

# Assessing the impact of participation in People's Health Trust programmes

Key findings (Wave 2)

January 2023



## About this report

This report describes the findings of the first two waves of research assessing the impact of participation in the People's Health Trust's Local Conversations and Active Communities programmes.

More about this research is on our website, [http://www.social-life.co/project/peoples\\_health\\_trust/](http://www.social-life.co/project/peoples_health_trust/)

The research was commissioned by People's Health Trust. The aim was to examine the ways in which community-led projects are building social connections and collective control to improve health and wellbeing. We would like to thank the project participants and practitioners who shared their knowledge, hopes and worries with us. We appreciate their expertise and the time they put into this work and hope the report will provide useful insight.

The report was written and published by Social Life (text by Dr Olimpia Mosteanu, Dr Izzy Gibbin and Lavanya Kumaran, with statistical modelling by Alix Naylor).

**Social Life** was created by the Young Foundation in 2012, to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. All our work is about the relationship between people and the places they live and understanding how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, affects the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas. We work in the UK and internationally.

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**People's Health Trust** is a charity addressing health inequalities in England, Scotland and Wales. We work to ensure that where you live does not unfairly reduce the length of your life, or the quality of your health. Our work focuses on:

- Funding and support for communities
- Using our evidence and learning to influence change locally and nationally
- Working with our networks of funded partners to offer support, shape our programmes and policy, and ensure their voices are well represented with decision-makers.

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<b>1 Summary.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 Survey of project participants: methods .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>3 Survey of project participants: main findings.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>3.1 Shorter-term changes .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Participation .....	14
Confidence and skills.....	17
Social connectedness and feelings of belonging .....	19
<b>3.2 Achieving community power and its impact on longer-term changes .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>3.3 The role of local contexts in shaping the outcomes for individuals and communities .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>3.4 A brief comparison across programmes (findings from the combined dataset) .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>4 Survey of practitioners: main findings .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>4.1 Understanding local barriers and enablers .....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>4.2 Projects' impact on individual participants .....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>4.3 Projects' impact on communities .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>4.4 Lessons learnt in the past six months.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>5 Appendix.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5.1 Benchmarking questions included in the survey of project participants .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5.2 Additional benchmarking analyses based on the combined dataset (waves 1 and 2).....</b>	<b>43</b>

# 1 Summary

This report discusses the findings of the first two waves of research aimed at assessing the impact of participation in People's Health Trust's Local Conversations and Active Communities programmes.

**Local Conversations** is a funding programme that enables people to have voice, control and influence over the things that matter to them locally. Residents get together to identify and agree local priorities and then take action to help address them. Using investment from the Trust over a longer timeframe than many traditional grants, residents are supported by a local anchor organisation in their neighbourhood to realise their long-term vision for the area. The process of bringing about change is led by residents and involves deep and continuous engagement and conversations with different groups of people within the community, including residents who may not normally participate in local decision-making. Local Conversations works with relatively small neighbourhoods or communities of interest - typically around 4,000 to 10,000 people. The Trust typically provides around £300,000 funding to support each Local Conversation for an initial period of two years, with subsequent funding to neighbourhoods each year for up to nine years. The Trust currently funds 12 Local Conversations.

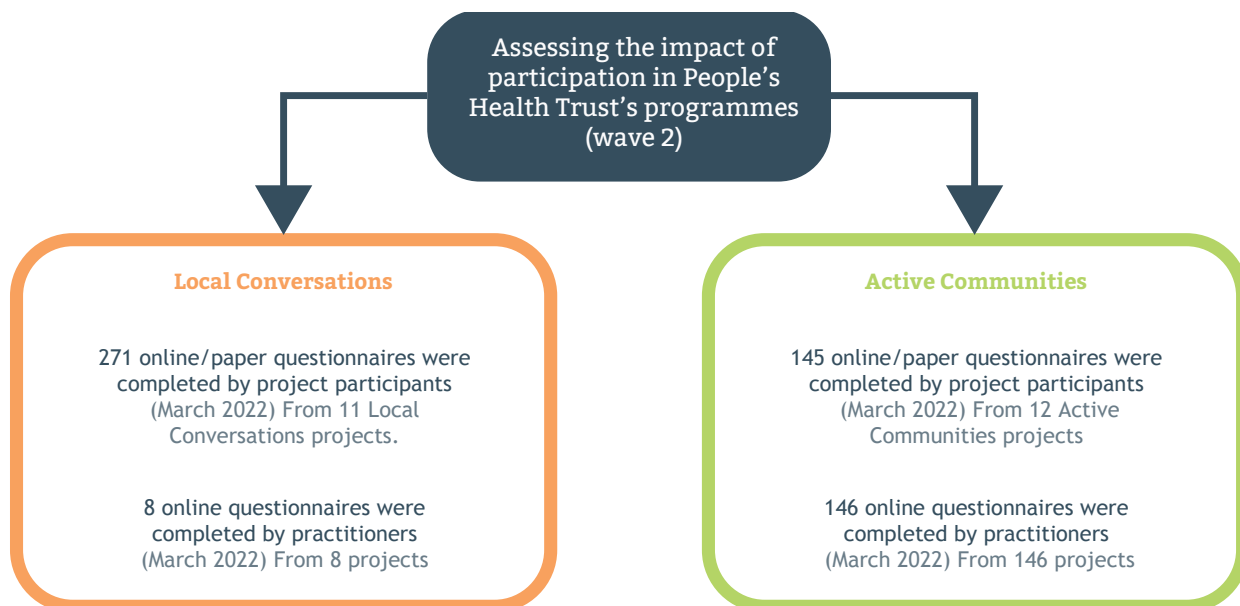
**Active Communities** has been running since 2013 and supports participants to develop project ideas relevant to their areas, to strengthen social connections and build greater collective control. By empowering participants to take the lead and by putting processes in place to address the issues that are important to them, the programme aims to support local communities and neighbourhoods. Projects support local neighbourhoods and communities to come together and take action on issues that are important to them. This could be anything from tackling social isolation through meeting regularly and engaging in arts, music, or simply chatting, to working together to enhance the area they live in. The Active Communities programme is an open small grants programme for projects lasting up to two years.

Building on **People's Health Trust's theory of change**, the goal of this research is to understand the ways in which community-led projects can improve health and wellbeing outcomes. The research contributes to a more detailed understanding of how health and wellbeing are grounded in place through the experiences of associated social determinants of health, while bringing attention to local barriers and opportunities.

The research uses a place-based approach to answer three interrelated research questions:

- (1) how do practitioners evaluate the progress of each programme in relation to key elements of the theory of change?
- (2) what is the effect of participation in the Trust's programmes on local people?
- (3) what is the role of local contexts in supporting or hampering positive outcomes for individuals and communities?

The second wave of research took place in March 2022, about six months after the first wave of the research. At the time, local groups across the UK were emerging from the last round of government COVID-19 restrictions. Complex challenges ranging from financial pressures, the loss of community and staff members, to the uncertainty about the long-term impact of pandemic were on people's minds. The research gave project participants the opportunity to take part in the survey, either by filling it out online or on paper.



This research draws upon studies previously commissioned by People’s Health Trust and their theory of change and adds to the findings from the first wave of research carried out in April-July 2021. It makes use of comparisons with nationally available datasets (Community Life Survey, Understanding Society Survey, the National Survey for Wales, and the Scottish Household Survey) and across the Trust’s programmes to further understand the impact of community-led projects.

To understand the impact of the two programmes, responses from surveyed participants were compared to aggregate data for people living in either 20% or 30% most deprived communities in the UK (surveys in different countries focus on different geographies). The report refers to these comparative geographies as areas characterised by similarly high levels of disadvantage. The survey has a common set of questions that allows the research team to run analyses across all the Trust’s projects. The questionnaire also includes questions that are aligned with nation-specific surveys - Community Life Survey for England, the National Survey for Wales, and the Scottish Household Survey. These help us acknowledge differences between the projects run by the Trust in England, Scotland, and Wales, and make use of relevant surveys in our comparative analyses.

Apart from one project that did not take part in the second wave due to staff shortages, the same Local Conversations participated in the research. Due to shorter timescales and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on staff and participants, three of the Active Communities projects took part in wave 1 but not in wave 2, and four projects participated in wave 2 but not in wave 1.

**11 Local Conversations (271 participants)** were involved in the second wave of the research. Across projects, 75% of the surveyed participants were female and 25% male. They were mostly White (93%), 5% were Asian, 1% Mixed, and 1% Black. There was a somewhat even split between the 30-44 age group (25%), the 45-64 age group (32%) and the over 65 age group (27%), with 7% of participants aged between 25 and 20, and 9% aged between 18 and 24.

**12 Active Communities projects (145 participants)** took part in the research. Across projects, 55% of the surveyed participants were female, 42% male, and 3% non-binary. 56% of the Active Communities participants were Asian, 36% were White, 2% Mixed, 6% Black, and 1% other ethnic group. In terms of their age distribution, 38% were in the 45-64 age group, 25% in the 30-44 age group, 23% in the over 65 age group, 8% of participants aged between 25 and 20, and 6% aged between 18 and 24.

The data gathered in the **first and second waves of research** gives us insight into how effective community-led projects are to affect short- and longer-term change in health equity against an uneven background shaped by demographic, economic and geographic factors. By repeating the research over a period of time, we are able to work with a larger dataset and increase the robustness of the overall analysis. The third wave of the research is scheduled for early 2023.

**Local Conversations included in Wave 2 (Participant survey)**



**Active Communities projects included in Wave 2 (Participant survey)**



## 1. What is the effect of participation in the Trust’s programmes on local people?

### 1.1 Short-term changes (analysis based on combined dataset including Wave 1 and 2)

The projects funded through People’s Health Trust projects had a positive impact on **participants’ confidence** (in the second wave, over 73% of surveyed participants in each programme reported that the projects helped them to feel more confident). By supporting people to come together and join a range of activities, projects **impacted positively on participants’ skills** (in the second wave, 87% of the surveyed participants involved in Active Communities projects and 73% of those involved in Local Conversations projects said they had learnt or developed new or existing skills through the project).

Participation in local projects had a **positive impact on participants’ social networks**, supporting participants to expand their social links and ties. Surveyed participants from both programmes had **more positive perceptions of social connectedness** than people living in areas characterised by similarly high levels of disadvantage:

- 84% of those surveyed agreed that the **friendships and associations they had with other people in their neighbourhood meant a lot to them**, compared to 49% of the people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage.
- 75% of those surveyed agreed that **they regularly stop and talk with people in their neighbourhood**, compared to 57% of the people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage.
- 79% of those surveyed agreed that **their local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together** compared to 70% of the people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage.

Surveyed participants from both programmes had **more positive perceptions of belonging and trust but less positive perceptions of safety** than people living in areas characterised by similarly high levels of disadvantage:

- 77% of those surveyed agreed that **people in their neighbourhood can be trusted**, compared to 56% of the people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage [benchmarked against England only].
- 76% of those surveyed agreed that they **feel they belong to their neighbourhood**, compared to 56% of the people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage.
- 60% of those surveyed agreed that they **feel safe walking alone in their area after dark**, compared to 84% of the people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage.

It is important to highlight that these findings about perceptions of safety after dark could be influenced by the survey demographics, especially the unequal numbers of male and female respondents in our samples. In the third wave of research, we will further explore whether perceptions of safety after dark are influenced by survey demographics such as gender or other factors, and the impact this might have on the wider analysis.

## 1.2 Achieving community power and its impact on longer-term changes (analysis based on combined dataset including Wave 1 and 2)

Projects funded through People's Health Trust had a **positive impact on collective action and community power**.

Increased participation in Local Conversations and Active Communities projects had a positive impact on participants' community power. For both Local Conversations and Active Communities projects, **stronger social networks, improved confidence and skills and more cohesive communities had a positive impact on participants' community power**.

**Improved experience of community power**, achieved through participation in projects, had a positive impact on the **wellbeing of project participants**. For Local Conversations, improved community power had a positive impact on participants' wellbeing. Improved community power had a positive impact on the wellbeing and self-reported health of participants in Active Communities projects.

Data across programmes and nations shows that surveyed participants **had more positive perceptions of community power** than people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage:

- 81% of those surveyed agreed that **when people in their area get involved in their local community, they really can change the way that their area is run**, compared to 51% of the people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage.
- 59% of those surveyed agreed that they **can influence decisions affecting their local area**, compared to 22% of the people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage.
- 86% of those surveyed agreed that they **would be willing to work together with others on something to improve their neighbourhood**, compared to 59% of the people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage.

**The programmes are making a difference in people's lives, which supports the findings from the first wave of research.**

Many surveyed participants who answered the question about whether the project is making a difference in their life (open-ended question), gave at least one reason for its impact but quite a few participants provided two or three reasons. In the second wave, Local Conversations participants mentioned that **projects impacted positively on a variety of aspects of their lives**, including their networks (46% of those who answered), collective action (23% of those who answered) and increased opportunities to take part in activities (23% of those who answered). We received 220 responses from 145 participants. Active

Communities participants noted that projects made a positive impact on their social links and ties (52% of those who answered) and improved health and wellbeing (33% of those who answered). We received 170 responses from 120 participants.

## 2. What is the role of local contexts in supporting or hindering outcomes for individuals and communities? (findings from Wave 2, March 2022)

Across the two programmes, **the local cost of living and job opportunities** were identified as key local issues by participants in the projects funded through People's Health Trust.

For participants in both programmes, **relationships with people in the local area and the accessibility of nature** (parks, gardens, green spaces) were seen as assets.

The majority of participants **surveyed became involved in the projects** funded through People's Health Trust because of a combination of individual and community-driven motivations.

For both Local Conversations and Active Communities practitioners, **the uncertainty about the pandemic and the increased hardship for residents due to the pandemic** were seen as the most significant barriers to projects returning to normal operations as they were emerging from the last round of government restrictions. Other significant barriers highlighted by practitioners across the two programmes were **the difficulty carrying out outreach and engagement, and recent changes that took place in the community**.

## 3. How do practitioners evaluate the progress of each programme in relation to key elements of the theory of change? (findings from the Wave 2)

Eight practitioners from Local Conversations (of 11) and 146 from Active Communities projects took part in the online survey. The focus of this part of the research was to **gather insight into how practitioners evaluate project progress against key elements of the theory of change**.

Practitioners and participants largely agree **on the positive impacts the projects have on participants' health and wellbeing, developing skills and improving social connections**.

The survey also shows that practitioners believe projects **created opportunities for place-based collaborative work**, gradually contributing to the sustainability of project activities and local systems change. All Local Conversations practitioners who were surveyed and 30% of Active Communities practitioners reported that **the projects have increased influence over neighbourhood services**. 76% of the Local Conversations practitioners and 59% of Active Communities programme practitioners answered that **the projects have supported local services**. 76% of the surveyed Local Conversations practitioners and 63% of Active Communities programme practitioners said that **the projects have facilitated new partnerships between local projects or organisations with common goals or interest**. 88% of the surveyed Local Conversations practitioners and 50% of Active Communities programme practitioners noted that **the projects have increased access to assets (e.g. money, places to get together)**.

When asked if they have learnt any **lessons over the last six months that could help other projects realise their goals**, about a third of the Active Communities practitioners mentioned **the importance of being flexible**. Many of these practitioners highlighted the disruptive effect that COVID-19 had on their projects. In response, they recommended an approach that is realistic with goal setting and accepts the limits of the team's capacity. They also recommended setting up contingency plans and trying out different ways of delivering activities and staying in contact with members (such as online formats).



Local Conversations practitioners mentioned that projects would benefit from having shared goals across participant groups and ‘celebrating small wins.’ They also highlighted that **giving autonomy to projects participants could help bring the best results**. Enabling the participants to make decisions and encouraging them to take on more responsibility were mentioned as key lessons moving forward.

## 2 Survey of project participants: methods

The survey of project participants examined how participation in community-led programmes impacts local people’s short- and long-term health and wellbeing. The survey included questions about the role played by external conditions, environmental factors and individual characteristics in shaping the individual and community health and wellbeing.

The survey of project participants relied both on an online version, which used the Survey Monkey platform, and a paper version for participants who struggled to complete the online survey. Through the in-depth interviews we conducted with practitioners at the beginning of the commission, we learned that the need for postal surveys varied quite significantly across the projects included in the research. In the first wave of the research, in 2021, we learned from practitioners that a significant percentage of project participants had limited access to the internet, or they lacked the skills, digital devices, data allowance and the confidence to complete online questionnaires.

By using postal surveys, the research sought to ensure that certain groups of participants were not excluded from taking part in the survey and that the data collected was not skewed toward those who had the access and the skills needed. Some projects only needed a few paper questionnaires for participants from key demographics (for example, older people or people from very low-income backgrounds) who either lack the skills or digital devices to complete the online questionnaire. Other projects needed 30-40 paper questionnaires as a significant part of their participant group has limited access to digital devices, the internet or they lack the skills and confidence to complete online surveys.

This combination of methods ensured a systematic data collection process for a range of key indicators. Relying on local practitioners to inform and send reminders to project participants about the survey helped secure a more representative sample of residents. It is important to note, however, that the personal and community disruptions caused by the pandemic impacted on project participants’ readiness to engage in the research.

To understand the impact of the two programmes, responses from surveyed participants were compared to aggregate data for people living in either 20% or 30% most deprived communities in the UK (surveys in different countries focus on different geographies). The report refers to these comparative geographies as areas characterised by similarly high levels of disadvantage. The benchmarking analyses are focused on the core concepts of People’s Health Trust’s theory of change including ‘community power’ and ‘social connectedness’. Throughout these analyses, the percentage of positive responses is computed as the top two categories (‘Strongly agree’ and ‘Agree’, or ‘Definitely agree’ and ‘Agree’).

Social Life has developed a set of survey questions to evaluate the impact of People’s Health Trust’s Local Conversations, and a sample of their Active Communities projects. We selected questions that replicate those used in national surveys. This had two advantages: the surveys have been tested thoroughly; and data generated can be used to compare responses to national surveys. This gives the analysis more depth,

enabling us to compare the data we collected in the first wave to similar areas based on IMD scores. This process is known as “benchmarking”.

Our preference for benchmarking is to use surveys that have UK-wide coverage and a robust sample size. UK coverage gives us comparable data across the three countries that People’s Health Trust operates in (England, Scotland, and Wales). However, for some questions it is not possible to find UK-wide comparable data and for these, three different surveys each covering one nation will be used (the Community Life Survey, the National Survey for Wales and the Scottish Household Survey).

**The Understanding Society Survey (USS)** is the largest longitudinal study of its kind and provides crucial information for researchers and policymakers on the changes and stability of people’s lives in the UK. Participants are interviewed annually and around 40,000 people are interviewed each year. It covers all four countries of the UK, with both ethnic minority and immigrant booster samples. Questions are reviewed each year and not all questions are asked in every year, however when a question is skipped it returns in future years.<sup>1</sup> All the Understanding Society Survey questions were benchmarked on Wave I (2019) except “walk in the dark” which was benchmarked on Wave F (2015) as that was the last time it was asked.

**The Community Life Survey (CLS)** is carried out in England annually to track trends and developments in areas that encourage social action and empower communities. The Cabinet Office commissioned the first Community Life Survey in 2012 to look at the latest trends in areas such as volunteering, charitable giving, local action and networks and wellbeing. Around 3,000 people are interviewed each year.<sup>2</sup> It is now overseen by DCMS. The benchmarking was run on the Community Life Survey for 2018-2019.

**The National Survey for Wales (Wales only)** involves around 12,000 people each year and covers a wide range of topics. It runs all year round, across the whole of Wales. The results are used by the Welsh Government to help make Wales a better place to live.<sup>3</sup> The benchmarking was run on the National Survey for Wales for 2018-2019.

**The Scottish Household Survey (Scotland only)** is an annual survey of over 10,000 households. It covers a range of different topics including your home, your neighbourhood and your views on local public services. It has been running since 1999. It is funded by the Scottish Government.<sup>4</sup> The benchmarking was run on the Scottish Household Survey for 2019.

These four surveys are coded so results can be matched to different statistical geographies. This is important because the sample of the surveys are not large enough to allow them to be disaggregated robustly to small geographic areas. However, the surveys are coded to different geographic typologies, and some geographic units differ between the three nations.

The Understanding Society Survey is coded to Output Area Classifications (OACs), a socio-geographic classification created by the Office for National Statistics; the Community Life Survey, the National Survey for Wales and the Scottish Household Survey are coded to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD: English, Scottish and Welsh versions). Understanding Society and the National Survey for Wales were broken down by IMD, so the survey responses are benchmarked to neighbourhoods falling in the bottom

<sup>1</sup> The Economic and Social Research Council is the primary funder of the USS study. The study is led by a team at the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Essex. For further information, see <https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-life-survey#:~:text=The%20Community%20Life%20Survey%20is,social%20action%20and%20empower%20communities>

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see <https://gov.wales/national-survey-wales>

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see <http://www.scottishhouseholdsurvey.com/>

30% of IMD. The Community Life Survey and the Scottish Household Survey were also broken down by IMD but the survey responses could only be matched to IMD quintiles instead of deciles. This is why we matched the Community Life Survey and Scottish Household Survey questions to the bottom 20% of neighbourhoods by IMD score.

Benchmarking data in detail over three waves will give us insight into the impact of participation in local projects on social connections, feelings of belonging, trust, collective and individual control, and satisfaction with life. We have looked at data for the locations of individual projects, local authorities, regional and national data (since larger dynamics often have an impact on local communities).

To better understand the impact of community-led initiatives on individual and community health and wellbeing and further explore patterns within the data, we ran the regression models developed for the first wave of research. The analyses were run initially on the data collected in the second wave and then on the combined dataset from both waves. We used date of birth and project location to ensure that each participant was only included once in the dataset. **Running the statistical models on the combined dataset for each programme increased their reliability.** These models are the ones discussed in this report. The analyses on the combined dataset have given us a deeper insight into the causal relationships underpinning the health equity theory of change, for example, by allowing us to examine on a larger dataset how participation in local projects impacts social connections, a sense of belonging and social engagement.

Factor analysis was used to investigate how different questions relate to the core concepts of wellbeing, feelings of belonging, control, motivations to get involved and benefits from the project. The factors used in the current analysis are based on People's Health Trust theory of change, and they remained consistent with the ones used in the first wave of research. Only the statistically reliable groupings are shown below and used in regression analyses.

It is important to note that the factors are inter-correlated (for instance, the battery of questions from the Understanding Society Survey were split between different groupings which contribute to this). Regardless, the five factors capture useful patterns in the data. Once the data from the next phase of research becomes available, we can further test if these factors hold together or we need to adjust them.

With regard to the 'Wellbeing (understanding wellbeing impacts)' factor, the statistical reliability test showed that it was not advisable to group together the short version of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS - the shorter version is known as SWEMWBS) and the 'satisfaction with life' question. This is why we kept them separate and included them in different regression models as outcome (dependent) variables.

The Likert scale variables included in factor analyses were standardised to a 0 to 10 scale with 0 corresponding to the lowest score and 10 to the highest. Binary questions were recoded as 0/1. When used together as factors in the regression analysis, scores were calculated by taking the average of the variables included in the scale. The scale classifies a case as 'low' wellbeing where the total score is less than 20, 'moderate' for 20-27 and 'high' for greater than 27, according to the final score.<sup>5</sup> A comprehensive list of descriptive statistics is included in the Appendix.

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<sup>5</sup> For more information on how these scores are calculated, see <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>

### **1. 'Community power' factor**

"I would be willing to work together with others on something to improve my neighbourhood."

"Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?"

"When people in this area get involved in their local community, they really can change the way that their area is run."

"I can influence decisions affecting my local area."

"People in my local area pull together to improve the neighbourhood."

"I feel I can contribute to how the project activities are planned or run."

"I have become more involved in wider community action as a result of participating in the project."

### **2. 'Social connectedness' factor**

"The friendships and associations I have with other people in my neighbourhood mean a lot to me."

"I borrow things and exchange favours with my neighbours."

"I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood."

"My local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together."

"I have made new friends by taking part in the project."

### **3. 'Feelings of belonging' factor**

"I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood."

"Thinking about the people who live in this neighbourhood, to what extent do you believe they can be trusted?"

"How safe do you feel walking alone in your neighbourhood after dark?"

"My local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together."

### **4. 'Confidence and skills' factor**

"The project has helped me to feel more confident."

"I have learnt and developed new skills through the project's activities."

### **5. 'Wellbeing' factor (short version of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, SWEMWBS)**

"I've been feeling optimistic about the future."

"I've been feeling useful."

"I've been feeling relaxed."

"I've been dealing with problems well."

"I've been thinking clearly."

"I've been feeling close to other people."

"I've been able to make up my own mind about things."

We decided against using control variables for this round of analyses. Age, gender, education, or employment status do not have a significant impact on the relationships we investigated. We will assess this again once we add the data from the third wave. Regression analysis was used to examine the relationships between participation in the local projects funded by the Trust and individual and community health and wellbeing.

We ran the regression models separately on the Local Conversations and Active Communities samples. The statistically significant predictors differ for the two programmes, which is why the results are discussed separately for each type of programme.

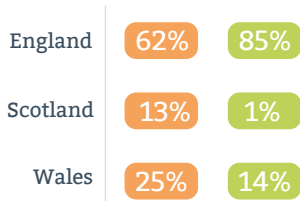
### 3 Survey of project participants: main findings

Between 28th February and 27th March 2022, 416 questionnaires were completed by participants in 23 projects - 11 Local Conversations and 12 Active Communities projects. The infographic provides an initial snapshot of the characteristics of the participants who took part in the research across the two programmes.

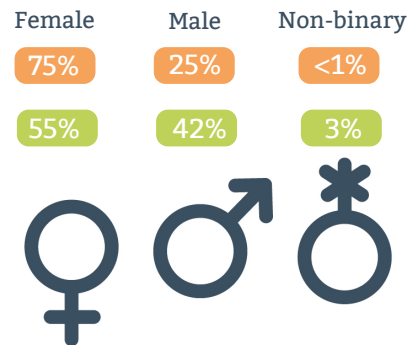
**Local Conversations**  
# of project participants surveyed | **271**

**Active Communities**  
# of project participants surveyed | **145**

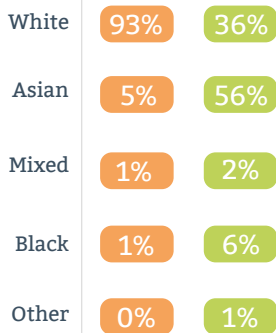
#### UK Countries



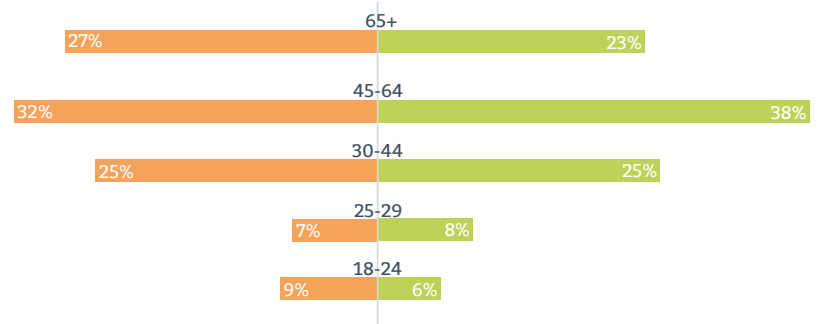
#### Gender



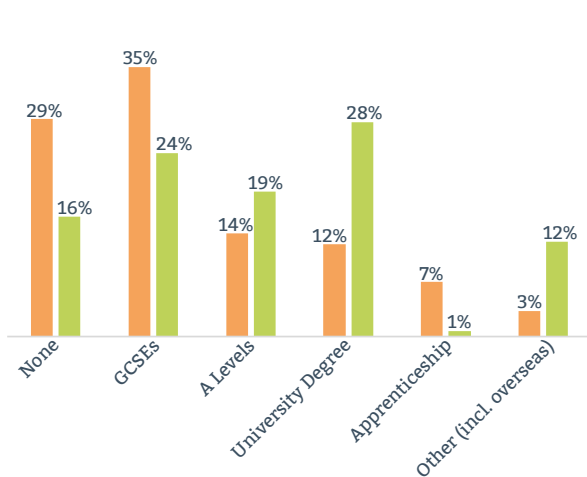
#### Ethnicity



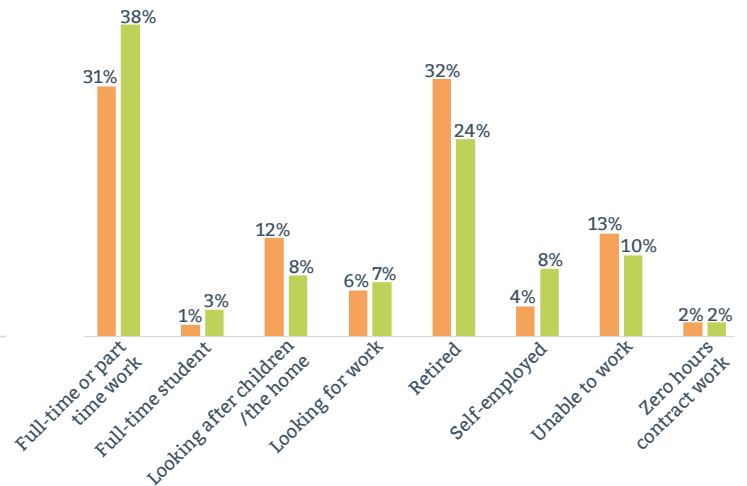
#### Age



#### Qualifications



#### Employment



Note: Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

The survey also included two questions about participants' perceptions of their health. **Perceptions of general health** and of **day-to-day health limitations** may have an impact on the participants' participation in projects, and on the short- and longer-term outcomes associated with projects, so it is key to examine them carefully.

In the second wave of research, 53% of participants in Local Conversations answered that their health was very good or good, while only 44% of participants in Active Communities projects reported that their health was very good or good. Because the question and response options were worded differently (this survey used the census question), it is difficult to compare the participant survey data to nation-specific averages or to data from areas characterised by similarly high levels of disadvantage. In the third wave, the participant survey data will be compared across the waves to further examine the trends.

## How is your health in general?

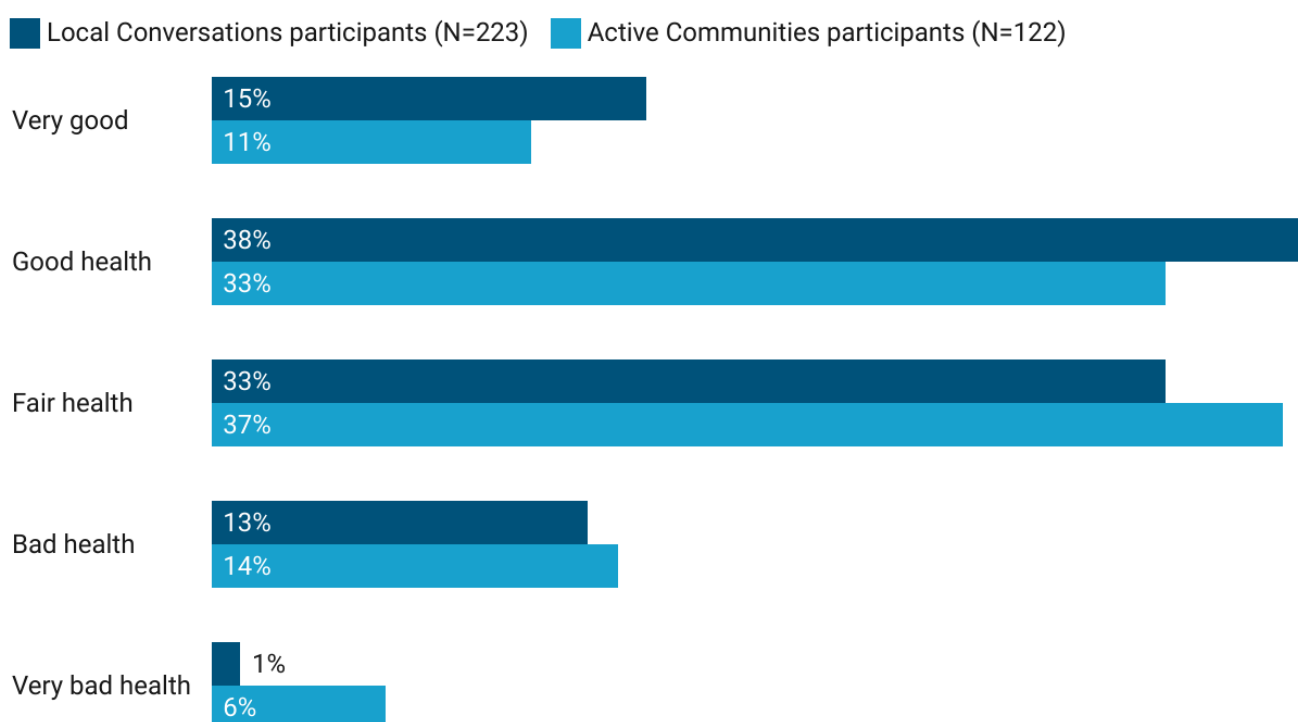


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, Wave 2 (March 2022), Social Life • Created with Datawrapper

When we examine participants' **perceptions of day-to-day health limitations**, the differences between the two programmes become negligible. 31% of participants in Local Conversations and 32% of participants in Active Communities projects said that their day-to-day activities were limited due to a physical or learning disability or health (second wave data).<sup>6</sup>

Across the two programmes, in the second wave, **perceptions of life satisfaction** were higher than in the first wave of research. 72% of participants in Local Conversations (62% in the first wave) and 79% participants in Active Communities projects (59% in the first wave) gave a positive response when asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were you with their life overall.

<sup>6</sup> "Are your day-to-day activities limited due to a physical or learning disability or health problem?" (Yes, No, Prefer not to say)

### 3.1 Shorter-term changes

In the next section, we examine how the two programmes impacted on short-term outcomes connected to People’s Health Trust’s health equity theory of change, which seeks to create greater health equity (pertinent metrics include feelings of belonging, satisfaction with area, trust, perceptions of safety after dark, satisfaction with life, and health).

Then we turn to a discussion about community power and its impact on longer term individual- and community-level changes.

#### Participation

Following People’s Health Trust’s theory of change, the analysis explored how participation in the projects funded by People’s Health Trust impacts on social connections, feelings of belonging, community power, wellbeing, and general health.

The survey of project participants allows us to examine both the length of participation, which is calculated as the number of months or years that participants have been involved in a project, and the depth of participation, given by the regularity of involvement and the types of meetings attended.

A significant number of Active Communities participants said they had been **involved in the project** for less than a year, which contrast with Local Conversations participants. Given the underlying differences between the two programmes and the duration of funding, the difference is not surprising.

## How long have you been involved in Local Conversations/Active Communities activities in your area?

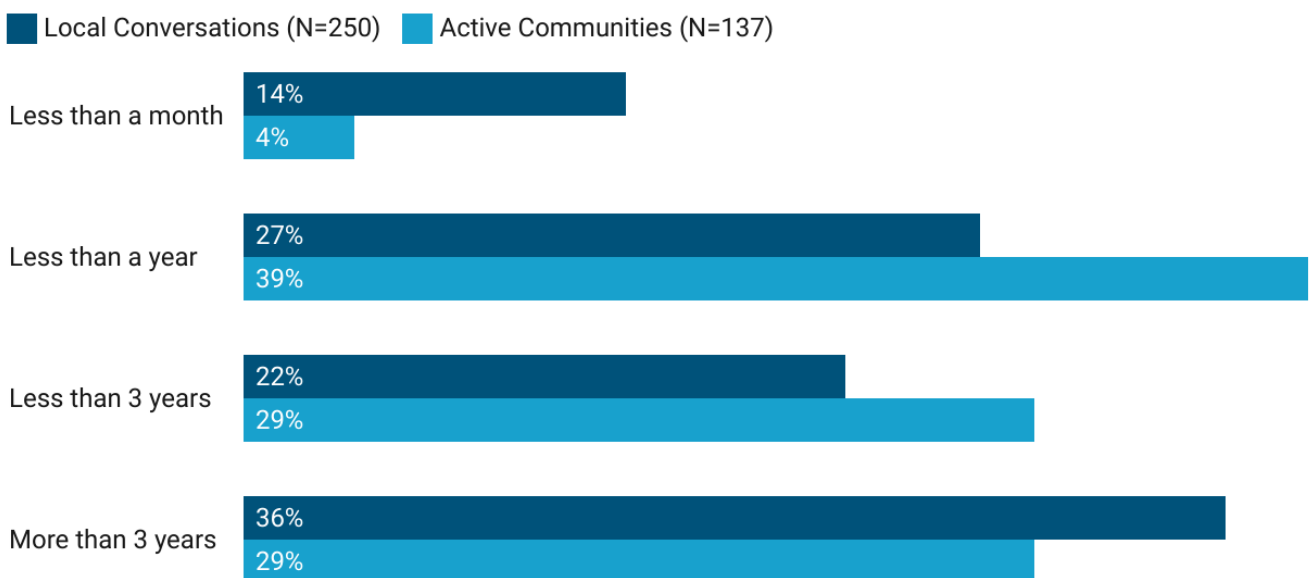


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, Wave 2 (March 2022), Social Life • Created with Datawrapper

When we look at the depth of participation, the most important difference between the two programmes is the number of those who participate regularly in project activities but not in steering or core group meetings (48% for Active Communities projects and 36% for Local Conversations). However, these numbers

are a snapshot of the project participants who took part in the survey and may not be representative for all project participants.

## Thinking about the Local Conversations/Active Communities activities in which you are involved, how would you describe your role in the project?

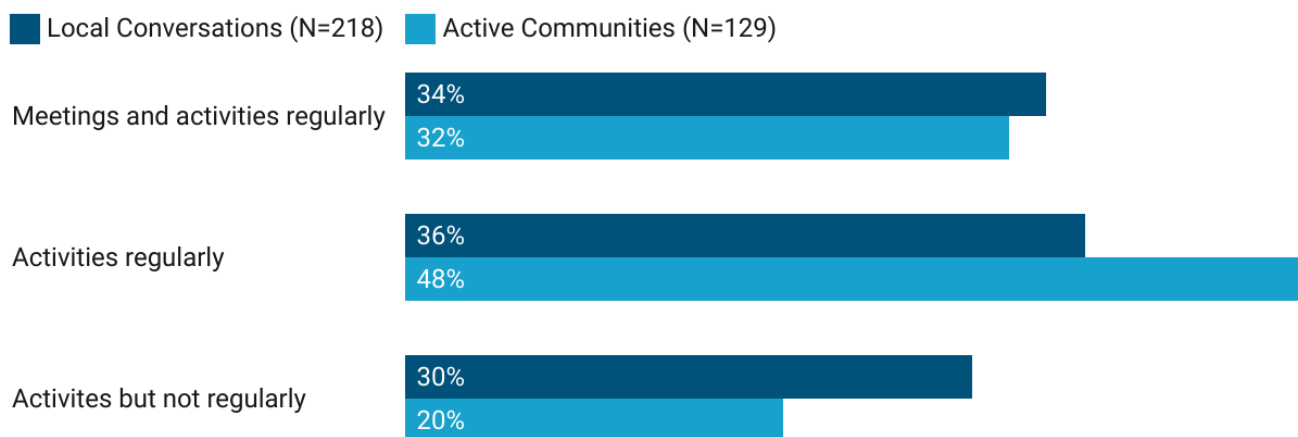


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, Wave 2 (March 2022), Social Life • Created with Datawrapper

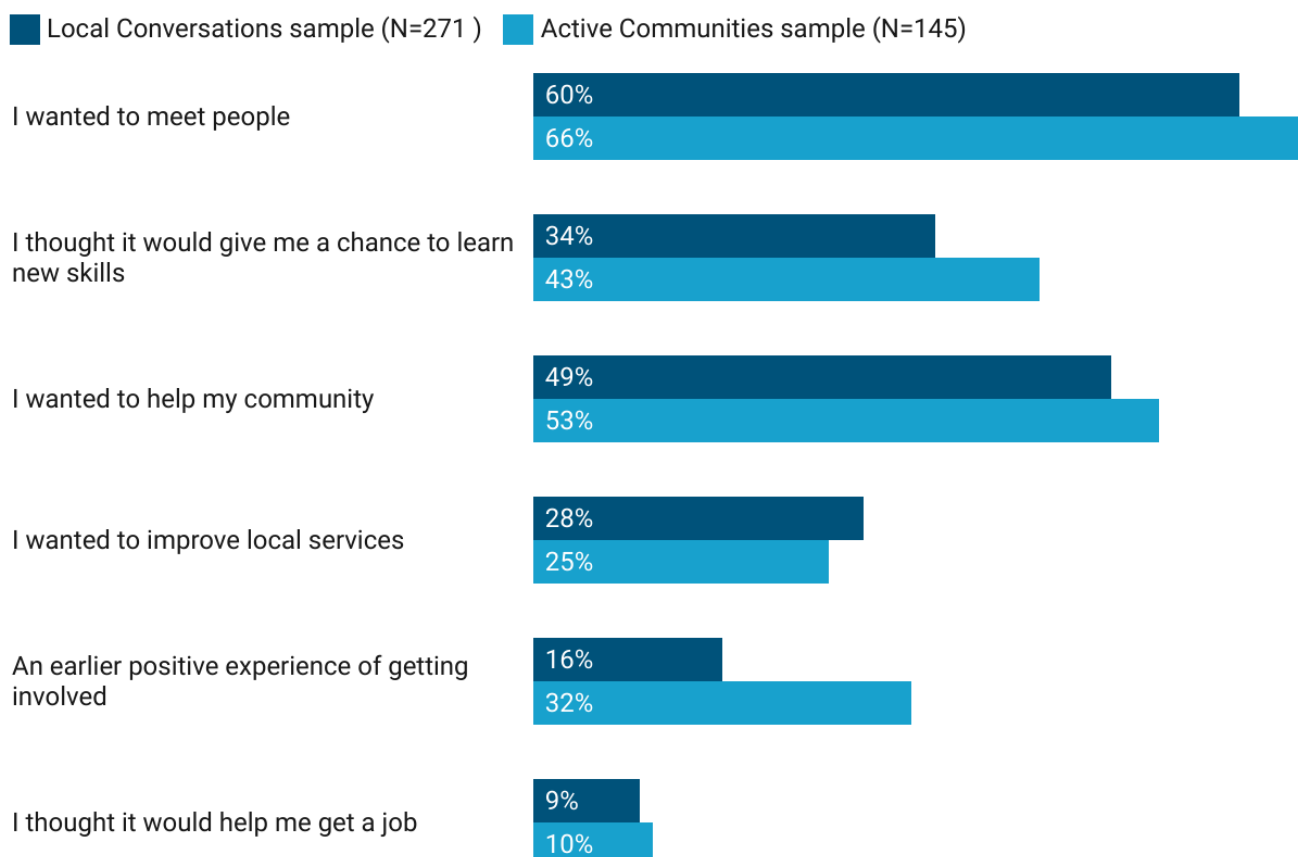
Participation in projects had a **positive impact on participants' social networks**, supporting participants to expand their social links and ties. 92% of surveyed Active Communities participants and 89% of the Local Conversations participants said they made new friends by taking part in project activities (Wave 2 data, March 2022).

When asked about their **motivations** to get involved in the project funded by People's Health Trust in their local area, participants noted that meeting new people and wanting to help the local community were key motivations.

Across the two programmes, wanting to meet people was the most important motivation, and wanting to help one's community was a close second (Wave 2 data, March 2022). This result differs slightly from the first wave of research, when participants in Local Conversations listed helping their community as the first motivation and meeting new people as the second. However, this difference between the two sets of findings might be related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions on participants' daily lives and their changing needs during those difficult times. In both waves, the least cited motivation by participants was *"I thought it would help me get a job"*.



# What motivated you to get involved in the Local Conversations/Active Communities project?



*Multiple responses possible*

Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, Wave 2 (March 2022), Social Life • Created with Datawrapper

The survey asked project participants if, over the past six months, they **participated in any consultations about local services** (for example, about local schools, housing, regeneration plans, green spaces, etc). This question was asked to give us further insight into the project’s impact on individual participants, specifically to see if those who were more actively involved in local projects were also engaged in consultations and wider community action.

The aim is to compare the data from the first wave with data from the second and third waves and further investigate the projects’ impact. In the first wave of research, slightly more participants in the Local Conversations projects than in the Active Communities projects said they participated in consultations in the past six months. In the second wave, however, there were no differences between the two programmes (30% of respondents in each programme said they participated in consultations in the past six months).

The regression models explored the relationship between participation in projects and wellbeing. For both programmes, the analysis of the combined dataset (waves 1 and 2) indicates that higher levels of participation correspond to higher wellbeing scores (on average). However, the regression model is not robust enough, and the results are not corroborated by the regression models run on the second wave dataset alone. We will further explore these analyses in the third phase of the research. One competing hypothesis is that participants who have been involved for more than three years might have started with higher wellbeing scores than other participants (a self-selection bias).

## Confidence and skills

The projects funded through People’s Health Trust projects had an **impact on participants’ confidence**. The second wave of research shows that over 73% of surveyed participants in each programme reported that the projects helped them to feel more confident.

By supporting people to come together and join a range of activities, projects **impacted positively on participants’ skills**. Data from the second wave of research reveals that 87% of the surveyed participants involved in Active Communities projects and 73% of those involved in Local Conversations projects noted that they had learnt or developed new or existing skills through the project.

The survey of project participants included a series of questions about confidence, social connections and learning new skills, as well as the overall impact the community-led projects funded by the Trust had on participants’ lives.

## To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Local Conversations/Active Communities project that you are involved in?

Comparison between Local Conversations and Active Communities participants

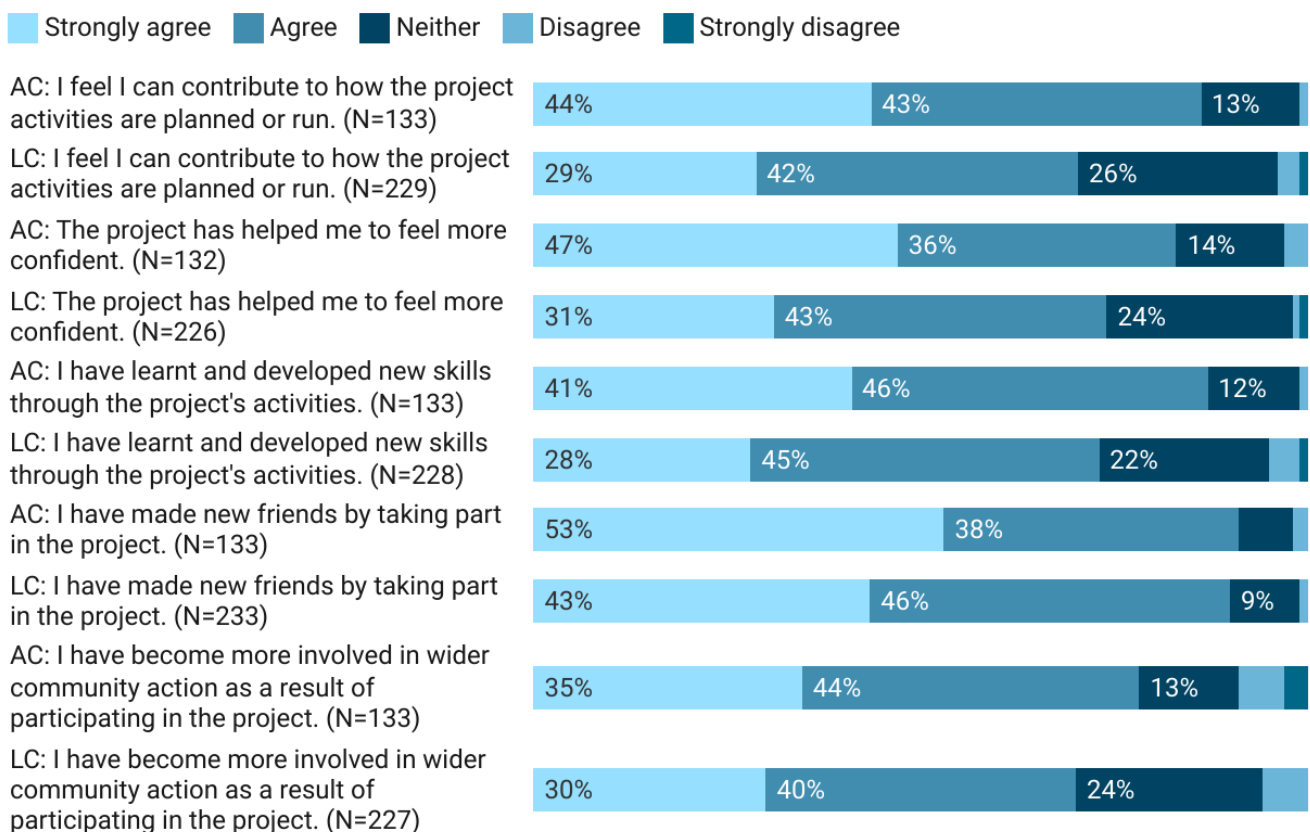


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, Wave 2 (March 2022), Social Life • Created with Datawrapper

Only slightly more participants in Active Communities projects (92%) than Local Conversations (89%) agreed that they **made new friends** by taking part in the project. At the same time, fewer participants in Local Conversations projects (70%) than Active Communities (78%) reported that they **became more involved in wider community action** as a result of participating in the project, although this remains more than two-thirds of participants across both programmes. At the same time, more participants

involved in Active Communities projects (83%) than those involved in Local Conversations projects (74%) said that the project helped them **feel more confident**.

Regression analyses run on the second wave of data and on the combined datasets (waves 1 and 2) indicate that **participation in Local Conversations leads to improved confidence and skills for those involved**. The analysis showed that both the depth and duration of participation are statistically significant predictors. In other words, participation had a positive impact on participants' confidence and skills. The highlighted variables are statistically significant predictors.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	5.55	0.32		0.00
Have been involved 1 month or more but less than a year	0.82	0.36	0.17	0.02
Have been involved 1 year or more but less than 3 years	1.05	0.34	0.25	0.00
Have been involved more than 3 years	1.03	0.34	0.25	0.00
I participate regularly in activities but not in steering or core group meetings	1.27	0.22	0.31	0.00
I participate in steering or core group meetings and other project activities regularly	1.67	0.23	0.40	0.00

Local Conversations participants, combined dataset (Wave 1 and Wave 2), Dependent Variable: 'Confidence and skills' factor, R Square = 0.161

For surveyed Active Communities participants, neither the second wave of data nor the combined datasets evidence this finding. These findings are surprising given the wider evidence base for the programme, and we will further explore the relationship between confidence and skills and participation with data from the third wave of research.

The relationship between **participation and the strength of participants' social networks (the 'social connectedness' factor)** was also explored. We looked separately at the data from the second wave and the combined waves, which showed that participation is not a robust predictor of social connectedness (metrics including the importance of local friendships and associations, borrowing things and exchanging favours with neighbours, regularly talking with people in the neighbourhood, feeling the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, and making new friends due to project participants). This result is true of participants in both programmes. It is worth mentioning that in the first wave of the research, for surveyed Active Communities participants, participation levels appeared to have a statistically significant positive impact on social connectedness.

The analysis also investigated **the impact of the length and depth of participation on the 'feelings of belonging' factor** (metrics including perceptions of trust, belonging, safety, and agreement that people from different backgrounds get on well together).

It is important to highlight that these findings about perceptions of safety after dark could be influenced by the survey demographics, especially the unequal numbers of male and female respondents in our samples. 75% of the surveyed participants involved in Local Conversations were female and 25% male, while 55% of the surveyed participants involved in Active Communities projects were female, 42% male, and 3% non-binary. In the third wave of research, we will further explore whether perceptions of safety after dark are influenced by survey demographics such as gender or other factors, and the impact this might have on the wider analysis.

For Local Conversations, analyses of the second wave and the combined dataset independently show that only the depth of participation has some limited impact on feelings of belonging. However, the regression

model has low explanatory power. For Active Communities, neither form of participation is a statistically significant predictor of feelings of belonging, which corroborates the findings from the first wave of research.

Overall, these findings about the impact of participation on social connectedness and feelings of belonging are mixed, and they will be further examined in the third phase of research.

### Social connectedness and feelings of belonging

In the second wave of research, over 75% of survey respondents said that they felt they **belong to their local area** regardless of the programme in which they were involved.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, over 70% of the surveyed project participants reported that they were **satisfied with their local area**.

Comparable percentages of participants in Active Communities (76%) and Local Conversations (77%) reported that they **trusted people who live in their neighbourhood**.<sup>8</sup> In terms of perceptions of **safety after dark**, there were slight differences between participants in the two programmes, with 57% of Active Communities participants and 63% of Local Conversations participants giving positive answers.

## How safe do you feel walking alone in your neighbourhood after dark?

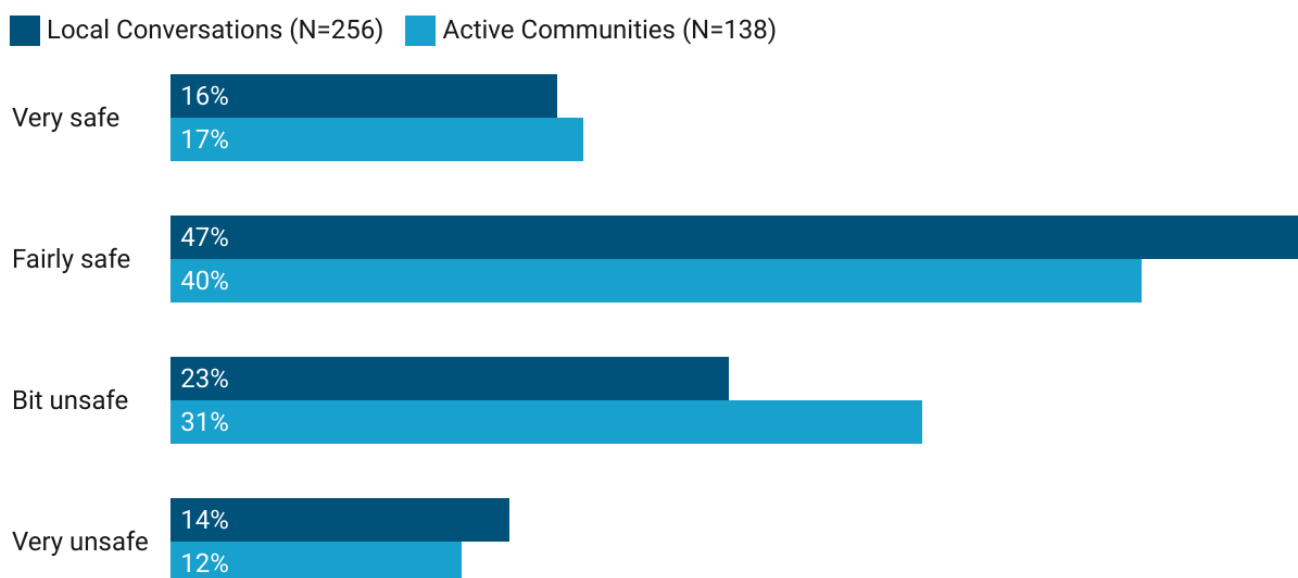


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, Wave 2 (March 2022), Social Life • Created with Datawrapper

The analysis of the combined dataset from the first and second waves shows that, across programmes and nations, **the surveyed project participants had more positive perceptions of social connectedness, belonging and trust than people living in 20% or 30% most deprived communities in the UK (referred to throughout this report as people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage).**<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> “Thinking about your neighbourhood, please answer how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood”; Strongly agree, Agree, Neither, Disagree, Strongly disagree.

<sup>8</sup> “Thinking about the people who live in this neighbourhood, to what extent do you believe they can be trusted?”; Many, Some, A few, None.

<sup>9</sup> Understanding Society and the National Survey for Wales were broken down by IMD, so the survey responses are benchmarked to neighbourhoods falling in the bottom 30% of IMD. Community Life Survey and the Scottish Household Survey were also broken down by IMD but the survey responses could only be matched to IMD quintiles instead of deciles. This is why we matched the Community Life Survey and Scottish Household Survey questions to the bottom 20% of neighbourhoods by IMD score.

- 84% of respondents agreed that the friendships and associations they have with other people in their neighbourhood mean a lot to them, compared to 49% of the people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage.
- 55% of those surveyed agreed that they borrow things and exchange favours with their neighbours, compared to 32% of the people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage.
- 75% of those surveyed agreed that they stop and talk to their neighbours, compared to 57% of the people living in areas characterised by similarly high levels of disadvantage.
- 79% of respondents agreed that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, compared to 70% of the people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage.

## 'Feelings of belonging' factor

■ % of positive responses for all surveyed project participants   ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

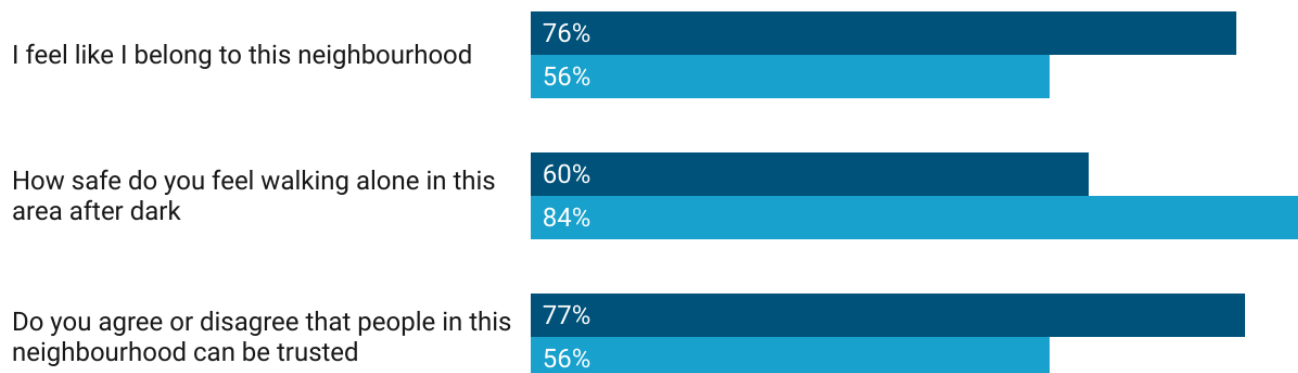


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

Across programmes and nations, project participants were **less positive about safety after dark** (60% compared to 84%, combined dataset), which is in line with the findings from the first wave of research.

#### Local Conversations - across projects

78% of those surveyed agreed that they stop and talk to their neighbours

85% of respondents agreed that the friendships and associations they have with other people in their neighbourhood mean a lot to them

56% of those surveyed agreed that they borrow things and exchange favours with their neighbours

78% of respondents agreed that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together

77% of respondents agreed that people in the neighbourhood can be trusted

#### Active Communities - across projects

70% of those surveyed agreed that they stop and talk to their neighbours

83% of respondents agreed that the friendships and associations they have with other people in their neighbourhood mean a lot to them

54% of those surveyed agreed that they borrow things and exchange favours with their neighbours

83% of respondents agreed that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together

77% of respondents agreed that people in the neighbourhood can be trusted

The benchmarking analysis also considered each programme separately. Local Conversations respondents **had more positive perceptions of community power, social connectedness, and belonging** than people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in the UK. Local Conversations respondents had, however, **less positive perceptions of safety after dark** than people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in the UK.

As with Local Conversations comparisons, benchmarking reveals that overall the surveyed Active Communities respondents **had more positive perceptions of community power, social connectedness and some aspects of feelings of belonging** compared to people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in the UK. Similarly to Local Conversations, Active Communities respondents also had **less positive perceptions of safety after dark**.

By exploring the data comparatively across the three nations, some differences emerged.

Local Conversations in England Local Conversations in Scotland Local Conversations in Wales

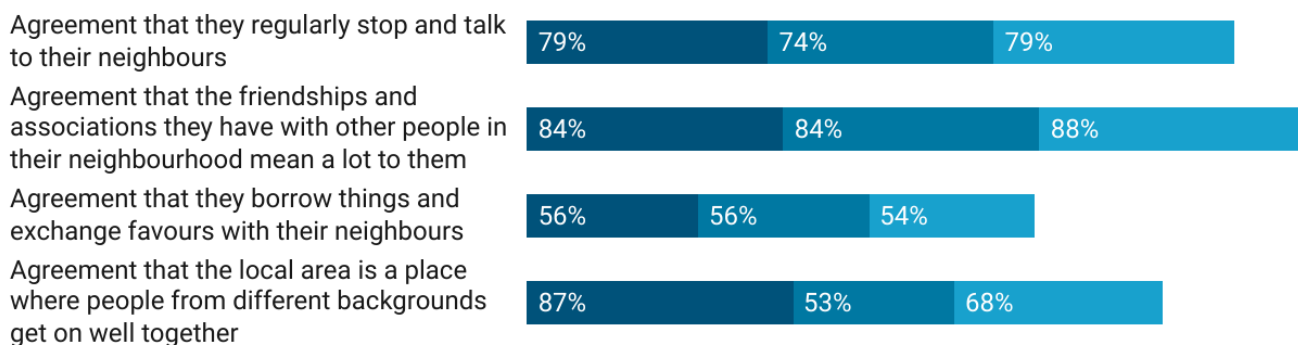
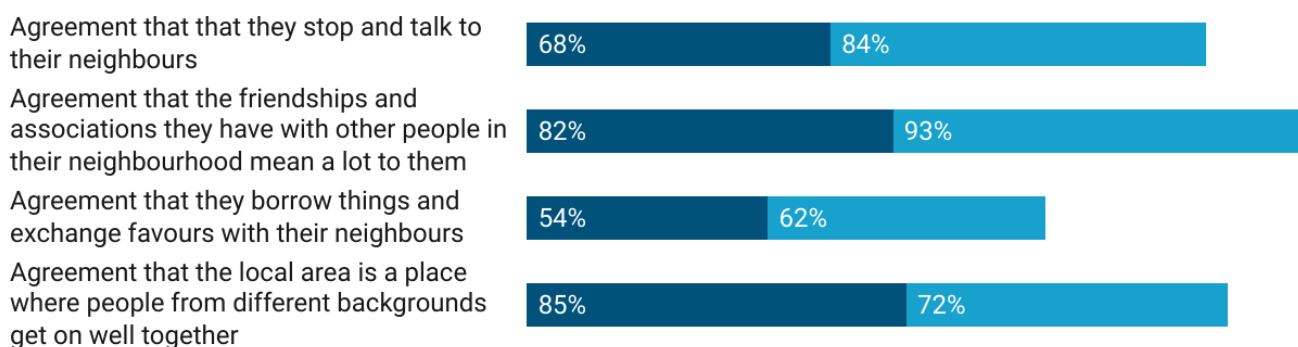


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life. • Created with Datawrapper

Active Communities in England Active Communities in Wales



*The sample of participants in Active Communities projects based in Scotland is very small so the data is not included*

Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life. • Created with Datawrapper

### 3.2 Achieving community power and its impact on longer-term changes

Following People’s Health Trust’s theory of change, this section explores the community power outcome and its impact on the surveyed respondents involved in the projects funded by People’s Health Trust. The focus is on changes in participants’ social connections, feelings of belonging, wellbeing, and general health.

Overall, surveyed project participants had **more positive perceptions of community power, social connectedness and some aspects of feelings of belonging** than people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage.

## 'Community power' factor

■ % of positive responses for all surveyed project participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

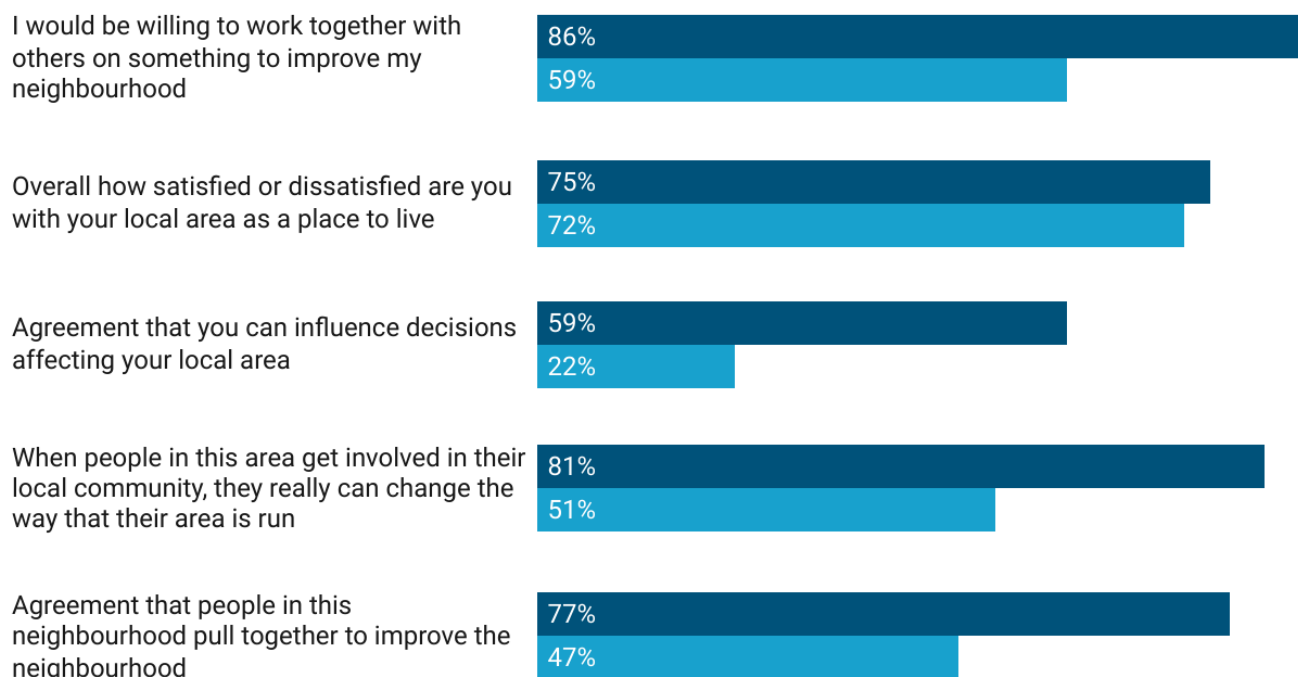


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

Regression models based on the second wave and the combined waves shows that participation in Local Conversations projects is a good predictor of community power. Both the length and depth of participation in Local Conversations have a positive impact on participants' experience of community power. This corroborates the findings of the first wave of research. The highlighted variables are statistically significant predictors.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	6.41	0.23		0.00
Have been involved 1 month or more but less than a year	0.19	0.27	0.05	0.47
Have been involved 1 year or more but less than 3 years	0.34	0.26	0.10	0.19
Have been involved more than 3 years	0.71	0.26	0.23	0.01
I participate regularly in activities but not in steering or core group meetings	0.57	0.17	0.18	0.00
I participate in steering or core group meetings and other project activities regularly	1.08	0.17	0.33	0.00

Local Conversations participants, combined dataset (Wave 1 and Wave 2), Dependent Variable: 'Community power' factor. R Square = 0.133



The same regression models were run separately for the Active Communities programme, both on the second wave and the combined waves. The depth of participation has a positive impact on community power, but the length of participation does not. Like in the first wave of research, these results are different from the findings for Local Conversations - but this is not surprising given the differences between the two programmes.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	6.56	0.33		0.00
Have been involved 1 month or more but less than a year	-0.22	0.35	-0.08	0.53
Have been involved 1 year or more but less than 3 years	0.12	0.36	0.04	0.75
Have been involved more than 3 years	0.29	0.36	0.09	0.42
I participate regularly in activities but not in steering or core group meetings	0.62	0.22	0.22	0.00
I participate in steering or core group meetings and other project activities regularly	1.16	0.23	0.37	0.00

Active Communities participants, combined dataset (Wave 1 and Wave 2), Dependent Variable: 'Community power' factor. R Square = 0.101

Next, we looked at the relationship between social connectedness, confidence and skills, and feelings of belonging on the one hand and wellbeing on the other as they are key elements of People's Health Trust's theory of change.

For Local Conversations participants, both the **'feelings of belonging' factor** (perceptions of trust, feelings of belonging, safety, and agreement that people from different backgrounds get on well together) and the **'confidence and skills' factor** have a positive impact on participants' wellbeing (results evidenced by regression models based on both the second wave and the combined dataset from wave 1 and 2). This result corroborates the findings of the first wave of research.

The second wave findings resemble those of the first wave in so far as the 'social connectedness' factor is not a good predictor of wellbeing.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	15.83	1.14		0.00
Social connectedness factor	0.02	0.20	0.01	0.92
Confidence and skills factor	0.54	0.13	0.22	0.00
Feelings of belonging factor	0.73	0.17	0.25	0.00

Local Conversations participants, combined dataset (Wave 1 and Wave 2), Dependent Variable: SWEMWEBS. R Square = 0.141

In the case of the surveyed Active Communities participants, only the ‘**confidence and skills**’ factor is a **statistically significant predictor of wellbeing**, showing that improved confidence and skills through the programme leads to increased perceptions of wellbeing. This finding is supported by regression models run both on the second wave and the combined dataset, but the models have low explanatory power. Additional data from the third wave is needed to better discern the strength of the identified relationship between confidence and skills and wellbeing.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	15.47	1.79		0.00
Social connectedness factor	0.20	0.28	0.06	0.47
<b>Confidence and skills factor</b>	<b>0.68</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>0.23</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Feelings of belonging factor	0.25	0.25	0.08	0.31

Active Communities participants, combined dataset (Wave 1 and Wave 2), Dependent Variable: SWEMWBS. R Square = 0.086

Next, the regression analysis examined whether the same three factors (**confidence and skills, social connectedness, and feelings of belonging**) might also have an impact on community power. For Local Conversations, this is very much the case.

These results corroborate the findings from the first wave of research and evidence the Local Conversations theory of change (results hold for regression models run on the second wave and the combined waves). The third and final phase of research will allow us to further assess the reliability of these analyses.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	0.85	0.19		0.00
<b>Social connectedness factor</b>	<b>0.35</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.37</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Confidence and skills factor</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.35</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Feelings of belonging factor</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.33</b>	<b>0.00</b>

Local Conversations participants, combined dataset (Wave 1 and Wave 2), Dependent Variable: Community power factor. R Square = 0.716

Like with Local Conversations, **stronger social networks, increased confidence and skills, and improved feelings of belonging lead to improved perceptions of community power for participants in Active Communities projects** (results hold for regression models based on the second wave and the combined waves).

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	0.99	0.29		0.00
<b>Social connectedness factor</b>	<b>0.34</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>0.36</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Confidence and skills factor</b>	<b>0.21</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>0.27</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Feelings of belonging factor</b>	<b>0.30</b>	<b>0.04</b>	<b>0.35</b>	<b>0.00</b>

Active Communities participants, combined dataset (Wave 1 and Wave 2), Dependent Variable: Community power factor. R Square = 0.652

Two other series of regression analyses explored the relationship between the ‘community power’ factor and wellbeing, and the ‘community power’ factor and self-rated health for both programmes.

For the surveyed participants in Local Conversations, the ‘community power’ factor is a statistically significant predictor of wellbeing (this result holds for regression models run on the second wave and the combined dataset, and it is also supported by findings from the first wave). This shows that, for Local Conversations, increased community power leads to more positive perceptions of wellbeing.

The analysis we ran on the combined dataset for Local Conversations also shows that the ‘community power’ factor is a predictor of self-rated health but the regression model has very low explanatory power (the regression model run on the data from the second wave alone is not statistically significant). These mixed findings about the relationship between community power and self-rated health will be investigated further in the third phase of research.

For Active Communities projects, community power is a statistically significant predictor of both wellbeing and self-rated health. As predicted by the theory of change, higher levels of individual and collective action and control (community power) lead to more positive perceptions of health and wellbeing. The patterns identified here support the findings from the first wave.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	
(Constant)	1.92	0.28		0.00
Community power factor	0.22	0.04	0.35	0.00

Active Communities participants, combined dataset (Wave 1 and Wave 2), Dependent Variable: Self-rated health.  
R Square = 0.118

To summarise, for Local Conversations, these analyses provide support for the theory of change in several key ways:

- Participation in Local Conversations had a positive impact on participants’ perceptions of community power [finding corroborated by Wave 2 and combined datasets Wave 1 and Wave 2]
- Participation in Local Conversations led to improved confidence and skills [finding corroborated by Wave 2 and combined datasets Wave 1 and Wave 2]
- Stronger social networks, improved confidence and skills and more cohesive communities had a positive impact on participants’ perceptions of community power [finding corroborated by Wave 2 and combined datasets Wave 1 and Wave 2]
- Improved perceptions of community power had a positive impact on participants’ wellbeing [finding corroborated by Wave 2 and combined datasets Wave 1 and Wave 2].

The findings of regression models are supported by the analysis of open-ended questions included in the participant survey. In response to the question about whether they felt that participating in the Local

Conversations project made a difference in their lives, those surveyed mentioned most frequently that the projects impacted positively on their social networks (46% of those who answered the question), community power (23% of those who answered the question), increased opportunities to take part in activities (23% of those who answered the question), and mental health and wellbeing (21% of those who answered the question). Participants' responses bring life to the statistical models, describing how the positive impact of the programme on social networks, community power and wellbeing unfolds for different people:

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***“Yes [it has made a difference in my life], because it has allowed me to take a more in-depth look at [the local area] and it feels good to be involved with the community.***

*LC survey participant, 1 month or more, but less than 1 year*

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***“I can come with issues and meet people struggling with similar things. Good thing to get involved in and keep busy.”***

*LC survey participant, 3 years or more*

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***“It’s made me more aware of what’s happening in my local area and been able to voice my opinions and concerns.”***

*LC survey participant, 1 year or more, but less than 3 years*

In summary, for Active Communities projects, these analyses provide support for the theory of change in a number of key ways:

- **Participation in Active Communities projects had positive impact on community power** [finding corroborated by Wave 2 and combined datasets Wave 1 and Wave 2]
- **Stronger social networks, improved confidence and skills and more cohesive communities have a positive impact on community power** [finding corroborated by Wave 2 and combined datasets Wave 1 and Wave 2]
- **Improved community power has a positive impact on participants’ wellbeing and health** [finding corroborated by Wave 2 and combined datasets Wave 1 and Wave 2].

These findings are supported by participants’ responses to the open-ended question focused on whether the projects made a difference in their lives. Active Communities participants noted that projects positively impacted on their social links and ties (52% of those who answered the question) and improved health and wellbeing (33% of those who answered the question). The following quotes illustrate the most common responses received:

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*“Getting out in fresh air helps with mental health, keeps my brain ticking and stops me feeling ‘old’.”*

*AC survey participant, 1 year or more, but less than 3 years*

---

*“Yes [the project made a difference in my life]. I feel more active after I had cancer. [I] felt isolated and very self-conscious. But with the activities in my local [community] has given me the self-confidence to be more active and not feel [crippled] by cancer. I also have a life to live.”*

*AC survey participant, 3 years or more*

---

*“[It] makes me happy. [I’m] learning about new things, [I’m] learning so much as it’s our second language. I have made very good friendships. I relax in the workshops, [it’s] very friendly and [I] feel strong. ‘You [have] my back’.”*

*AC survey participant, 1 month or more, but less than 1 year*

Data from the third wave will further improve the reliability of these analyses and allow us to better understand the mechanisms of change outlined in the Trust’s programmes’ theory of change.

### **3.3 The role of local contexts in shaping the outcomes for individuals and communities**

The survey of project participants asked them to rate a series of aspects of their community and neighbourhood including housing, public transport and relationships with people in the local area. Their answers bring attention to a series of opportunities and barriers that have shaped these local communities over the years. These issues also impact on community engagement, thus affecting short- and long-term health equity changes locally.

## How would you rate the following aspects of your community and neighbourhood? (all surveyed project participants)

■ Poor ■ Acceptable ■ Good

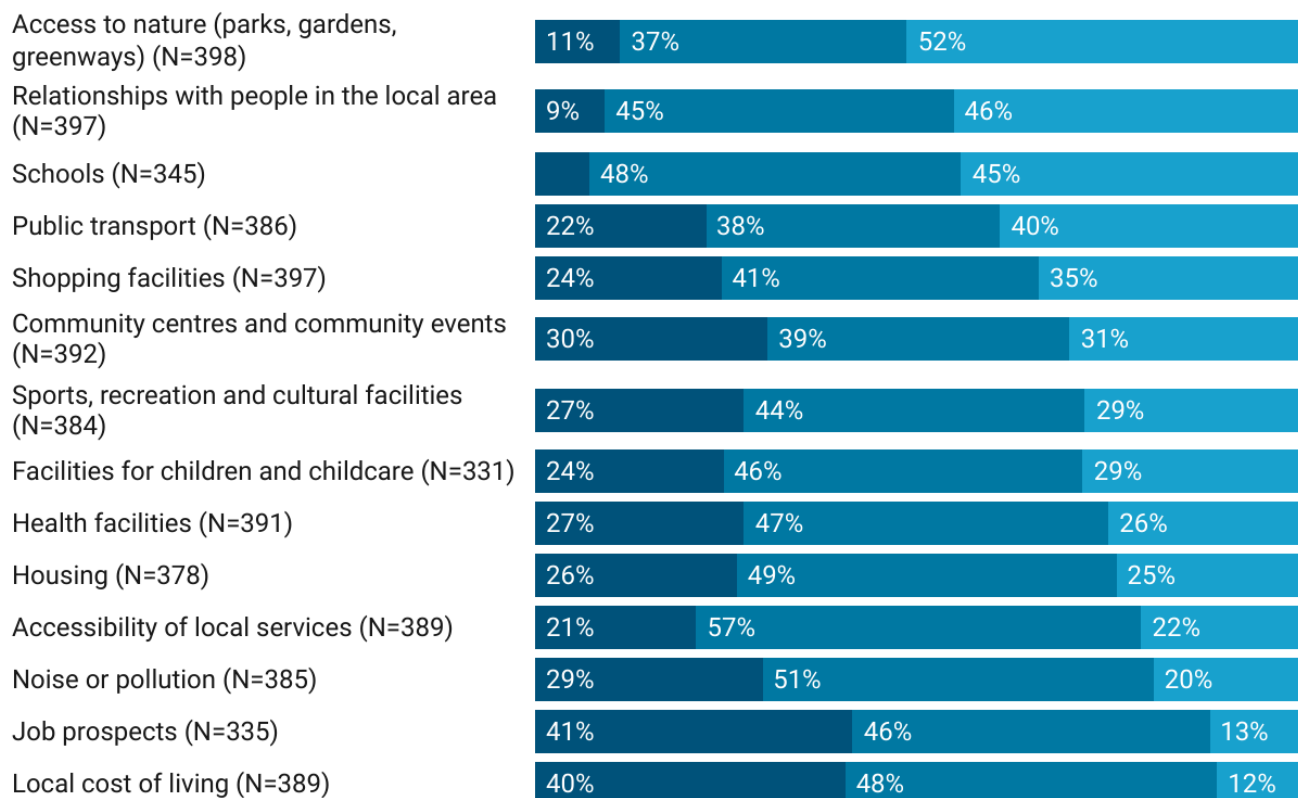


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, Wave 2 (March 2022), Social Life • Created with Datawrapper

Across the two programmes, the local cost of living and job opportunities were identified as key barriers by participants in the projects funded through People’s Health Trust. Relationships with people in the local area and the accessibility of nature (parks, gardens, green spaces) appeared as enablers for participants in both programmes. The aggregated data for all of the surveyed participants shows that about half of the respondents rated ‘Access to nature’ as ‘Good’ in their local area. Relationships with people in the local area had the second highest rating, with 46% of surveyed project participants rating it as ‘Good’.

‘Local cost of living’, ‘Job prospects’ and ‘Noise or pollution’ received the lowest ratings, pointing to the most important challenges experienced by project participants. Over 40% of them rated ‘Job prospects’ and ‘Local cost of living’ as ‘Poor’. These findings are consistent with the results of the first wave of research.

# How would you rate the following aspects of your community and neighbourhood? (comparison between Local Conversations and Active Communities participants)

■ Poor ■ Acceptable ■ Good

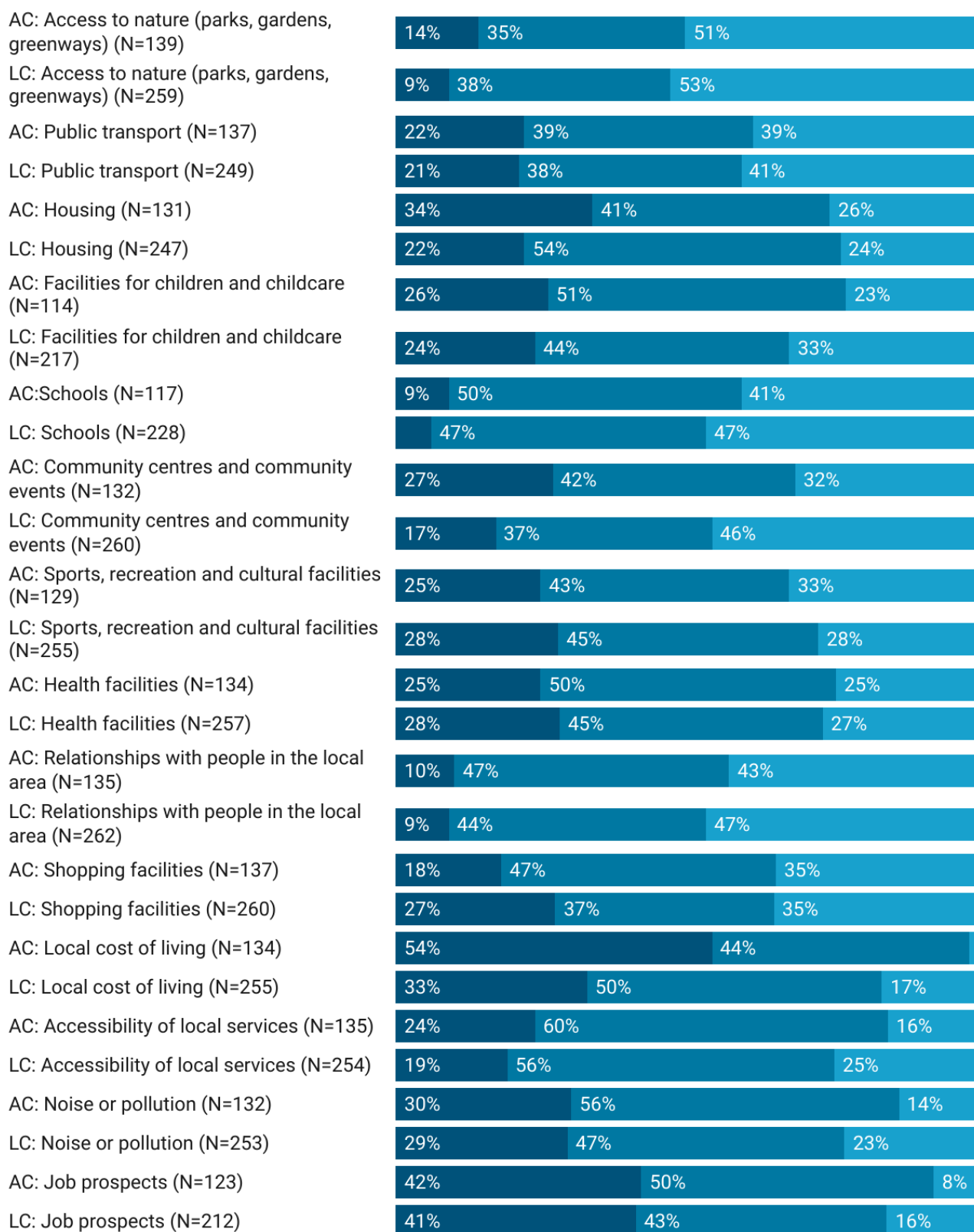


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, Wave 2 (March 2022), Social Life • Created with Datawrapper

The key difference between the two programmes relates to participants' perceptions of the cost of living, with a far higher proportion of respondents involved in the Active Communities programme rating this as poor in their community or neighbourhood. Similarities between the two programmes include perceptions of 'access to nature' and 'relationships with people in the local area", with high ratings across the two programmes. 'Noise or pollution' and 'job prospects' have very poor ratings for both programmes.

### 3.4 A brief comparison across programmes (findings from the combined dataset, Wave 1 and 2)

#### Local Conversations - across projects

86% of those surveyed agreed that they would be willing to work together with others on somethings to improve their neighbourhood

58% those surveyed agreed that they can influence decisions affecting their local area

#### Active Communities - across projects

86% of those surveyed agreed that they would be willing to work together with others on somethings to improve their neighbourhood

59% those surveyed agreed that they can influence decisions affecting their local area

#### Local Conversations - comparative overview

Across the programme, the surveyed participants tended to have **more positive perceptions of community power, social connectedness, trust and belonging** than people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in the UK. Participants in the Local Conversations projects had **less positive perceptions of safety after dark** (60% compared to 84%) than people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage. Key findings include:

Regularly stopping and talking with people in the neighbourhood (78% compared to 57%)

Importance of friendships and associations with people in the neighbourhood (85% compared to 49%).

Local Conversations in England Local Conversations in Scotland Local Conversations in Wales

Agreement that they would be willing to work together with others on something to improve their neighbourhood



Agreement that they can influence decisions affecting their local area



Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

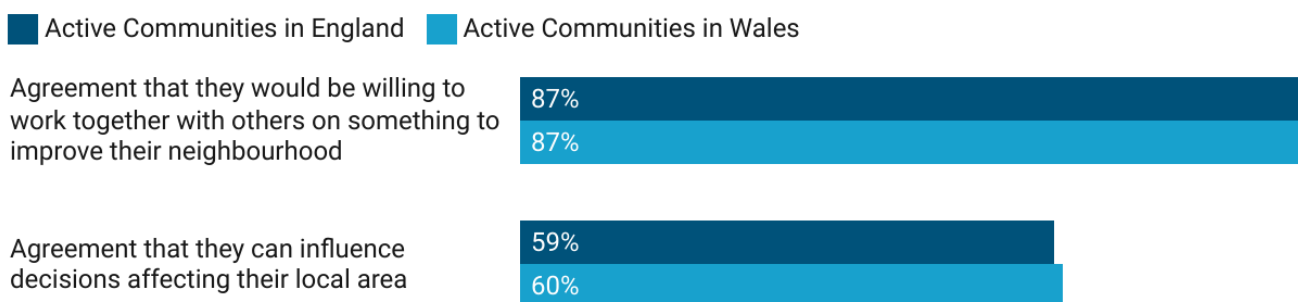


## Active Communities - comparative overview

The surveyed participants tended to have **more positive perceptions of community power, social connectedness, trust and belonging** than respondents living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in the UK. Key findings include:

- Perceptions of individual control over decisions affecting one's local area (59% compared to 22%)
- Regularly stopping and talking with people in the neighbourhood (70% compared to 57%)
- Importance of friendships and associations with people in the neighbourhood (83% compared to 49%)

Participants in the Active Conversations projects were **less positive about perceptions of safety after dark** (61% compared to 84%) than respondents living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in the UK.



*The sample of participants in Active Communities projects based in Scotland is very small so the data is not included.*

Chart: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Source: Social Life • Created with Datawrapper

## 4 Survey of practitioners: main findings

This section describes the findings of the survey of practitioners carried out in March 2022. It involved eight Local Conversations (of 11) and 146 Active Communities practitioners. The focus of this online survey was to gather insight into how practitioners evaluate project progress against key elements of the theory of change.

### What stage is your People's Health Trust funded project at currently?

■ Early stages of the project ■ Roughly in the middle of the project ■ Towards the end of project delivery  
■ Other ■ Have just completed the application process

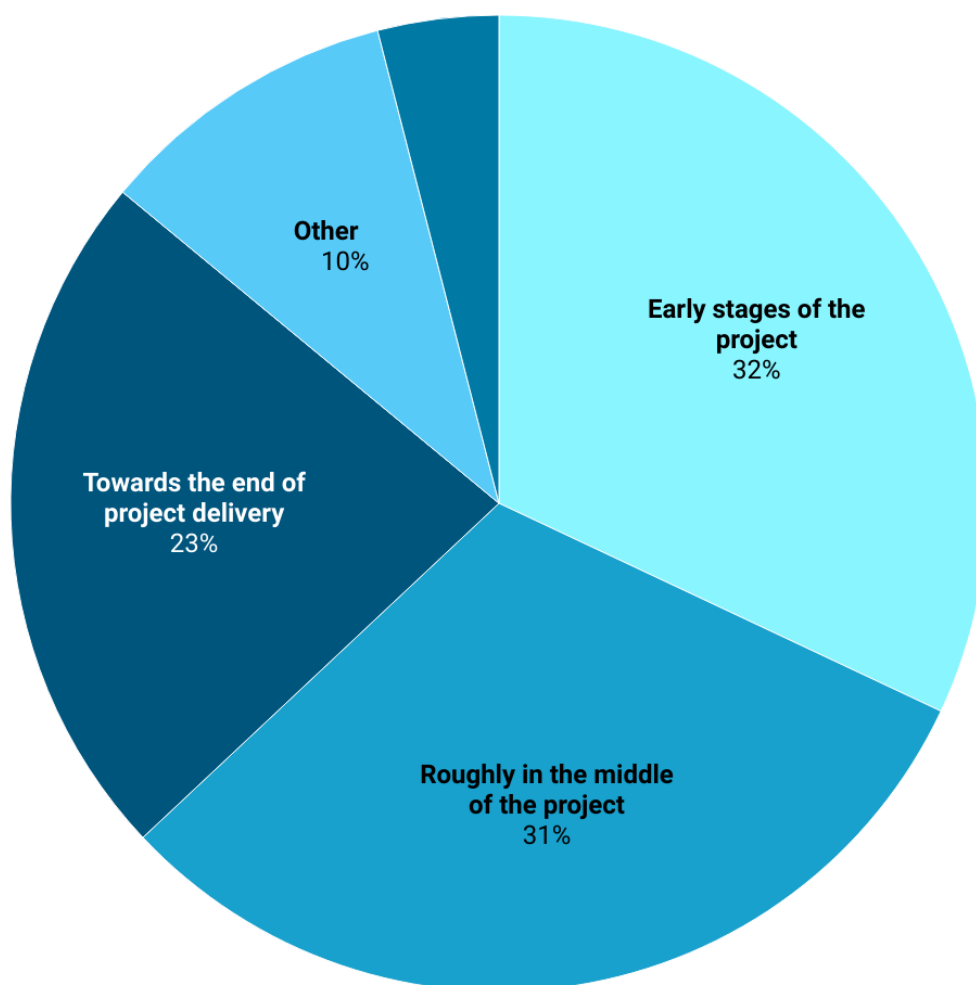


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of practitioners, Wave 2 (March 2022), Social Life • Created with Datawrapper

Roughly half of the practitioners in each programme completed the survey. About a third of respondents participating in Active Communities projects were in the early stages, 31% in the middle of the project, and 23% towards project completion. More than half of the Active Communities projects were seeking or applying for further funding, showing that the majority of them were taking steps towards ensuring they could continue their work with local people.

## Do you intend to carry on project activities after the end of the grant from People’s Health Trust?

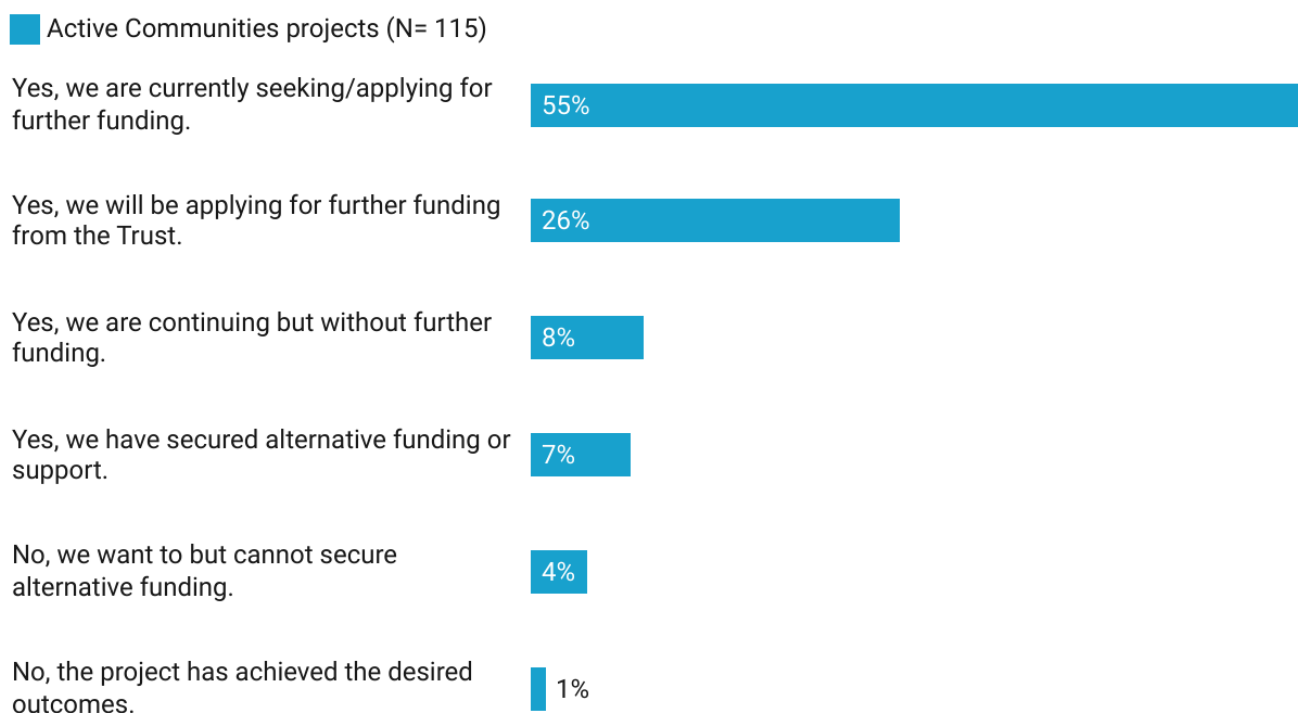


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of practitioners, Wave 2 (March 2022), Social Life • Created with Datawrapper

When asked whether, over the past six months, work related to Local Conversations helped their organisation secure funding from other sources, half of the Local Conversations practitioners said yes. The amounts they secured differed from project to project and ranged from £6,000 to £30,000.

### 4.1 Understanding local barriers and enablers

The survey of practitioners provides further insight into the role of local contexts in shaping barriers and enablers for community engagement. As the participants’ survey showed, a lack of employment opportunities, the local cost of living and gaps in service provision (for instance, health services, children’s activities, or childcare facilities) are identified as major local challenges by practitioners across the two programmes.

The practitioners’ survey substantiates findings related to what enables and what limits daily life in the areas where the projects are based. Furthermore, they help us further understand how lived experience is shaped by multiple intersecting factors.

For both Local Conversations and Active Communities practitioners, the uncertainty of the pandemic and the increased hardship it placed upon residents were key barriers to projects returning to normal operations after the last round of government restrictions. Other significant barriers highlighted by practitioners across programmes included difficulty carrying out outreach and engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as recent changes that took place in the community.

## Are there any barriers to the project returning to normal operations after months of pandemic restrictions?

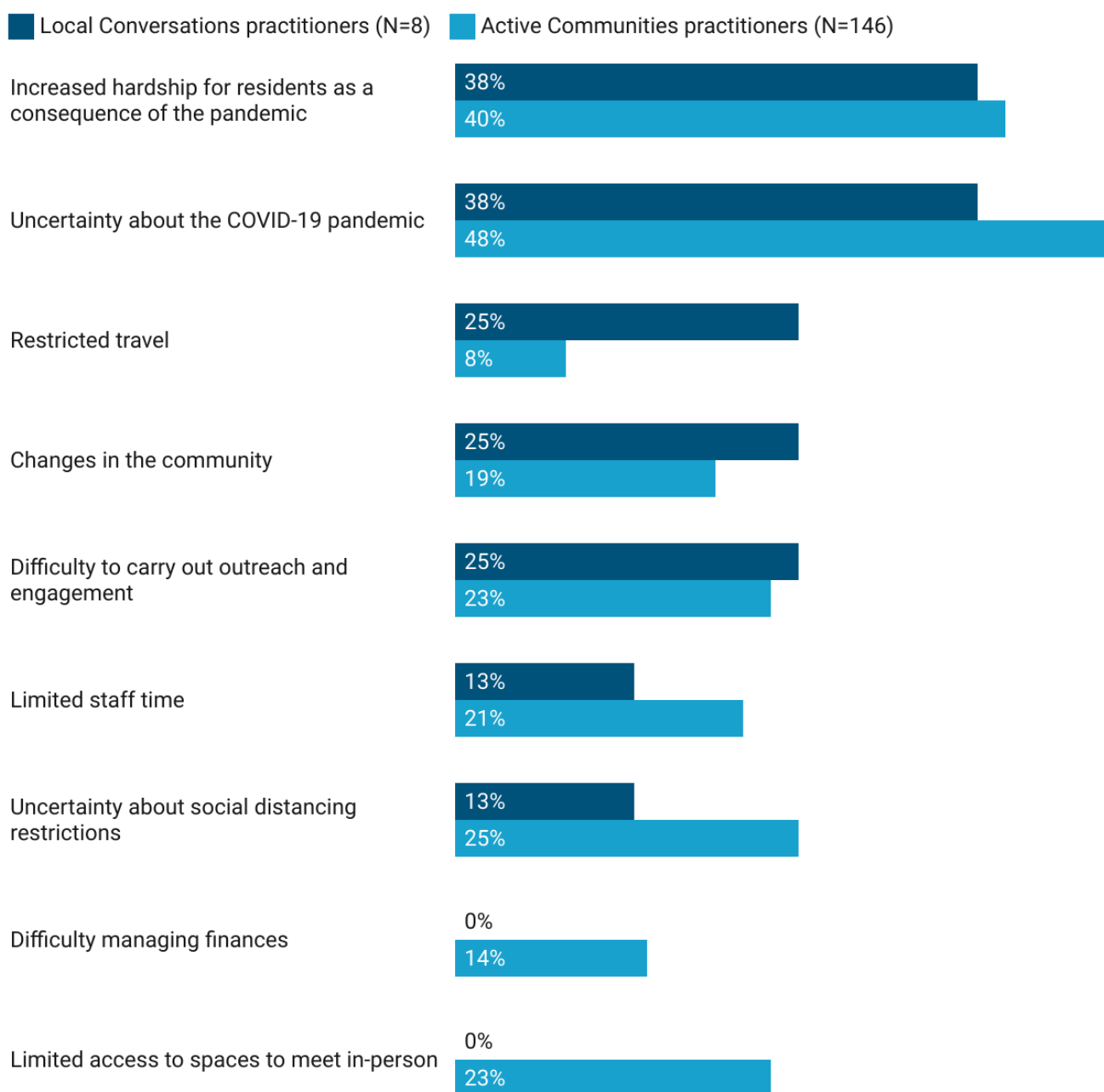


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of practitioners, Wave 2 (March 2022), Social Life • Created with Datawrapper

75% of Local Conversations practitioners and 47% of Active Communities practitioners said that certain groups were harder to engage in the past six months or did not get involved in project activities.

Both Active Communities and Local Conversations practitioners described a range of approaches used to address challenges in engaging groups. Of these, outreach was mentioned most frequently with practitioners using door-knocking, community events, and word of mouth strategies to reach people. Another key theme that emerged was improving the support offered to existing members. This could take the form of providing digital help or equipment, changing event times or premises, or implementing befriending schemes to encourage less confident members.

Regular contact was also mentioned by practitioners, and some highlighted tailoring communication to the needs of their members. Some practitioners also worked with other organisations to reach particular groups; for instance, they might advertise with local Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, disabled or LGBTQ+ groups. Finally, practitioners noted that fears about COVID-19 have remained a barrier to engagement, with some describing this as hard to overcome. They mentioned the importance of implementing COVID-19 safety measures and letting people know what precautions they are taking.

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*"We have paid for leaflet drops; explained how people can access Zoom just using a telephone; secured funding to give people in digital poverty a tablet PC and data sim; telephoned those who don't want to use the internet and offered to phone for a chat on a regular basis. What we have found is that many of those we originally engaged are particularly attracted to the face-to-face opportunities we offer and so quite a few don't want a one-to-one telephone call, or to phone into the project's Zoom meetings - or, in some cases, simply don't want online social contact. Conversely, many are too anxious/lacking confidence to attend face-to-face meet-ups just yet. However, face-to-face sessions have resumed and people are starting to trickle back. To deal with the issue of people not getting back out and about, we have secured funding to develop a 'peer befriending' project where volunteers will support people to rebuild their confidence/reduce their anxiety."*

*Active Communities practitioner, March 2022*

When asked if there was anything missing in terms of support that would help projects reach their long-term goals, Local Conversations practitioners expressed a range of views on current missing support and wider barriers. There was concern about securing larger premises, thinking ahead about sustaining projects beyond the funding period, and producing concise outputs about project impact that could be used for further funding opportunities. Other practitioners said that help with tackling structural barriers and establishing partnerships would enable them to reach long-term goals.

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*"Provide specific data on health outcomes...a real deep dive into 'headline' news which could be used to promote / help people understand and help to lever additional funding."*

*Local Conversations practitioner, March 2022*

Longer-term funding security was the most common answer given to the missing support question by Active Communities practitioners (17%). Practitioners said they had ideas about how to carry on with the project into the future but were unable to plan without securing core funding. Some would also like to see longer-term funding to account for the disruption caused by the pandemic. About a quarter of Active Communities practitioners who answered the questions felt that they needed increased resources for their project to thrive. These were mostly financial resources, such as paid hours for staffing or digital resources.

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*"We have been trying to shift from being a project-based organisation to finding core funding. We are too dependent on particular individuals to keep things going. The future is very insecure. We have exciting new ideas. People's Health Trust funding has been the best long-term funding we have had, but even that is only 2 years!"*

*Active Communities practitioner, March 2022*

Practitioners were also asked if there was anything that working with other local organisations could do to reach the project's goals. 34% of the Active Communities practitioners stated that they are already working with other organisations. The most cited benefit (22% of responses) of these collaborative efforts was spreading the word about the benefits of the project. Active Communities practitioners also mentioned cross-referring between organisations and increasing project participation as other benefits. Other organisations may also advertise for projects, raising awareness and widening access to groups that projects have found difficult to engage. Another cited benefit was sharing resources. Predominantly, this refers to the sharing of expertise and skills, and building up a common understanding of good practice in the community. A few practitioners noted that this kind of working provides opportunities for organisations to collaborate on events. 17% could not think of any ways in which collaboration would help their project goals, and a further 8% were uncertain what the benefits of collaboration would be.

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*"Working together can promote the project to lots of other people, encourage sharing of ideas and good practice, and signposting to other activities / services on offer; plus shared resources."*

*Active Communities practitioner, March 2022*

Local Conversations practitioners noted that they already collaborate with various local organisations. Many said they targeted certain groups in the community to engage with, such as youth groups. To this end, projects worked closely with local schools to highlight current issues such as safety, employment and youth involvement in the community. The projects have also collaborated with issue-based organisations to address matters relevant locally, including domestic abuse services or visibility for the Roma community. From these partnerships and engagements, the projects reported that they learned how shared goals between partners can improve the outcome of their collective efforts.

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*"[We're] working to strengthen relationships with local doctor's surgery, housing association and local council. Have learnt all organisations are facing similar barriers, be it working with other organisations and services or residents."*

*Local Conversations practitioner, March 2022*

## 4.2 Projects' impact on individual participants

This section examines practitioners' views on the impact of projects on individual participants. When asked how participants got involved in designing, delivering and developing the project, 75% of Local Conversations practitioners said this was done informally (by talking to someone who is part of decision-making group, or posting suggestions on social media, etc.). All of the Local Conversations practitioners noted it was also done by participating in regular project activities (attending project meetings, filling out evaluation surveys, etc.), taking part in sub-groups, and attending steering groups.

73% of the Active Communities practitioners answered that participants got involved by participating in regular project activities and only 52% of them said that participants got involved by taking part in steering group or other type of decision-making group.

75% of the Active Communities practitioners mentioned that a steering group or other type of decision-making group was established for the project. This took several different forms, such as a committee, a steering group, a board of trustees, or a user forum. Most of these involve a combination of members, volunteers, and staff or elected representatives. A smaller proportion, around 14% of practitioners, make use of an informal decision-making structure. These tend to be less involved in strategic planning and

more involved in short-term activity planning. They are open to everyone and often take place before or during activities. Around 6% of practitioners mentioned using a combination of these structures, such as a core group of members that bring informal user feedback to a regular committee meeting.

These findings further evidence the discussions about how informal and formal processes of coming together provide support for collective action and are key to improving the social determinants of health. This interpretation of local experiences is supported by the analysis project participants' responses, especially their comments on the project's impact on their lives discussed in the previous section.

## Thinking about the project's impact on individual participants in the past six months, please answer how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

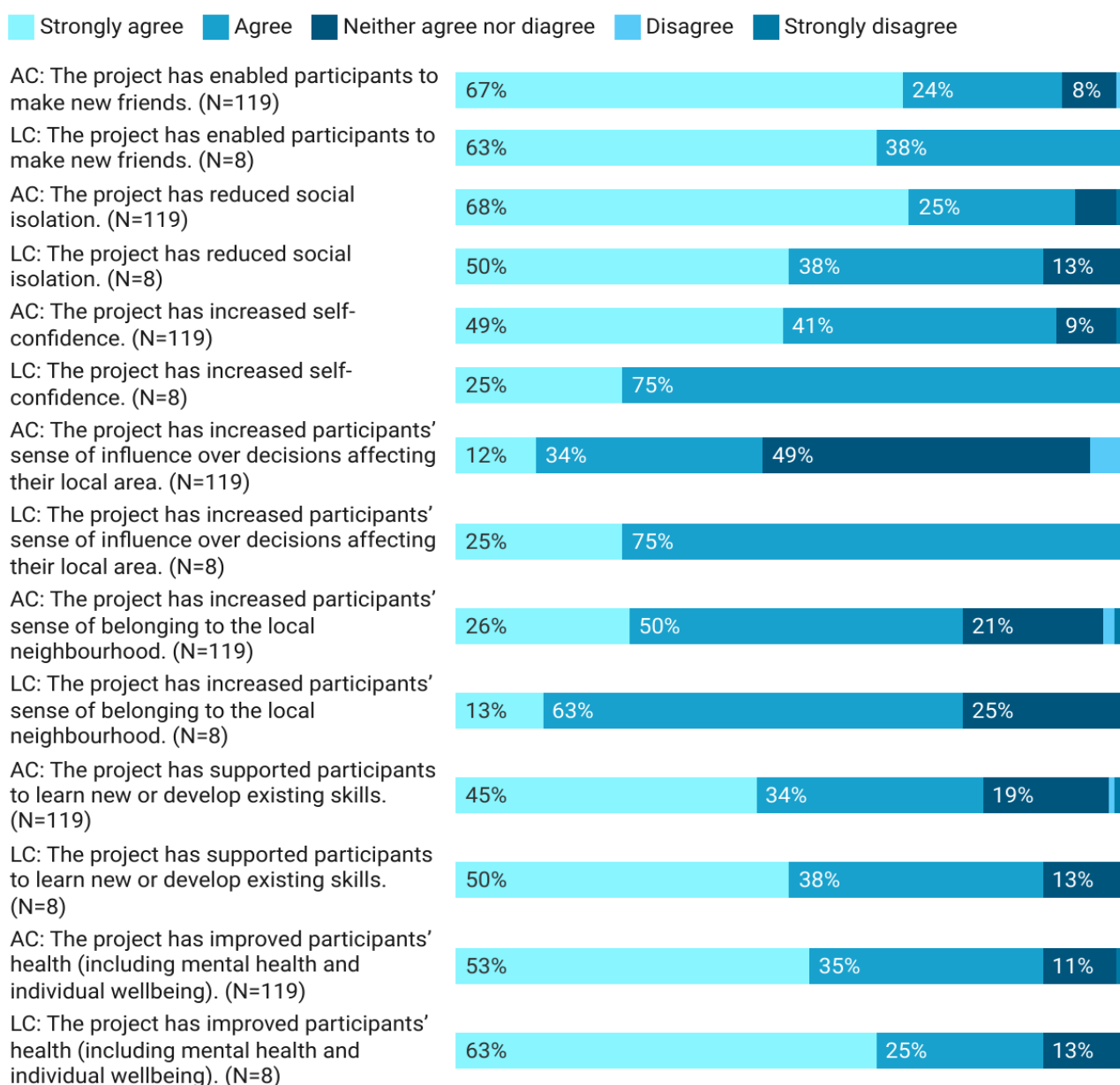


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of practitioners, Wave 2 (March 2022), Social Life • Created with Datawrapper

Practitioners and participants largely agree on the positive impacts the projects have on participants' health and wellbeing, developing skills and improving social connections. If we compare the findings from

the participant survey with these results, one thing to notice is that practitioners from both programmes held more positive perceptions of the projects' impact on self-confidence (AC: 90% for practitioners, compared to 83% for participants; LC: 100% for practitioners and 74% for participants).

### 4.3 Projects' impact on communities

The projects created opportunities for place-based collaborative work across both programmes, contributing gradually to the sustainability of project activities and local systems change. These positive trends are consistent with the responses collected in the first wave of the research.

A majority of project leads from both programmes thought that the project has facilitated new partnerships between local projects/organisations with common goals/interests (75% of Active Communities and 63% of Local Conversations practitioners). All Local Conversations practitioners who were surveyed and 30% of Active Communities practitioners reported that the projects have increased influence over neighbourhood services.

When asked how wider engagement events, including those with existing and potential partners, shaped decision-making processes and project priorities in the past six months, the majority of Local Conversations practitioners noted that these were a good opportunity to share information with the community.

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***"Wider engagement events have been a great way of informing others about the Local Conversations and gaining their views which helped shape the Community Plan for 2022-23. New opportunities are now being explored as a result of our engagement programme."***

*Local Conversations practitioner, March 2022*

Local Conversations practitioners also highlighted that wider engagement events were useful opportunities to explain to a larger audience what the goals of the project are and talk about its impact. Practitioners noted that these engagements may also lead to opportunities to work with new partners and attract larger groups of residents.

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***"The engagement with local residents has highlighted the importance for a community hub and the decision making for this has helped the steering group in making more of an informed decision and not rushing into the first potential venue that comes up and realising what the project and the steering group brings to the table when making decisions with potential partners."***

*Local Conversations practitioner, March 2022*



# Thinking about the project's impact on the community in the past six months, please answer how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

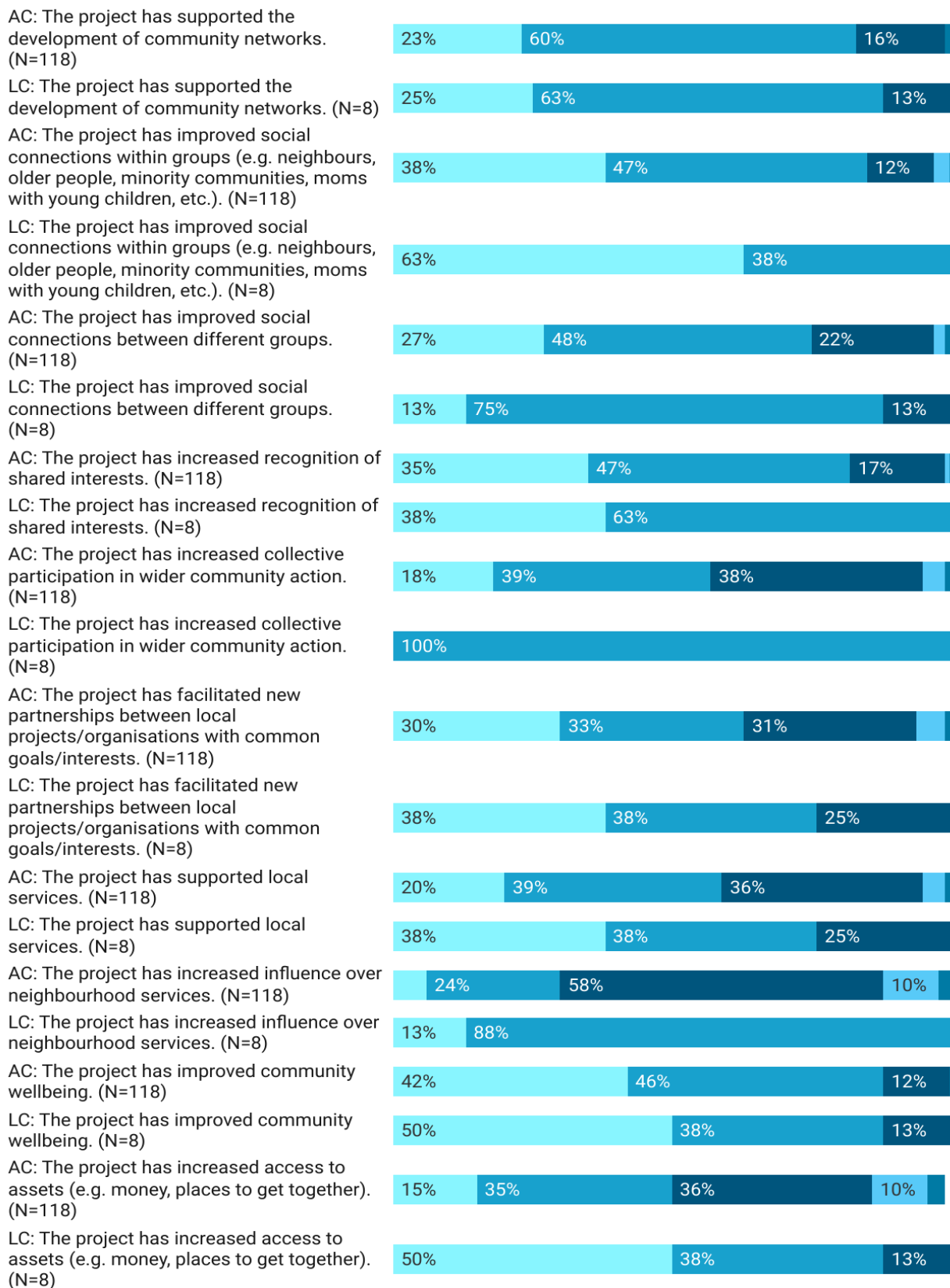


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of practitioners, Wave 2 (March 2022), Social Life • Created with Datawrapper

The projects **created opportunities for place-based collaborative work**, contributing gradually to the sustainability of project activities and local systems change. These positive trends are consistent with the responses collected in the first wave of the research. Key findings from the survey of practitioners include:

All of the surveyed practitioners involved in the Local Conversations programme and about a third of the practitioners involved in the Active Communities programme reported that the projects have increased their **influence over neighbourhood services**.

76% of the Local Conversations practitioners and 59% of Active Communities programme practitioners answered that the **projects have supported local services**.

76% of the surveyed Local Conversations practitioners and 63% of Active Communities programme practitioners said that the projects have **facilitated new partnerships** between local projects or organisations with common goals or interest.

#### 4.4 Lessons learnt in the past six months

When asked if they have learnt any lessons over the last six months that could help other projects realise their goals, about a third of the Active Communities practitioners mentioned the importance of being flexible. Many of these practitioners highlighted the disruptive effect that COVID-19 had on their projects. In response, they recommended an approach that is realistic with goal-setting and accepts the limits of the team's capacity. They also recommended setting up contingency plans, and trying out different ways of delivering activities and staying in contact with members (such as online formats).

Another important lesson was about listening to their community (17% of the Active Communities practitioners who answered the question). Practitioners stressed the significance of getting feedback from members and giving them ownership over projects, as well as listening to the wider community and designing a service that reflects its needs. Some practitioners also recommended having staff and representatives that reflect the demographics of the community.

12% of the Active Communities practitioners prioritised the importance of outreach in their work. For some of them this meant finding an approach that works, while others recommended that practitioners do not underestimate the barriers to participation that people in the community may be facing.

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*"Be flexible and remember that it's the participants who 'own' the project! I feel that this is essential when delivering the project, and in our case, we still have 3 project participants who are wary about joining any group activities due to Covid-19 fears. Despite the Active Communities programme stipulating that participants should be working together in group activities; we are not going to force these three participants to join in. We respect their feelings and fears, and ultimately, it's 'their' project. So, sometimes you have to be flexible to ensure that the community you are facilitating with a project don't start to feel that things are being done to them! We are listening to them and their ongoing needs."*

*Active Communities practitioner, March 2022*

The majority of the Local Conversations practitioners noted that practicing key project management steps would benefit them going forward. Such steps included managing workload, setting out clear steps for the project, plan meetings ahead and updating information available for project participants.

Local Conversations practitioners mentioned that projects would benefit from having shared goals across participant groups and ‘celebrating small wins.’ They also flagged that giving autonomy to projects participants could help bring the best results. Allowing the participants to make decisions and encouraging them to take on more responsibility were mentioned as key lessons moving forward.

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*"Never do for others what they can do for themselves. Trust in devolving power and decision making to volunteers, while ensuring that they are supported and well equipped to take on more responsibility."*

*Local Conversations practitioner, March 2022*

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*"Schedule meetings for the year ahead. Ensure paid staff provide written reports to steering group. Ensure work plans are reviewed and updated to ensure the project stays on track."*

*Local Conversations practitioner, March 2022*

# 5 Appendix

## 5.1 Benchmarking questions included in the survey of project participants

Sections	Survey question ( <i>italics indicate different questions used for England, Scotland and Wales</i> )	Survey to be used for benchmarking	England benchmarking geography	Scotland benchmark	Wales benchmark
Area belonging	I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood	Understanding Society Survey (UK)	OACs matched to Output Areas	OACs matched to Output Areas	OACs matched to Output Areas
Satisfaction (satisfaction with area)	<i>Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?</i>	Community Life Survey (England); National Survey for Wales	IMD quintiles matched to LSOAs		WIMD deciles matched to LSOAs
	<i>Thinking about the neighbourhood you live in, how would you rate it as a place to live - very good to very poor</i>	Scottish Household Survey		SIMD quintiles matched to Data Zones	
Safety	How safe do you feel walking alone in this area after dark?	Understanding Society Survey (UK)	OACs matched to Output Areas	OACs matched to Output Areas	OACs matched to Output Areas
Social cohesion	The friendships and associations I have with other people in my neighbourhood mean a lot to me.	Understanding Society Survey (UK)	OACs matched to Output Areas	OACs matched to Output Areas	OACs matched to Output Areas
	I regularly stop and talk with people in my neighbourhood.	Understanding Society Survey (UK)	OACs matched to Output Areas	OACs matched to Output Areas	OACs matched to Output Areas
	I would be willing to work together with others on something to improve my neighbourhood.	Understanding Society Survey (UK)	OACs matched to Output Areas	OACs matched to Output Areas	OACs matched to Output Areas
	I borrow things and exchange favours with my neighbours.	Understanding Society Survey (UK)	OACs matched to Output Areas	OACs matched to Output Areas	OACs matched to Output Areas
	<i>My local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.</i>	Community Life Survey (England); National Survey for Wales	IMD quintiles matched to LSOAs		WIMD deciles matched to LSOAs
	<i>This is a neighbourhood where people from different backgrounds get on well together</i>	Scottish Household Survey		SIMD quintiles matched to Data Zones	
Community and individual control	<i>I can personally influence decisions affecting my local area</i>	Community Life Survey (England)	IMD quintiles matched to LSOAs		
	<i>I can influence decisions affecting my local area</i>	Scottish Household Survey; National Survey for Wales		SIMD quintiles matched to Data Zones	WIMD deciles matched to LSOAs
Wellbeing	How dissatisfied or satisfied are you with your life overall?	Understanding Society Survey (UK)	OACs matched to Output Areas	OACs matched to Output Areas	OACs matched to Output Areas

## 5.2 Additional benchmarking analyses based on the combined dataset (waves 1 and 2)

### Benchmarking Local Conversations across the three nations

The data collected for all the Local Conversations projects across the three nations was compared to respondents in the USS and CLS samples for 20% or 30% most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK.<sup>10</sup> Overall, Local Conversations respondents had **more positive perceptions of community power, social**

<sup>10</sup> Understanding Society and the National Survey for Wales were broken down by IMD, so the survey responses are benchmarked to neighbourhoods falling in the bottom 30% of IMD. Community Life Survey and the Scottish Household Survey were also broken down by IMD but the survey responses could only be matched to IMD quintiles instead of deciles. This is why we matched the Community Life Survey and Scottish Household Survey questions to the bottom 20% of neighbourhoods by IMD score.

connectedness, and some aspects of belonging than people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in the UK.

## 'Community power' factor

■ % of positive responses for Local Conversations participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

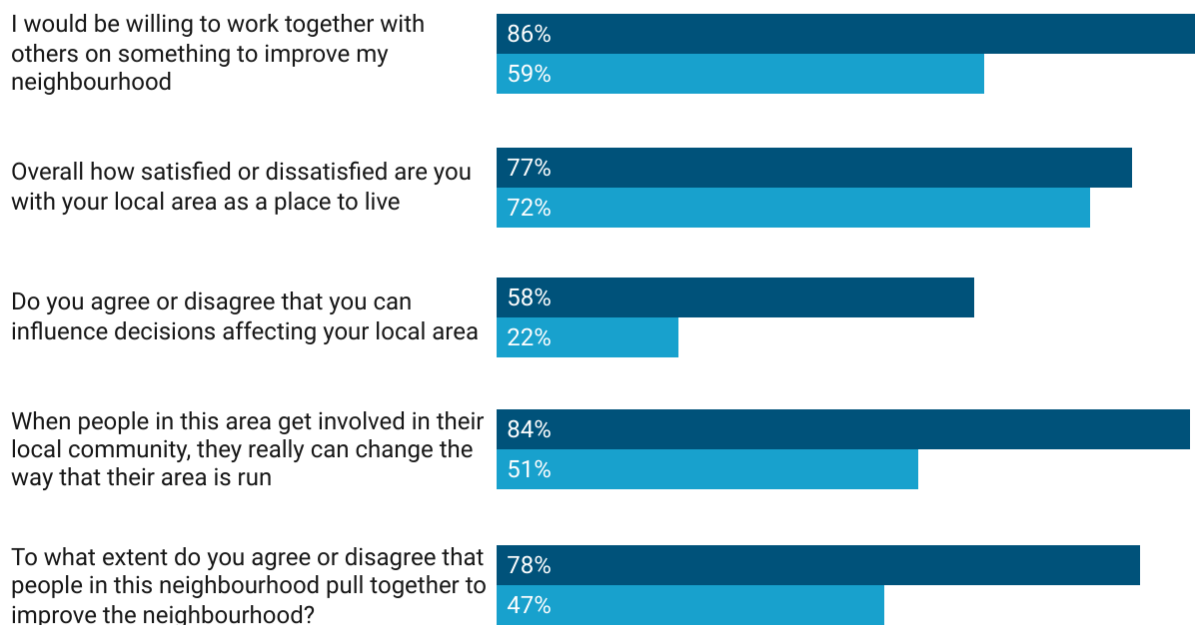


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

## 'Social connectedness' factor

■ % of positive responses for Local Conversations participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

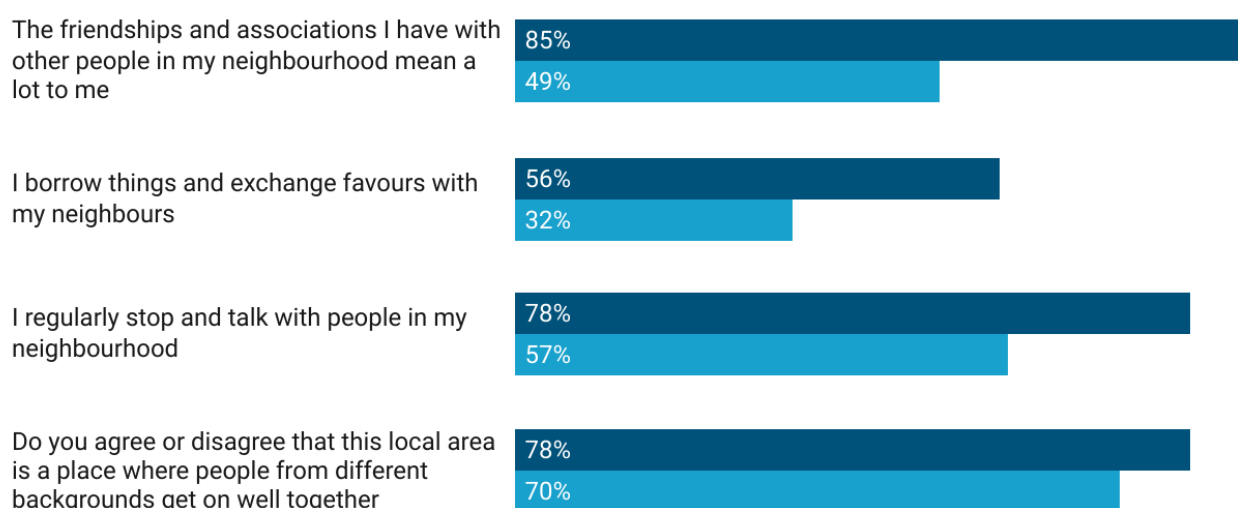


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

## 'Feelings of belonging' factor

■ % of positive responses for Local Conversations participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

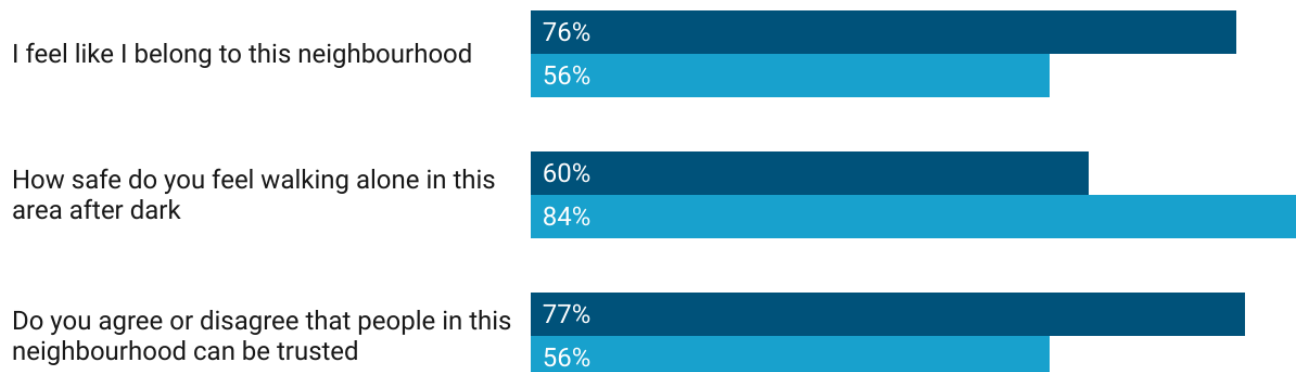


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

Local Conversations respondents had **similar perceptions of life satisfaction (66%)**, and **less positive perceptions of safety after dark (60% compared to 84%)** compared to people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in the UK.

### Local Conversations - ENGLAND<sup>11</sup>

Data from the Local Conversation projects located in England was compared to respondents in the USS and CLS samples for 20% or 30% most deprived neighbourhoods in England. Participants in Local Conversations projects in England had **more positive perceptions of community power, social connectedness, trust and some aspects of belonging** than people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in England. Key findings include:

Perceptions of individual control over decisions affecting one's local area (66% compared to 28%)

Willingness to work together with others on something to improve the neighbourhood (85% compared to 58%)

The importance of friendships and associations with people in the neighbourhood (84% compared to 49%).

<sup>11</sup> Two questions, "When people in this area get involved in their local community, they really can change the way that their area is run" and "To what extent do you agree or disagree that people in this neighbourhood pull together to improve the neighbourhood?" were part of the Community Life survey and were only benchmarked against England data.

## 'Community power' factor

■ % of positive responses for Local Conversations participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

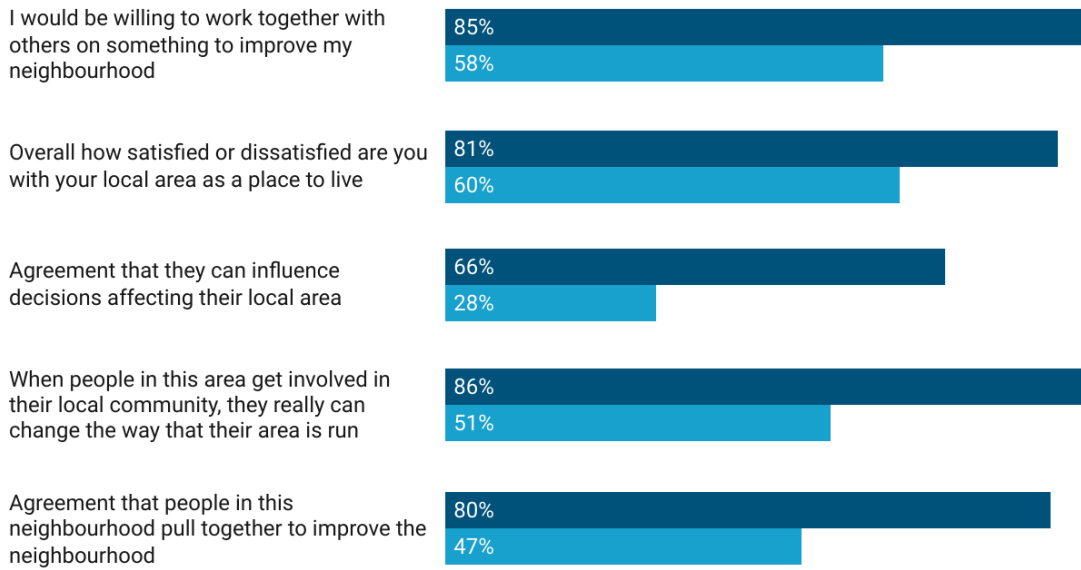


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

## 'Social connectedness' factor

■ % of positive responses for Local Conversations participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

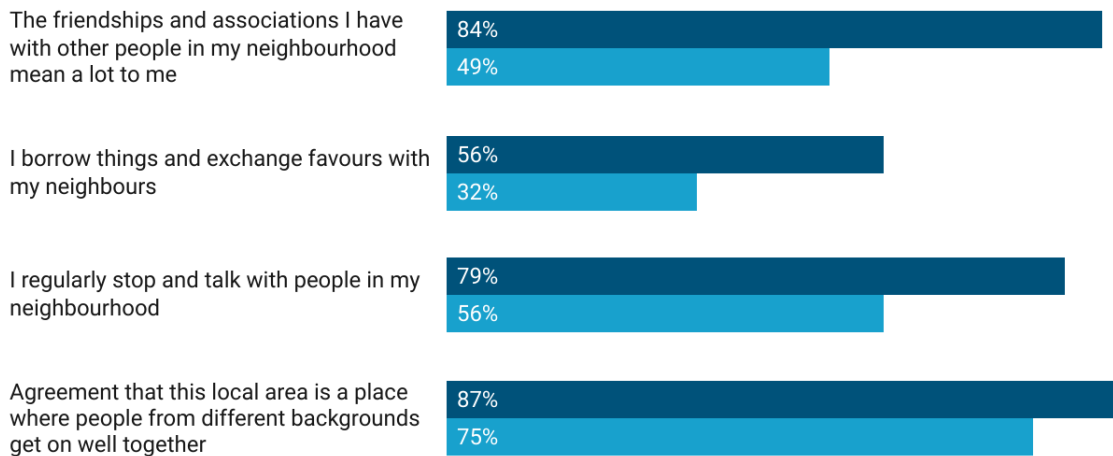


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

Participants in the Local Conversations projects in England were **less positive about perceptions of safety after dark** (58% compared to 83%) than respondents living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in England. The surveyed Local Conversation participants had only **slightly more positive perceptions of life satisfaction** compared to respondents living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in England (73% compared to 66%).

## 'Feelings of belonging' factor

■ % of positive responses for Local Conversations participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

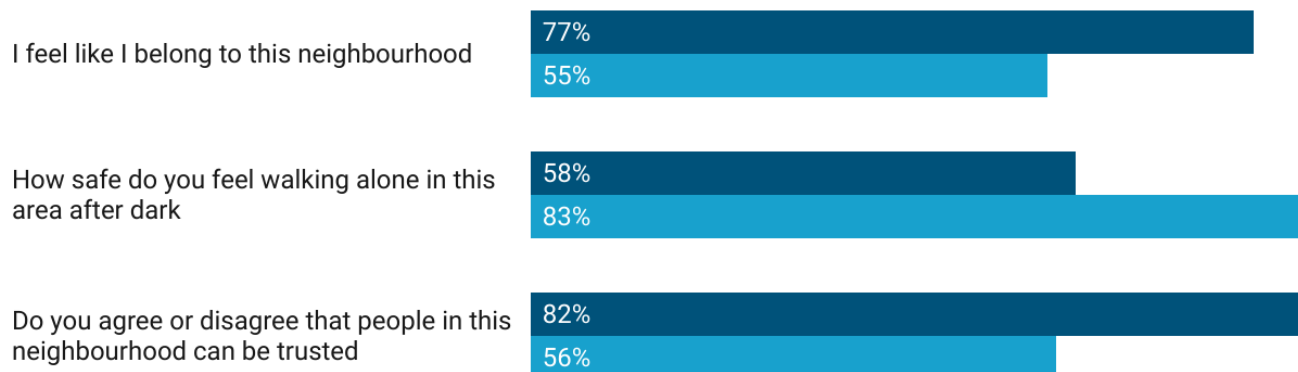


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

### Local Conversations - SCOTLAND

Participants in the Local Conversations projects were **more positive about most aspects of community power and social connectedness**. Key findings include:

Perceptions of individual control over decisions affecting one's local area (61% compared to 17%)

Willingness to work together with others on something to improve the neighbourhood (85% compared to 63%)

The importance of friendships and associations with people in the neighbourhood (84% compared to 51%)

Perceptions of borrowing things and exchanging favours with neighbours (56% compared to 29%).

## 'Community power' factor

■ % of positive responses for Local Conversations participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

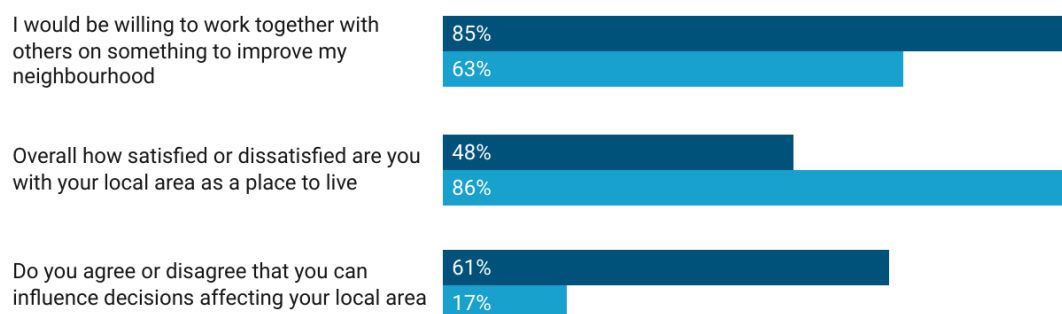


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper



## 'Social connectedness' factor

■ % of positive responses for Local Conversations participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

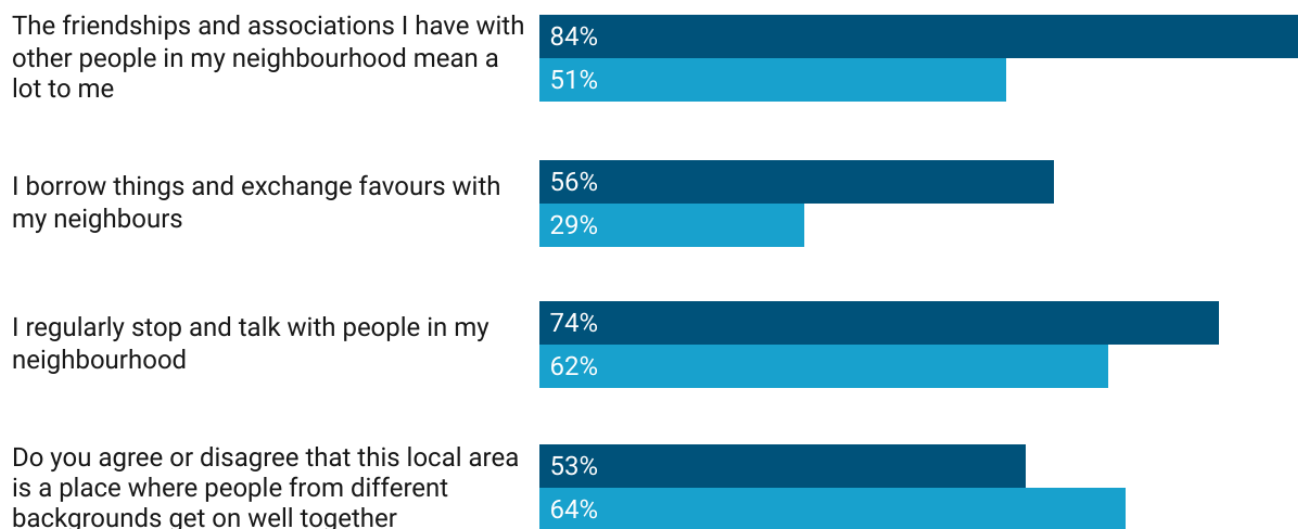


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

Local Conversations participants were **less positive about satisfaction with the local area as a place to live, agreement that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together, safety after dark, and life satisfaction (40% compared to 64%)**. However, the sample of surveyed participants was small (N=64), which may also explain why these trends only partly corroborate those from the first wave.

## Feelings of belonging

■ % of positive responses for Local Conversations participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

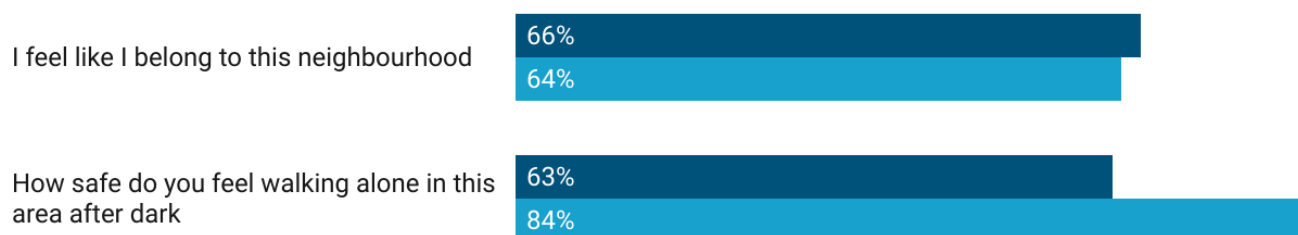


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

### Local Conversations - WALES

The surveyed participants had more **positive perceptions of community power and social connectedness** than respondents living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in Wales. Key findings include:

Perceptions of individual control over decisions affecting one's local area (41% compared to 17%)

Willingness to work together with others on something to improve the neighbourhood (87% compared to 58%)

The importance of friendships and associations with people in the neighbourhood (88% compared to 50%).

## 'Community power' factor

■ % of positive responses for Local Conversations participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

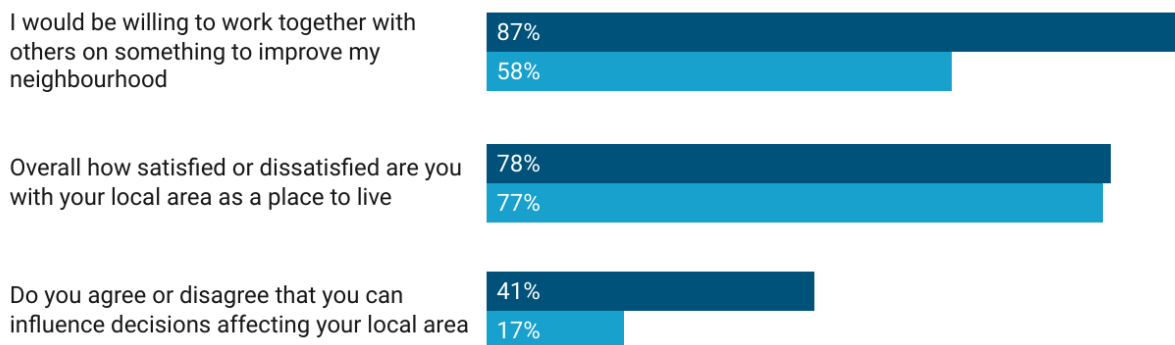


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

Participants in the Local Conversations projects in Wales reported **less positive perceptions of safety after dark** (62% compared to 88%), **feeling that the local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together** (68% compared to 71%), and **life satisfaction** (63% compared to 65%) than respondents living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in Wales.

## 'Social connectedness' factor

■ % of positive responses for Local Conversations participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

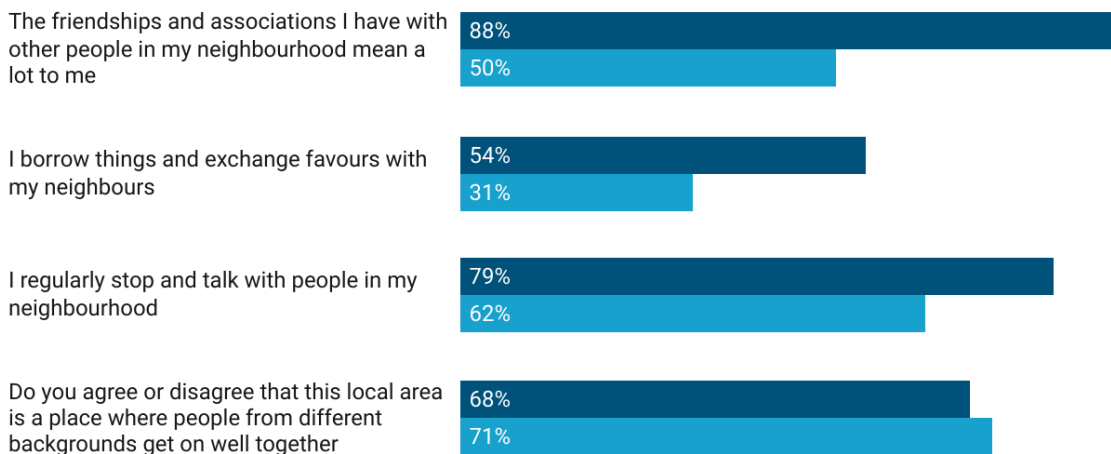


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

## 'Feelings of belonging' factor

■ % of positive responses for Local Conversations participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

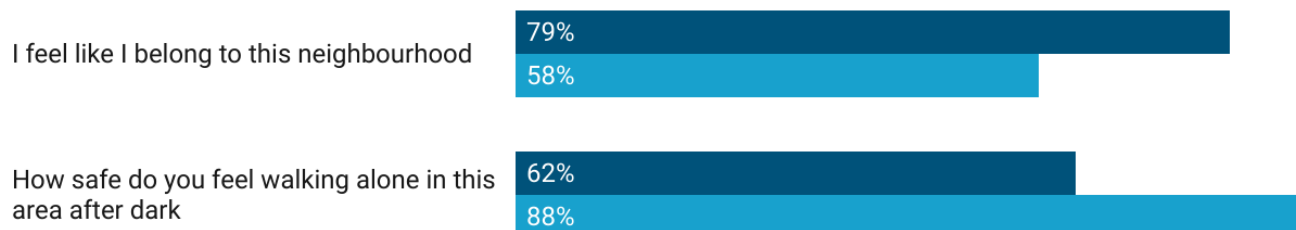


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

## Benchmarking Active Communities projects across the three nations

We turn now to the data collected for all the Active Communities projects across the three nations and compare it to the data from the USS and CLS samples for 20% or 30% most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK. As with Local Conversations comparisons, benchmarking reveals that overall Active Communities respondents had more positive perceptions of **community power, social connectedness and most aspects of belonging** compared to people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in the UK.

## 'Community power' factor

■ % of positive responses for Active Communities participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

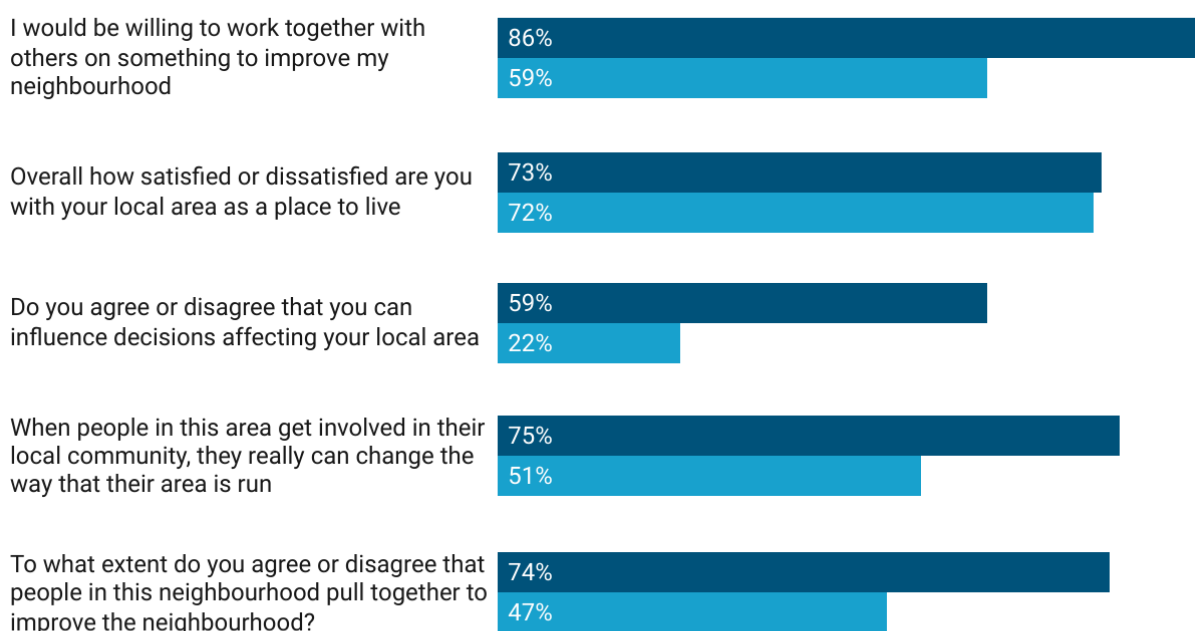


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

## 'Social connectedness' factor

■ % of positive responses for Active Communities participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

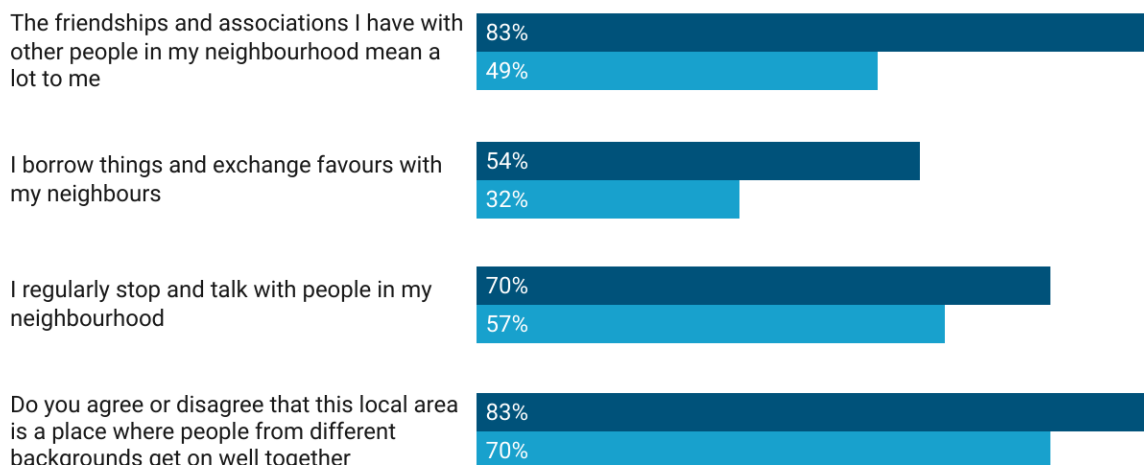


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

Similar to the Local Conversations benchmarking, Active Communities respondents had **less positive perceptions of safety after dark**, and only **slightly higher perceptions of life satisfaction** (69% compared to 66%) than people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in the UK.

## 'Feelings of belonging' factor

■ % of positive responses for Active Communities participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

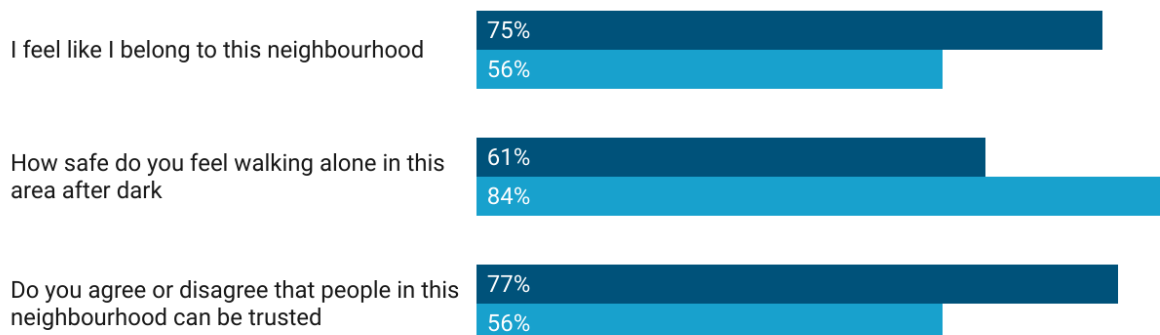


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

## Active Communities projects - ENGLAND

The surveyed participants had **more positive perceptions of community power, social connectedness, trust and belonging** than respondents living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in England:

Perceptions of individual control over decisions affecting one's local area (59% compared to 28%)

Willingness to work together with others on something to improve the neighbourhood (87% compared to 58%)

The importance of friendships and associations with people in the neighbourhood (82% compared to 49%).

## 'Community power' factor

■ % of positive responses for Active Communities participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

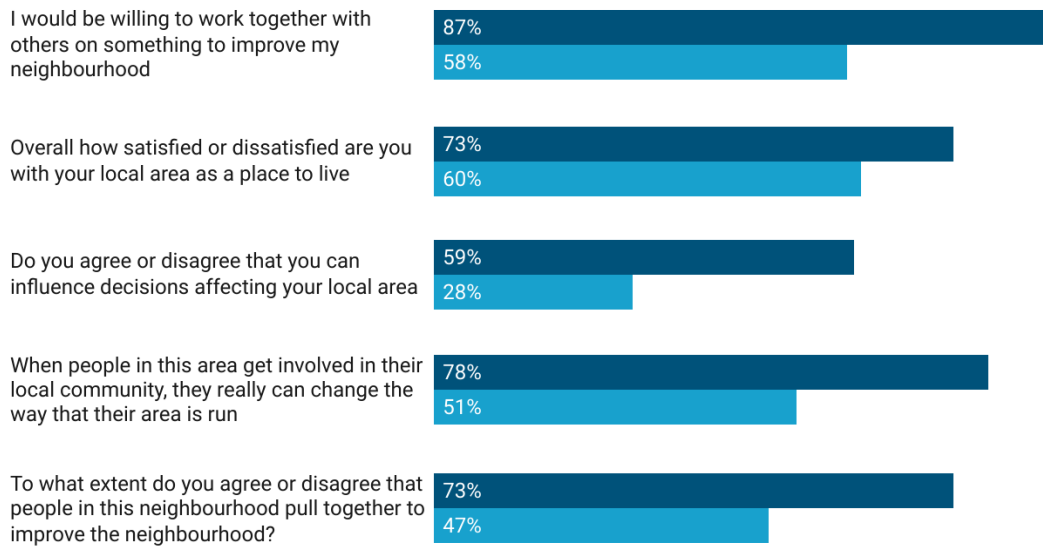


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

## 'Social connectedness' factor

■ % of positive responses for Active Communities participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

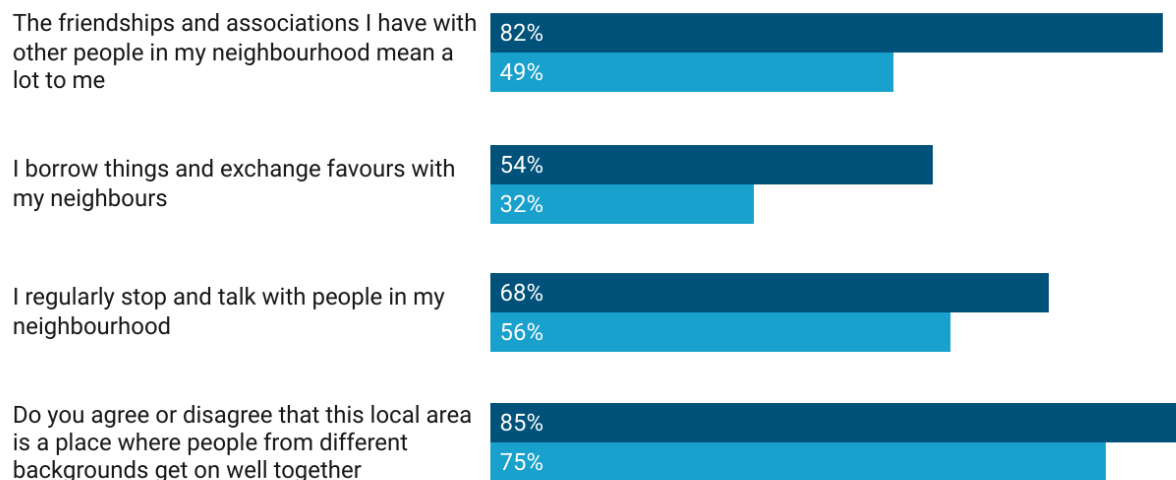


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

Participants in the Active Communities projects in England reported **less positive perceptions of safety after dark** (62% compared to 83%), and only **slightly higher perceptions of life satisfaction** (70% compared to 66%) compared to respondents living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in England.

## 'Feelings of belonging' factor

■ % of positive responses for Active Communities participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

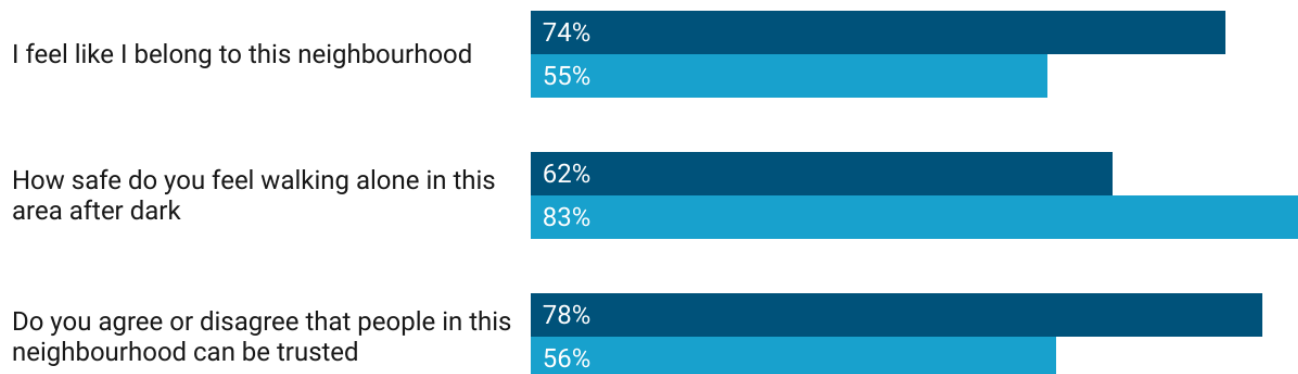


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

## SCOTLAND

The first and second waves of data collection included only two Active Communities projects based in Scotland. The sample for Active Communities projects for Scotland is very small (total respondents=7). The third research phase will increase the reliability of benchmarking analyses.

## WALES

The combined sample (wave 1 and 2) for Active Communities projects based in Wales is also relatively small (total respondents=31). These analyses reveal that participants in the Active Communities projects in Wales had **more positive perceptions of community power and social connectedness** than respondents living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in Wales:

Perceptions of individual control over decisions affecting one's local area (60% compared to 17%)

Willingness to work together with others on something to improve the neighbourhood (87% compared to 58%)

The importance of friendships and associations with people in the neighbourhood (93% compared to 50%)

I borrow things and exchange favours with my neighbours (62 compared to 31%).

## 'Community power' factor

■ % of positive responses for Active Communities participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

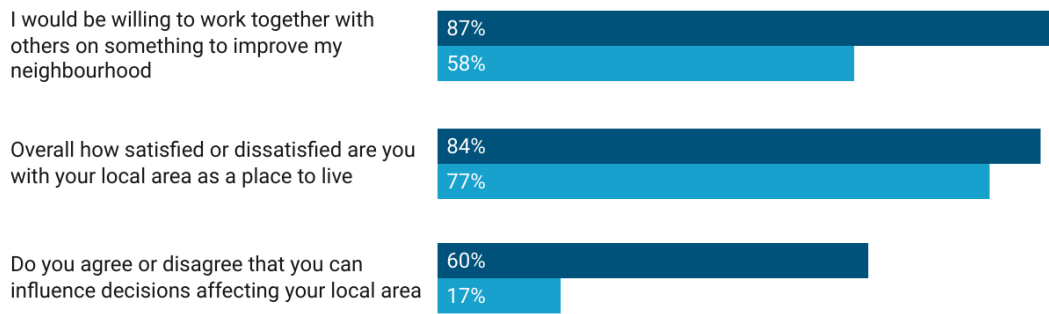


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

## 'Social connectedness' factor

■ % of positive responses for Active Communities participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with high levels of disadvantage

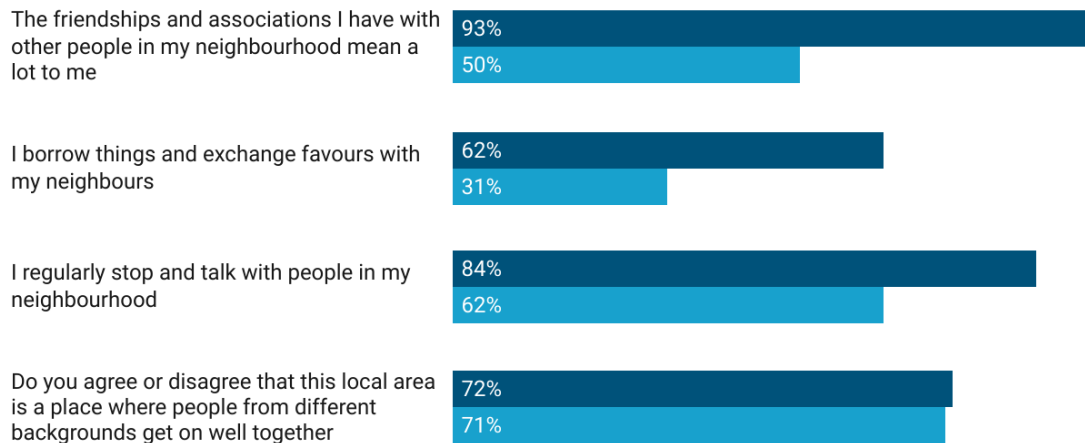


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

Participants in the Active Communities projects in Wales were less positive about **safety after dark** (52% compared to 88%) and had only **slightly higher perceptions of life satisfaction** (70% compared to 65%) compared to respondents living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage in Wales.

## 'Feelings of belonging' factor

■ % of positive responses for Active Communities participants ■ % of positive responses for people living in areas with similarly high levels of disadvantage

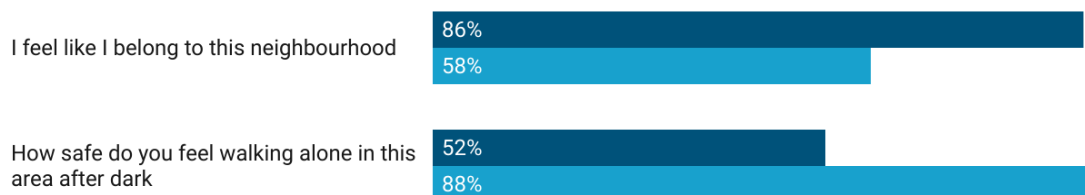


Chart: Social Life • Source: Local Conversations and Active Communities surveys of project participants, combined dataset - Waves 1 and 2, Social Life; Community Life Survey/Understanding Society Survey. • Created with Datawrapper

**Social Life** was created by the Young Foundation in 2012, to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. All our work is about the relationship between people and the places they live and understanding how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, affects the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas. We work in the UK and internationally.

[www.social-life.co](http://www.social-life.co) @SL\_Cities

**People's Health Trust** is a charity addressing health inequalities in England, Scotland and Wales. We work to ensure that where you live does not unfairly reduce the length of your life, or the quality of your health. Our work focuses on:

- Funding and support for communities
- Using our evidence and learning to influence change locally and nationally
- Working with our networks of funded partners to offer support, shape our programmes and policy, and ensure their voices are well represented with decision-makers.

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Report commissioned by People's Health Trust

