

Who is most likely to feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area?

(Future Generations Indicator 23)

The National Survey for Wales 2014-15 results are used here to investigate what factors are linked with people feeling able to influence decisions influencing their local area. We have controlled for a range of factors, so that even when factors are related (e.g. age and general health) the link between each factor and feeling able to influence decisions can be explored independently.

Key findings

People are more likely to feel able to influence decisions if they:

- Are educated to degree level or above;
- Have good general health;
- Live in Isle of Anglesey, Caerphilly or Swansea, compared with Pembrokeshire and Blaenau Gwent;
- Feel that people in the area treat each other with respect;
- Feel in control of daily life;

We did not find a link between the following and feeling able to influence decisions in the local area: age; national identity; gender; country of birth; religion; marital status; having a disability or longstanding limiting illness; having household internet access; living in an urban or rural area; being in material deprivation; overall life satisfaction; and feeling safe in the local area.

1. Background

The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) is designed to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by putting in place seven well-being goals. The Act places a legal requirement on the Welsh Government to set [national indicators](#) which measure achievement of the well-being goals.. This report focuses on indicator 23: 'percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions in their local area'.

The [National Survey for Wales](#) is used to measure progress against many of these national indicators. It is a large-scale, face-to-face survey collecting detailed information on people's

views and well-being. The 2014-15 survey covered 14,285 people. It provides robust information on people's views about a wide range of issues.

2. Measure of feeling able to influence decisions affecting the local area

Respondents were given the statement "I can influence decisions affecting my local area" and were asked "to what extent do you agree or disagree that this statement applies to (name of council)?" Respondents answered on a five point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. People who responded 'strongly agree' and 'tend to agree' were placed into the 'agree category'. Overall, 20% agreed that they can influence decisions affecting their local area.

3. Analysis method

To get a clear understanding of how each individual factor contributes to feeling able to influence local decisions, we used a technique called regression analysis. Regression analysis allows us to explore the links between particular factors and feeling able to influence decisions.

For example, we know that people who live in rural areas are more likely to feel that they can influence local decisions. However, people living in rural areas are also more likely to live in particular local authorities. This can make it difficult to say whether feeling able to influence local decisions is due to living in a rural area or to living in a particular local authority. Once other factors are controlled for, using regression analysis, it is clear that living in a rural area does not, in itself, affect the feeling that you can influence local decisions. But belonging to a local authority area does affect whether people feel able to influence decisions, even when other factors are taken into account.

The analysis of each factor presented below controls for a range of other factors, so the link between each factor of interest can be isolated and explored. All factors reported on below have a statistically significant link with feeling able to influence decisions affecting the local area (that is, we are confident these findings are robust and not just due to variability in the survey estimates).

Regression analysis can identify relationships between factors; however, it cannot tell us about causality. While for some factors causality is fairly clear based on prior knowledge (e.g. feeling able to influence decisions probably does not cause changes in general health; general health probably causes changes in feeling able to influence local decisions), for others the relationship between cause and effect is more blurred (belonging to a local authority area can affect feeling able to influence local decisions; feeling able to influence local decisions can influence choice of local authority area). Therefore, where prior knowledge does not make the direction of causality clear we have generally noted that causality can operate in either direction (or both).

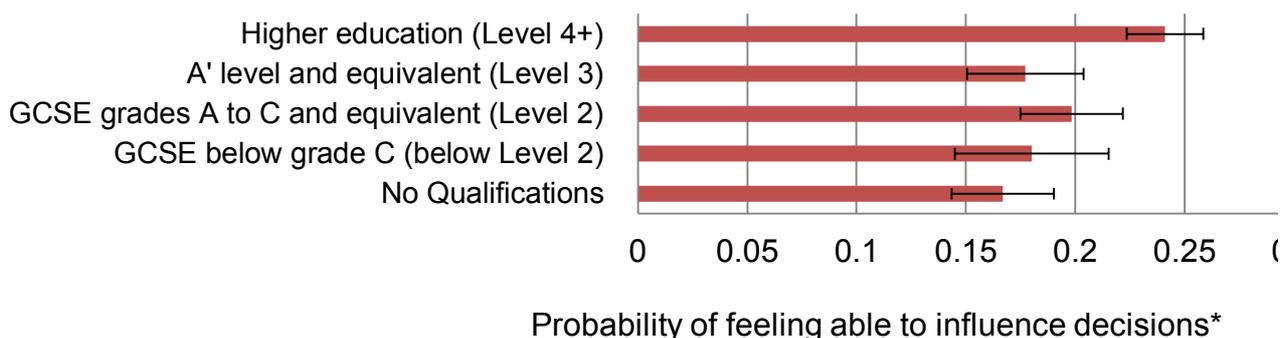
For a full description of how we carried out the analysis, see the accompanying [technical report](#).

4. Main findings: predictors of feeling able to influence decisions affecting the local area

When controlling for other factors, the following were found to be predictors of whether a person feels able to influence decisions in their local area¹.

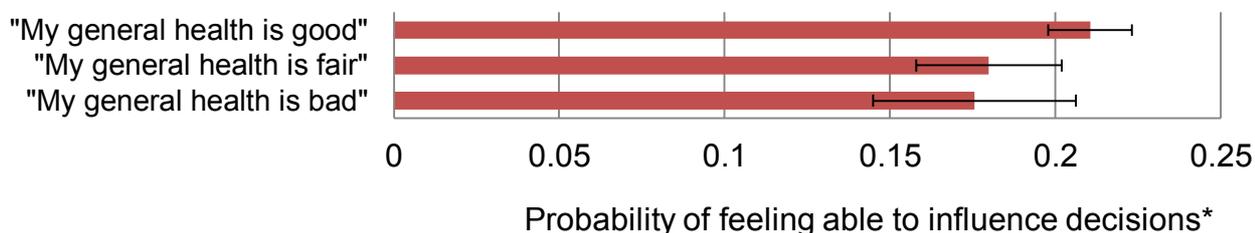
Highest qualification: Holding the other factors constant, people with qualifications that are degree level and above are more likely to feel that they can influence decisions affecting their local area (0.24)² than those with lower qualification levels, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The link between highest qualification and feeling able to influence decisions³



General health: Holding the other factors constant, people who report that they have good general health are more likely to feel that they can influence local decisions (0.21), as shown in Figure 2⁴.

Figure 2: The link between general health and feeling able to influence decisions



Local authority area: Holding the other factors constant, people from the Isle of Anglesey (0.26) and Caerphilly (0.25) are more likely to feel that they can influence decisions in their local area than those from Pembrokeshire (0.14), Blaenau Gwent (0.15) and Ceredigion (0.16), as shown in Figure 3.

¹ If the error bars for each response do not overlap, the responses are statistically significant different from one another. These intervals are calculated around a survey estimate and give a range within which the true value is likely to fall. In 95% of survey samples, the 95% confidence interval will contain the 'true' figure for the whole population. This means we have a high level of confidence that there is a real difference in the general population – the finding is not likely to be due to variability in the estimates.

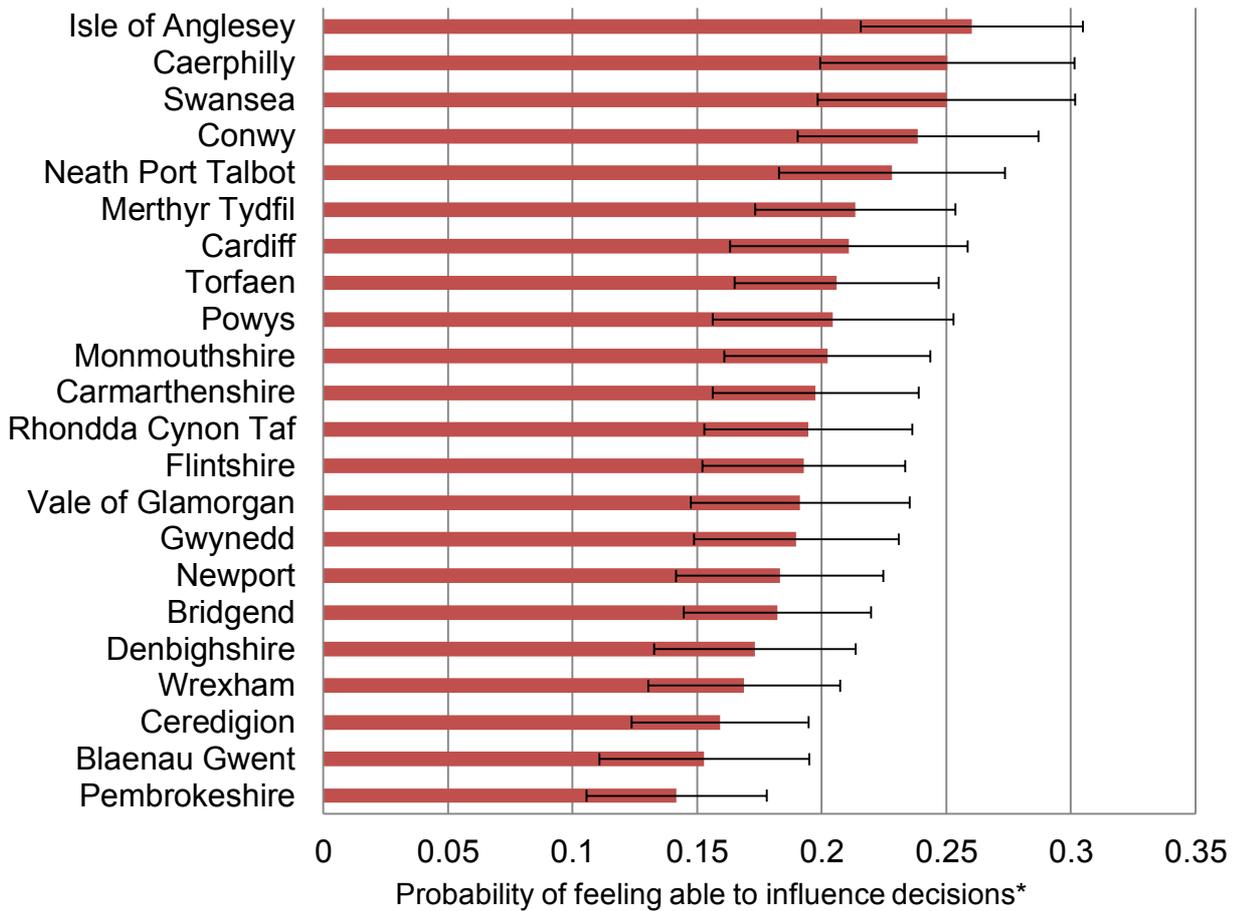
² When controlling for the other factors, a probability of 0 would indicate a 0% likelihood of a respondent in this group feeling able to influence decisions affecting their local area. A probability of 1.0 would indicate a 100% likelihood.

³ If the error bars for each response do not overlap, the responses are significantly different from one another at the 0.05 level.

* Holding the other factors constant.

⁴ Even though the error bars slightly overlap, further tests showed that the difference is statistically significant.

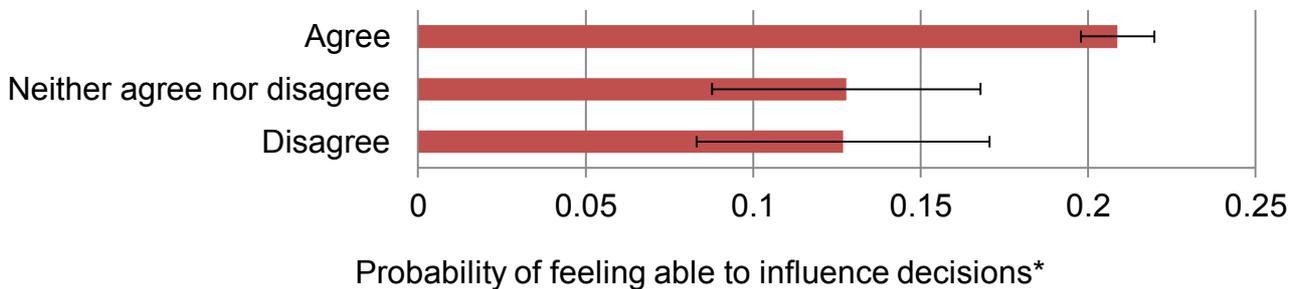
Figure 3: The link between local authority area and feeling able to influence decisions



Feeling in control of daily life: Holding the other factors constant, people who agree that they are in control of their daily life are more likely to feel able to influence local decisions (0.21), as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The link between feeling in control of daily life and feeling able to influence decisions

"I am in control of my daily life as much as I can be"



Feelings of being treated with respect: Holding the other factors constant, people who agree that people treat them with respect are more likely to feel able to influence local decisions (0.21) than those who disagree (0.12), as shown in Figure 5.

* Holding the other factors constant.

Figure 5: The link between the feeling of being treated with respect and feeling able to influence decisions

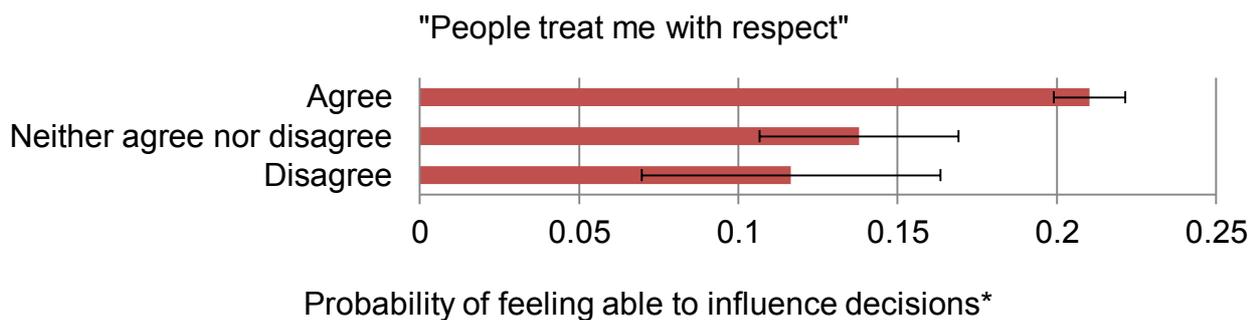
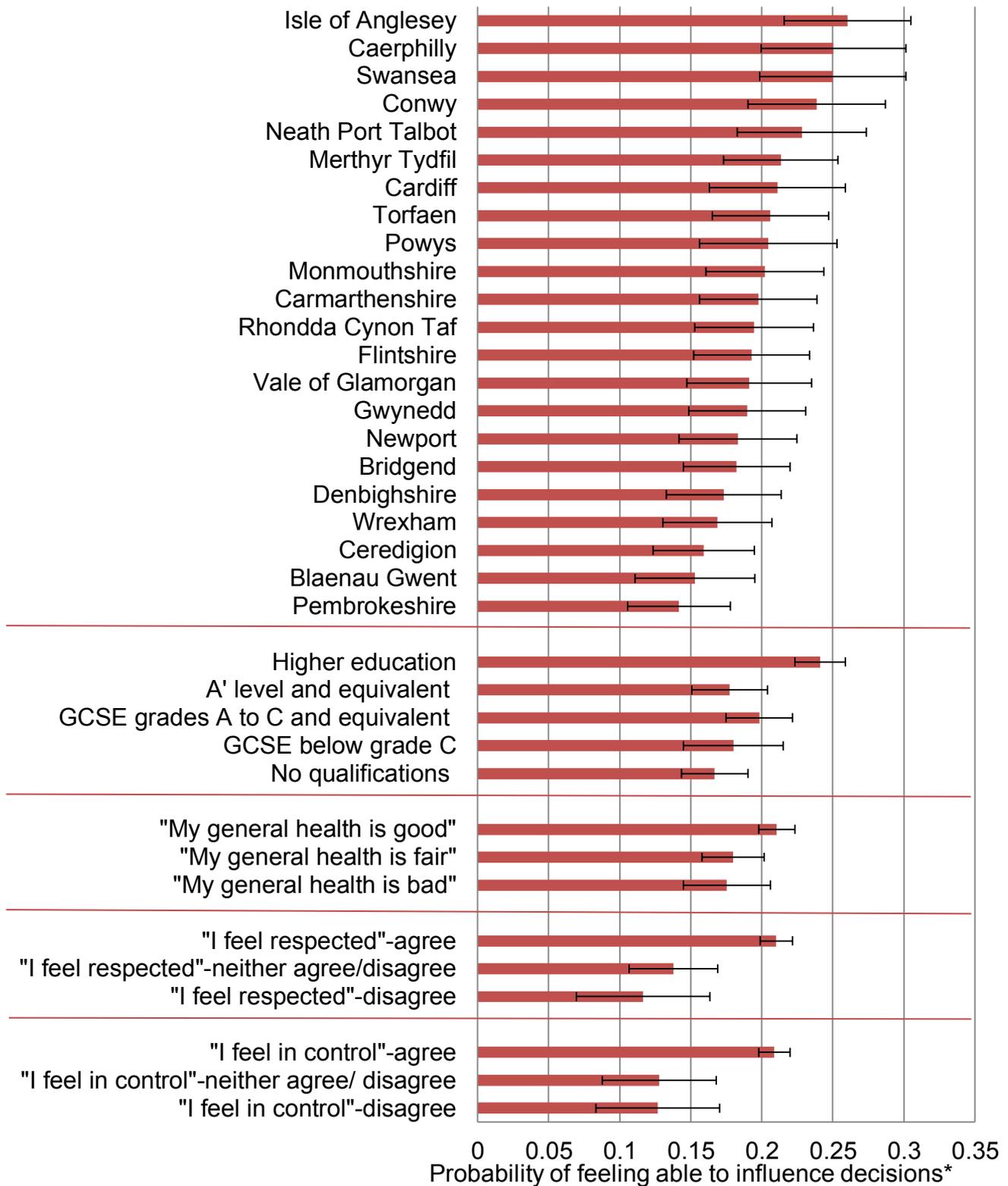


Figure 6 summarises the contribution of each factor on feeling able to influence decisions affecting their local area.

* Holding the other factors constant.

Figure 6: Probability of feeling able to influence decisions⁵



⁵ As before, the error bars can be used to see where there are statistically significant differences among categories of each factor: if the bars do not overlap, the difference is likely to be 'real'. However, it would not be correct (or meaningful) to compare directly and conclude that non-overlapping error bars mean that a category of one factor (e.g. people with degree level education) predicts feeling able to influence decisions significantly different to a category of another factor (e.g. people with good general health).

4.1 Factors not linked to feeling able to influence decisions

We did not find a link between the following and feeling able to influence decisions:

- age;
- national identity;
- gender;
- country of birth;
- religion;
- marital status;
- having a disability or longstanding limiting illness;
- having household internet access;
- living in an urban or rural area;
- being in material deprivation;
- overall life satisfaction; and
- feeling safe in the local area.

Further details on how we carried out the analysis are available in the accompanying [technical report](#).

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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

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