access to an internet-capable device.**

▶ **There are high levels of digital confidence. This confidence decreases with age, but not steadily; confidence drops below 80% only for the 80+ age groups. Consequently, demand for digital support is wanted by less than 10% of respondents.**

▶ **51% of respondents feel well informed about local services etc, vs 19% (13,000) who do not.**

▶ **36% feel government does not value their opinion vs 12% who do.**

2.7 Communication and Information

These percentages projected onto the older population of B&NES mean...

23,000 older people do not think the local Council and other government organisations value their opinion.

13,000 do not feel well informed about events, services, and facilities within their local area.

2,000 don't have an internet-capable device.

5,000 are not comfortable using the internet to find information that they need.

5,000 would like support to learn how to use the internet to find information

Qualitative Insights

Digital

For respondents lacking digital confidence, the issue is typically linked to specific services rather than a general discomfort with technology. A smaller group expressed concerns about online security, focusing on risks like fraud or data breaches. These varied challenges highlight the need for tailored solutions addressing both skills and safety.

Caveat: This survey may have missed the voices of the most isolated individuals, who could only be reached via a paper survey delivered to their residence. We aim to address this in the next survey, subject to funding.

"Since we lost our local Post Office I walk two miles there and back to the nearest Post Office facility in a shop. Using the Royal Mail parcel service online is rather complicated"

"I am unable to access the library website since the new system was introduced the librarian is also unable to help me with that, this has left me deprived of a major element of my life, this should be sorted as a matter of urgency"

"I do no financial transactions on line and find I am increasingly excluded e.g. no coach station for purchasing tickets in person"

"Absolute problem paying for parking - I will not put my banking details on my mobile phone for security reasons"

Information

This was occasionally raised spontaneously in a general way. Occasional comments made specific suggestions, focusing on the role of the Council

"Little or no communication for the elderly, very frustrating and feeing of not being wanted"

"The Council need to ensure that information to ensure that posters, leaflets etc are printed in bold larger print for people who are visually impaired"

"Could libraries become hubs for accessing services and providing information on local activities?"
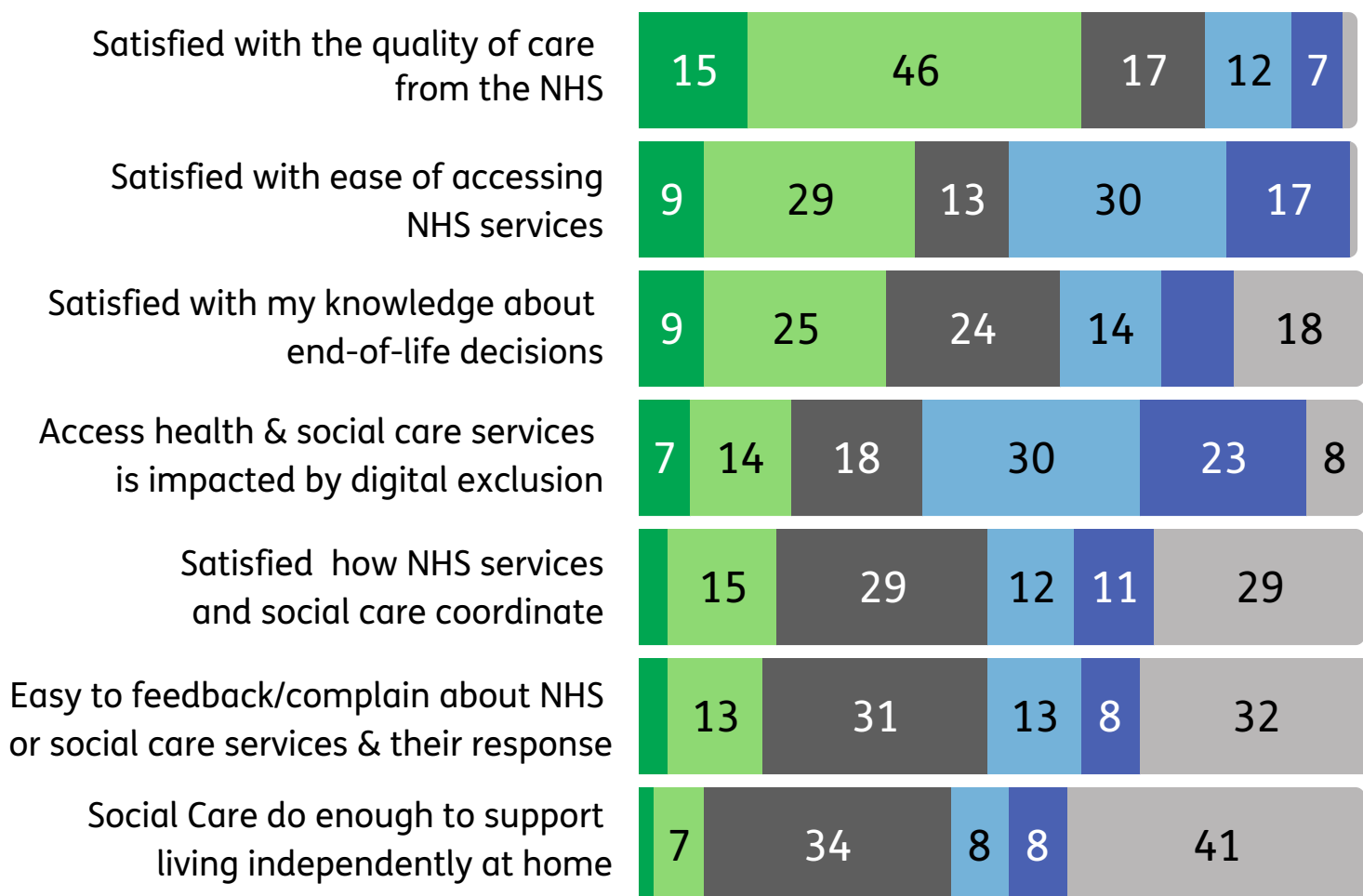
Key Takeaways

Lack of digital skills appears to be a widespread issue primarily among those over 80. Most respondents focused on specific digital services being difficult to use or potentially insecure, rather than expressing a need for general digital education.

This supports Age UK BANES' current approach of offering task-focused support rather than broad digital skills training. Partnering with the Council could be the most effective way to enhance access to local information and increase involvement in local decision-making.

2.8 Community Support and Health Services

% of respondents to each question | ■ Strongly Agree | ■ Agree | ■ Neutral | ■ Disagree | ■ Strongly Disagree | ■ Don't Know

Question						
Satisfied with the quality of care from the NHS	15	46	17	12	7	
Satisfied with ease of accessing NHS services	9	29	13	30	17	
Satisfied with my knowledge about end-of-life decisions	9	25	24	14		18
Access health & social care services is impacted by digital exclusion	7	14	18	30	23	8
Satisfied how NHS services and social care coordinate		15	29	12	11	29
Easy to feedback/complain about NHS or social care services & their response		13	31	13	8	32
Social Care do enough to support living independently at home		7	34	8	8	41

▶ **61% are satisfied with NHS care quality, but only 17% are satisfied with access, while 47% are dissatisfied, and 17% strongly dissatisfied.**

▶ **Views on end-of-life options are mixed: 34% satisfied, 24% dissatisfied.**

▶ **Complaints systems see more dissatisfaction than satisfaction.**

▶ **Most respondents could not answer questions about the social care system, suggesting caution when interpreting these results.**

2.8 Community Support and Health Services

These percentages projected onto the older population of B&NES mean...

30,000 older people are not satisfied with the ease of accessing NHS services when needed.

15,000 are not satisfied with their knowledge and information about end-of-life care options.

13,000 feel their ability to access health and social care services is impacted by digital exclusion, or difficulty in using digital tools and services.
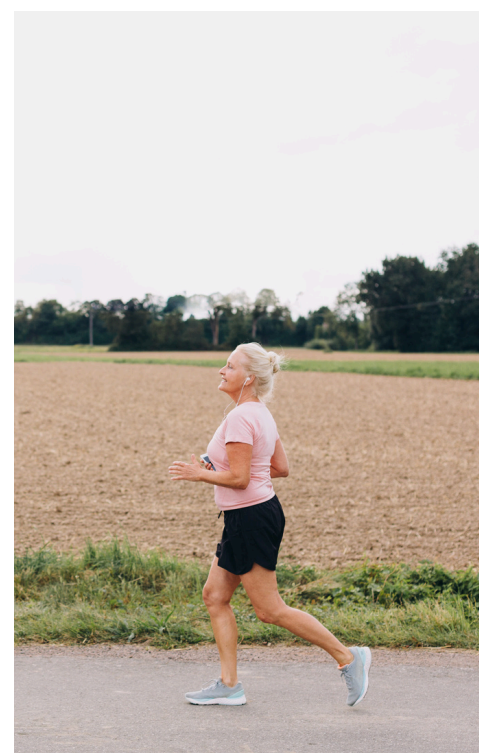
Qualitative Insights

Access to Health Services

When talking about access to health and social care services, respondents' comments focused on access to GPs and dentists. This was often expressed in terms that indicate real anger or distress.

As with transport, there was a lack of comments suggesting local measures can improve things, recognising these are complex national problems.

"The local GP services are diabolical, cannot get an appointment! Service is not fit for purpose. Dental and GP access is practically non existent when one actually needs it"

"GP surgery services have become catastrophically poor – 6 weeks wait for any routine appointment, after 45 minutes hanging on the phone"

"I appreciate that many issues (e.g. healthcare) are really national and probably relate to insufficient funding, including to local government"

Key Takeaways

Most respondents do not have clear views on aspects of social care or health beyond their personal experience.

Access to primary care including dental care is a big issue, but respondents did not look for solutions at the local level.

3. Summary of Key Points

Based on the overall survey results, we see four big issues as the most important for improving the quality of life for older adults in Bath & North East Somerset in the longer term. These are outlined in Section 3.2. below.

3.1. Focus Issues

It is important to remember that there are many other issues where, despite 'majority satisfaction', there are still numerically large groups with unmet needs who could benefit from age-friendly policies and initiatives that the B&NES Ageing Well programme can focus on as nuts-and-bolts initial priorities.

3.1.1. Digital Exclusion

- 5,000 are not comfortable using the internet to find information they need.
- 2,000 do not own an internet-capable device.

While most older adults have digital access, many, particularly those 80+, face challenges using digital services.

Limited access and confidence hinder vital activities like healthcare, transport, and social participation.

Focus on task-based, one-on-one support (e.g., accessing GP services or paying for parking) and strengthen partnerships with libraries and community centres to provide drop-in digital help.

3.1.2. Public Toilets & Resting Places

There is widespread demand for more publicly-accessible toilets and places to rest when out and about. As a discrete, clearly identifiable and actionable need, we are planning steps to improve access, initially in Bath town centre.

3.1.3. Age Representation & Respect

- 23,000 older people do not think the local Council and other government organisations value their opinions.
- 16,000 do not see positive imagery of older people.
- 15,000 sometimes face discrimination because of their age
- 9,000 do not feel a sense of belonging within their local community.
- 6,000 do not feel valued by their local community and 3,000 feel they don't bring value to their local community.
- 6,000 say older adults are not generally treated with respect.
- 5,000 do not think that information is provided in easily understandable formats.

Thousands of older people feel that their needs are not being considered by governmental authorities, particularly at the unitary Council level in planning and public services.

Additionally, there are perceptions of ageism, where older people feel stereotyped or excluded, particularly those aged between 55-64 who do not identify with the typical "older adult" label.

3.2. Majority issues

These are the issues that affect majorities or near majorities of respondents. They are more complex to address, requiring strategic engagement with partners over the mid or long term, and possibly investment.

3.2.1. Bus Services

Half of respondents use buses regularly, but only 17% rely on them daily, with low reliance often due to poor service rather than choice.

Improving bus frequency and reliability is a priority, especially for rural respondents, where it greatly impacts quality of life.

Solutions include better stops with seating, shelters, and pedestrian access. Respondents were unclear whether responsibility lies locally, regionally, or nationally.

3.2.2. Housing

There is clearly an unmet demand for varied housing options, including bungalows, ageing-in-place developments, and housing with good infrastructure and mixed communities. This contrasts with the current focus on student and high-end housing, particularly in Bath. Housing affordability is a key barrier, one of the few issues highlighted in the survey.

While Age UK B&NES may have limited influence on housing policy, around 23,000 local residents feel their opinions are undervalued by governmental organisations. Local authorities could improve housing consultations by specifically seeking input on age-friendly designs.

3.2.3. Getting Around

Poorly maintained pavements, narrow paths, circuitous routes, and vehicles on pavements are significant barriers to accessing amenities. Road schemes limiting car access or parking further exclude older people, compounded by inadequate bus services, making mobility both difficult and unsafe.

Respondents expect local government to address these issues, positioning Age UK B&NES as advocates for age-inclusive planning. Additionally, the lack of warm seating areas and public toilets is a prominent concern for many.

3.2.4 Access to Health and Wellbeing Services

Accessing health services is a major concern highlighted in various contexts. While respondents express high satisfaction with NHS care quality, satisfaction with ease of access is notably lower.

Most do not feel digital exclusion affects their ability to access care, but around 10,000 older people do face a 'digital barrier.' Among those with direct experience, a third report this as a significant issue.

Access to GPs and dentists was frequently raised, often with descriptions of distress, highlighting broader challenges beyond core NHS services.

4. Survey Methods & Sample

The survey aimed to sample B&NES residents aged 55 and older (the "reference population") using convenience sampling via advertising and outreach. The reference population is estimated at around 64,000 people in 2024. Thus, 10% of respondents agreeing with a statement equates to approximately 6,400 B&NES residents aged 55+ sharing that view.

Survey advertising was targeted within B&NES, with negligible responses from outside the area, mostly from adjacent postcodes. For this report, all respondents are assumed to be from B&NES.

The sample is under-representative of men (29% of the sample vs 47% of the population) and 55–64-year-olds (31% vs 39%). However, it closely matches the population in ethnicity (97% white British) and sexual orientation (99% heterosexual).

Comparisons with the population are approximate where data sources like the ONS use different age categories than the 55+ population. Population figures are based on the 2021 census, adjusted for a 3.75% increase from the ONS Mid-Year Projections for 2023. All population figures are courtesy of the Office for National Statistics, Crown Copyright.

The sample appears under-representative of renters and over-representative of owner-occupiers, particularly those who own their homes outright. Due to resource constraints, no statistical adjustments were made to correct these imbalances. This likely means that certain issues, such as loneliness, may be overstated, as the over-represented group of respondents living alone tends to report higher levels of loneliness.

Overall, survey results show no large-scale or systematic differences by gender. Age-related differences are noted in the analysis where relevant.

5. Table of Full Results

The table summarises responses to all 48 closed (agree/disagree) questions, showing the net agreement (percentage of respondents who 'agreed' or 'agreed strongly' minus those who 'disagreed' or 'disagreed strongly'). Neutral and 'don't know' responses are included in the percentage base.

For example, the question with the most consensus is 'I own a device that can access the internet,' with 92% agreeing or strongly agreeing and 4% disagreeing, resulting in a net agreement of +88%. The remaining 4% were neutral or unsure.

Caution is needed when interpreting results where agreement implies a negative outcome. For instance, a low agreement score on questions like 'I often feel isolated or lonely' or, arguably, 'I am reliant on public transport for my day-to-day life' reflects a positive result.

The table uses a colour scheme based on the WHO themes (domains such as transport and housing) for clarity.

Theme (WHO Domain)	Question	Net % Agreement
Communication and information	I own a device that can access the internet	88
Outdoor spaces and buildings	I am able to access an open green space or a park at least once a day	87
Housing	I am happy with my current living arrangements	86
Communication and information	I am comfortable using the internet to find information that I need	78
Housing	I plan to 'age in place' (in current home) for as long as I am able	76
Outdoor spaces and buildings	I feel safe when I am out and about by myself	69
Civic participation and employment	There are enough opportunities for me to engage in meaningful volunteer work if I want to	60
Transport	Public transportation is affordable for me	59
Respect and social inclusion	I bring value to my local community	57
Communication and information	Information is provided in formats that I find easy to understand	56
Respect and social inclusion	Older adults like me are generally treated with respect	54
Housing	From my home, it is easy for me to access services (e.g. such as GP, dentist, supermarkets, and hairdressers)	53
Community support and health services	I am satisfied with the quality of care I receive from the NHS, including treatment, communication, and overall patient experience	41
Respect and social inclusion	I feel valued by my local community	40
Social participation	I feel a sense of belonging within my local community	39
Communication and information	I feel well informed about events, services, and facilities within my local area	31
Transport	It is easy for me to access and navigate public transport	29
Civic participation and employment	I feel adequately informed about local political issues and local political candidates	26
Social participation	I am an active member within groups such as political parties, trade unions, environmental groups, residents' groups, community groups, religious groups, hobby and social interest groups	17
Respect and social inclusion	There are opportunities for me to share my experiences, knowledge, and expertise with others	16
Housing	Housing for older adults is affordable for me	12
Social participation	There are enough available and affordable activities or events specifically for older people like me in my local area	12
Community support and health services	I feel satisfied with my knowledge about end-of-life decisions, and I know where to find information about end-of-life care and options	9
Transport	The bus stops are safe, clean and accessible (e.g. have a bench)	6

Civic participation and employment	There are enough opportunities for me to engage in paid employment if I want to	3
Respect and social inclusion	I regularly see positive imagery of older people (e.g. in publications, newspapers, and other marketing)	3
Community support and health service	I am satisfied with how NHS services and social care coordinate to address my health and wellbeing needs	-4
Community support and health service	I find it easy to provide feedback or make a complaint about NHS or social care services, and I am satisfied with the response	-5
Community support and health service	Social Care Services do enough to support me or my loved ones in living independently at home	-8
Transport	There are frequent and reliable public transport options	-10
Community support and health service	I am satisfied with the ease of accessing NHS services when needed (e.g. GP appointments, specialist referrals, and hospital care)	-10
Civic participation and employment	The concerns and priorities of older adults like me are effectively represented by local elected officials	-10
Respect and social inclusion	There are opportunities for younger generations to share their experiences, knowledge, and expertise with me	-12
Social participation	There are enough intergenerational activities or events in my local area that bring people of all ages together	-13
Housing	The waiting times are reasonable to access housing that provides support to older adults like me (e.g. assisted living, long term care homes, group homes, personal care homes)	-14
Civic participation and employment	I would be interested in joining or forming a group advocating for the interests of older adults within my local community and/or local area	-17
Transport	There are enough parking spaces close to services and shops	-20
Transport	There are enough accessible parking spaces close to services and shops	-21
Respect and social inclusion	I sometimes face discrimination because of my age	-23
Civic participation and employment	I have participated in a local government meeting, town hall event or community forum within the past 3 years	-24
Communication and information	My local council and other government organisations value my opinion	-24
Outdoor spaces and buildings	Most or all pavements are well maintained (e.g. even surfaces or paved, not a lot of cracks)	-29
Community support and health service	My ability to access health and social care services is impacted by digital exclusion, or difficulty in using digital tools and services	-32
Social participation	I often feel isolated or lonely	-43
Transport	I am reliant on public transport for my day-to-day life	-48