Who is most likely to have a strong sense of community? (Future Generations Indicator 27)

The National Survey for Wales 2013-14 results are used here to investigate what factors contribute to whether an individual has a strong sense of community. We have controlled for a range of factors, so that even when factors are related (e.g. local authority area and being from a rural area) the link between each factor and sense of community can be explored independently.

Key findings

'Sense of community' is measured here by whether people agree that: they belong to the local area; people in the area from different backgrounds get on well together; and people in the area treat each other with respect.

When controlling for a wide range of other factors, people are more likely to have a strong sense of community if they:

- Are from a rural area;
- Are older;
- Have high overall life satisfaction;
- Speak Welsh;
- Are owner-occupiers; or
- Do not have a disability or limiting longstanding illness.

Which local authority people live in also makes a difference; for example, people living in Pembrokeshire are more likely to have a strong sense of community than those in Rhondda Cynon Taf.

We did not find a link between the following and sense of community: marital status; economic status; qualification levels; having children in the household; and having household internet access.

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 measuring achievement of the well-being goals. This report focuses on

indicator 27: 'Percentage of people agreeing that they belong to the local area; that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and that people treat each other with respect'.

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 2013-14 survey covered 14,771 people. It provides robust information on people's views about a wide range of issues.

2. Measures of community cohesion

To help explore the characteristics of people with a strong sense of community the results from three separate National Survey questions were combined:

- "To what extent would you agree or disagree that you belong to your local area?"
- "To what extent do you agree or disagree that this local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together?"
- "To what extent do you agree with the following statement? People in my local area treat each other with respect and consideration."

65% of respondents agreed with all three statements. The analysis below mainly focuses on sense of community as measured by this single combined factor.

We also looked at agreement with each of the three statements separately, in order to see whether the same factors affect all three. These results are presented at the end of the report.

3. Analysis method

To get a clear understanding of how each individual factor contributes to the indicator, we used a technique called regression analysis. Regression analysis allows us to explore the links between particular factors and sense of community.

For example, we know that people who are unemployed are less likely to have a strong sense of community. However, unemployed people are also more likely to be young, and young people are less likely to have a strong sense of community. This can make it difficult to say whether having a strong sense of community is due to employment status or to age. Once other factors were controlled for, using regression analysis, it is clear that economic status does not, in itself, affect the likelihood of agreeing with the above statements. But age does affect the likelihood of agreeing with the above statements, 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 effect link with sense of community (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 this is fairly clear based on prior knowledge (e.g. sense of community does not cause changes in age; age causes changes in sense of

community), for others the relationship between cause and effect is more blurred (e.g. low life satisfaction can lead to a low sense of community; a low sense of community can lead to low life satisfaction). 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.
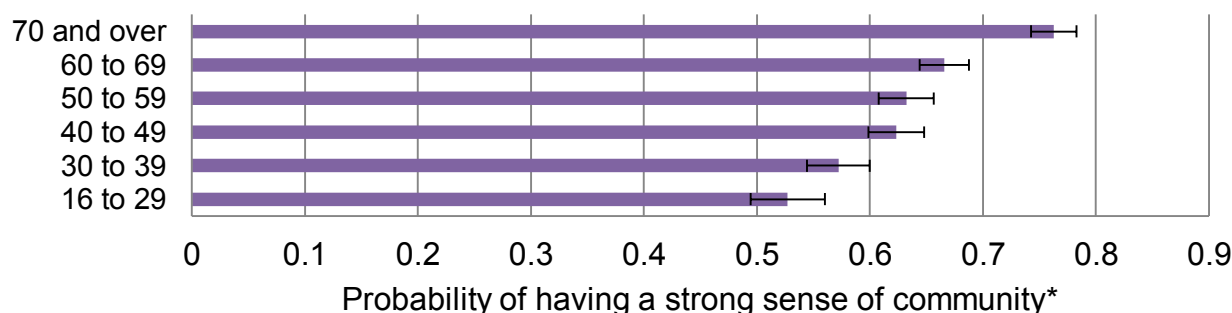
4. Main findings: Predictors of having a strong sense of community

When controlling for other factors, the following were found to be predictors of whether a person has a strong sense of community (i.e. agrees that they belong to the area; that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and that people treat each other with respect).
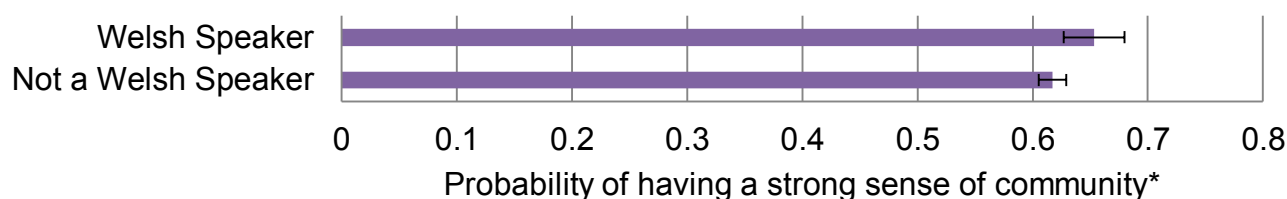
4.1 Respondent characteristics

Age: Holding the other factors constant, people aged 70 and over are most likely to have a strong sense of community (0.76)[1]. Sense of community increases with age, as shown in Figure 1[2].

Figure 1: The link between age and sense of community

Probability of having a strong sense of community*

Welsh speaking: Holding the other factors constant, Welsh speakers are more likely to have a strong sense of community (0.65), as shown in Figure 2[3].

Figure 2: The link between being a Welsh speaker and sense of community

Probability of having a strong sense of community*

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[1] A probability of 0 would indicate a 0% likelihood of a respondent in this group agreeing with all three statements. A probability of 1.0 would indicate a 100% likelihood of a respondent in this group agreeing with the three statements.)
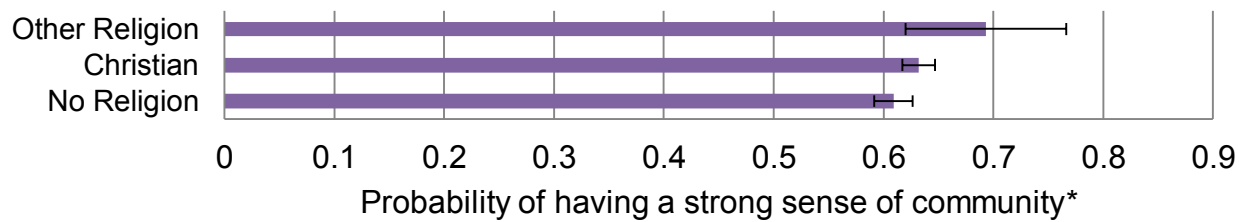
[2] If the error bars for each response as shown in the charts do not overlap, the responses are significantly different from one another at the 0.05 confidence interval. These intervals are calculated around a survey estimate and give a range within which the true value is likely to fall. In 95% of survey samples, the 95% confidence interval will contain the 'true' figure for the whole population. This means we can be confident that there is a real difference in the general population – the finding is not likely to be due to variability in the survey estimates.

* Holding the other factors constant.

[3+4] Even though the error bars slightly overlap, further tests showed that the difference is statistically significant.
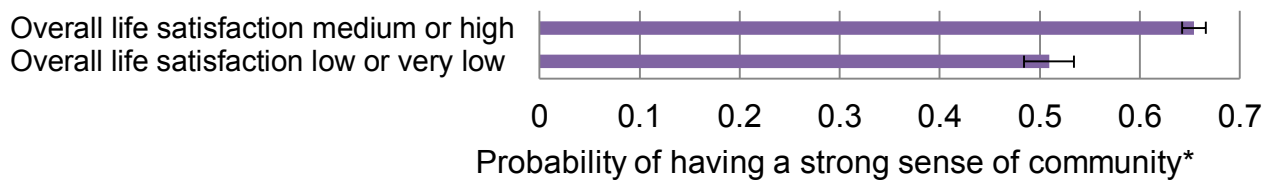
Religion: Holding the other factors constant, people with a religion other than Christian are more likely to have a strong sense of community (0.69), as shown in Figure 3[4].

Figure 3: The link between religion and sense of community

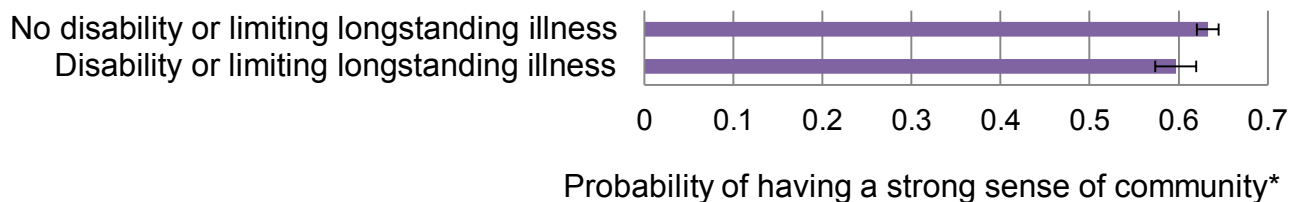Probability of having a strong sense of community*

Overall life satisfaction: Holding the other factors constant, people with a medium to high overall life satisfaction are more likely have a strong sense of community (0.65) compared with those with a low to very low life satisfaction (0.51), as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The link between life satisfaction and sense of community

Probability of having a strong sense of community*

Disability or long-term limiting illness: Holding the other factors constant, people without a disability or long-term limiting illness are more likely to have a strong sense of community (0.63) than those with a disability or long-term limiting illness (0.6), as shown in Figure 5.
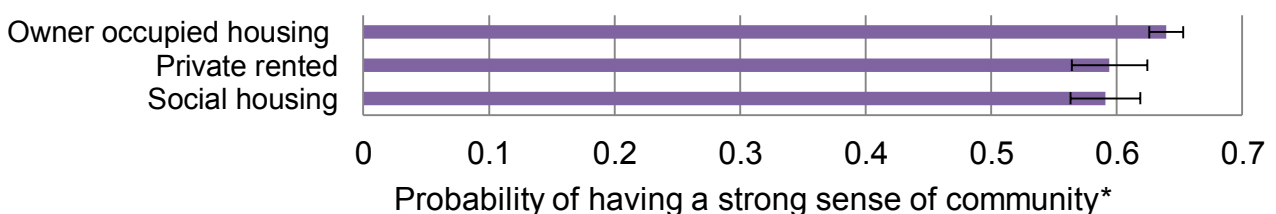
Figure 5: The link between disability or limiting long-standing illness and sense of community

Probability of having a strong sense of community*

4.2 Housing and area

Tenure: Holding the other factors constant, owner-occupiers (0.64) are most likely to have a strong sense of community. People living in social housing (0.59) and private rented housing (0.59) are least likely, as shown in Figure 6.
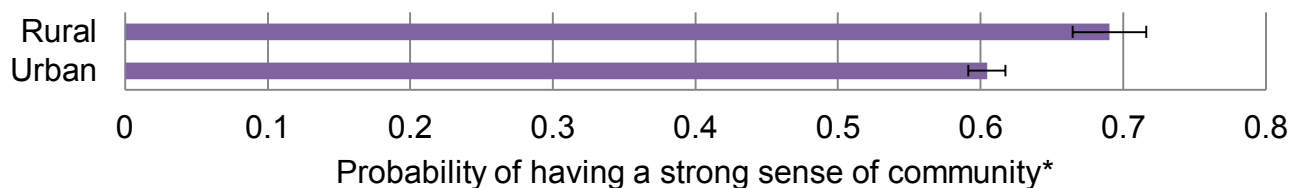
Figure 6: The link between tenure and sense of community

Probability of having a strong sense of community*

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* Holding the other factors constant.

Urban / rural area: Holding the other factors constant, people living in a rural area are more likely have a strong sense of community (0.69) than those who live in an urban area (0.6), as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: The link between urban/ rural area and sense of community

Local authority area: Holding the other factors constant, people living in Pembrokeshire (0.78) are more likely to have a strong sense of community than people in most of the other local authorities, as shown in Figure 8.

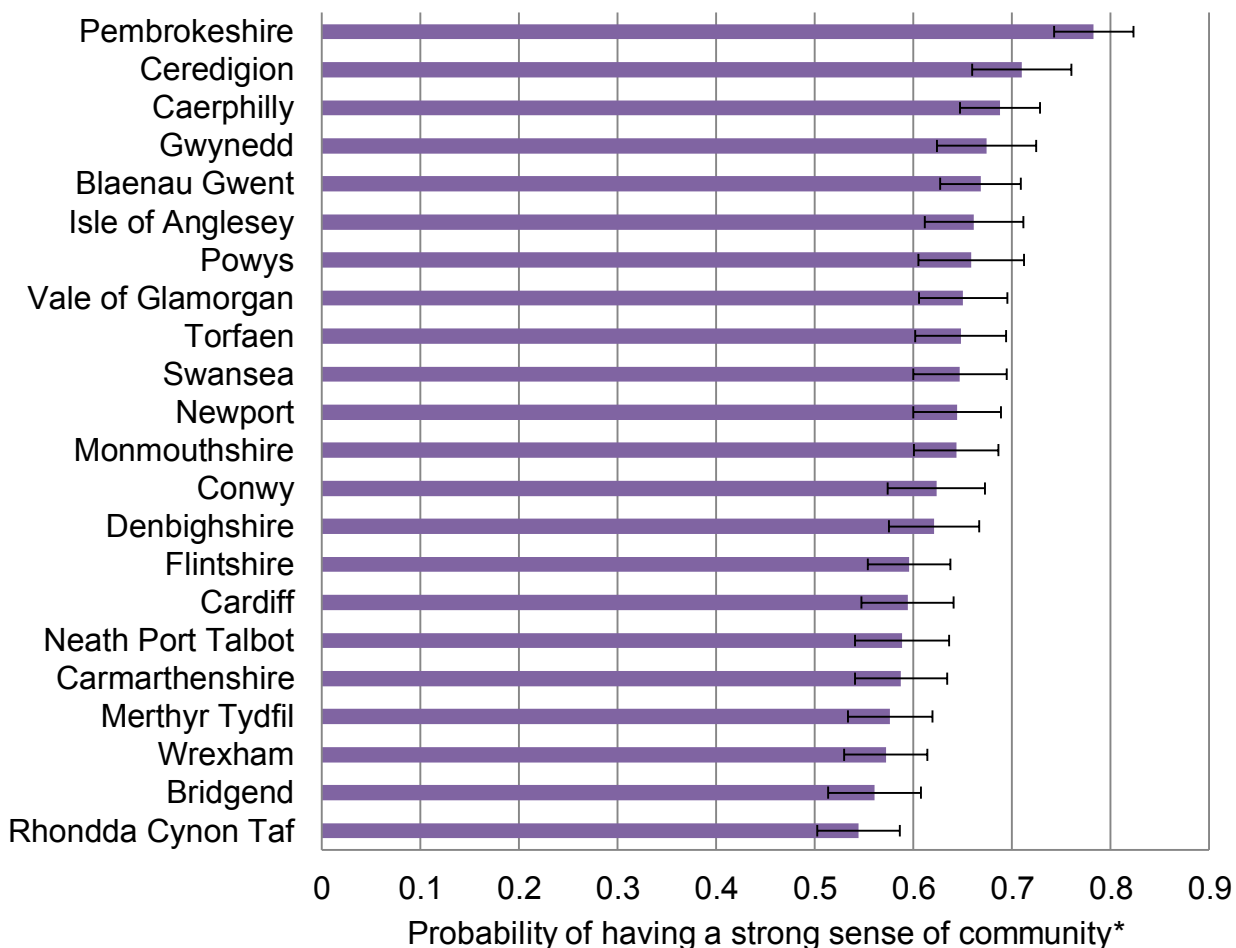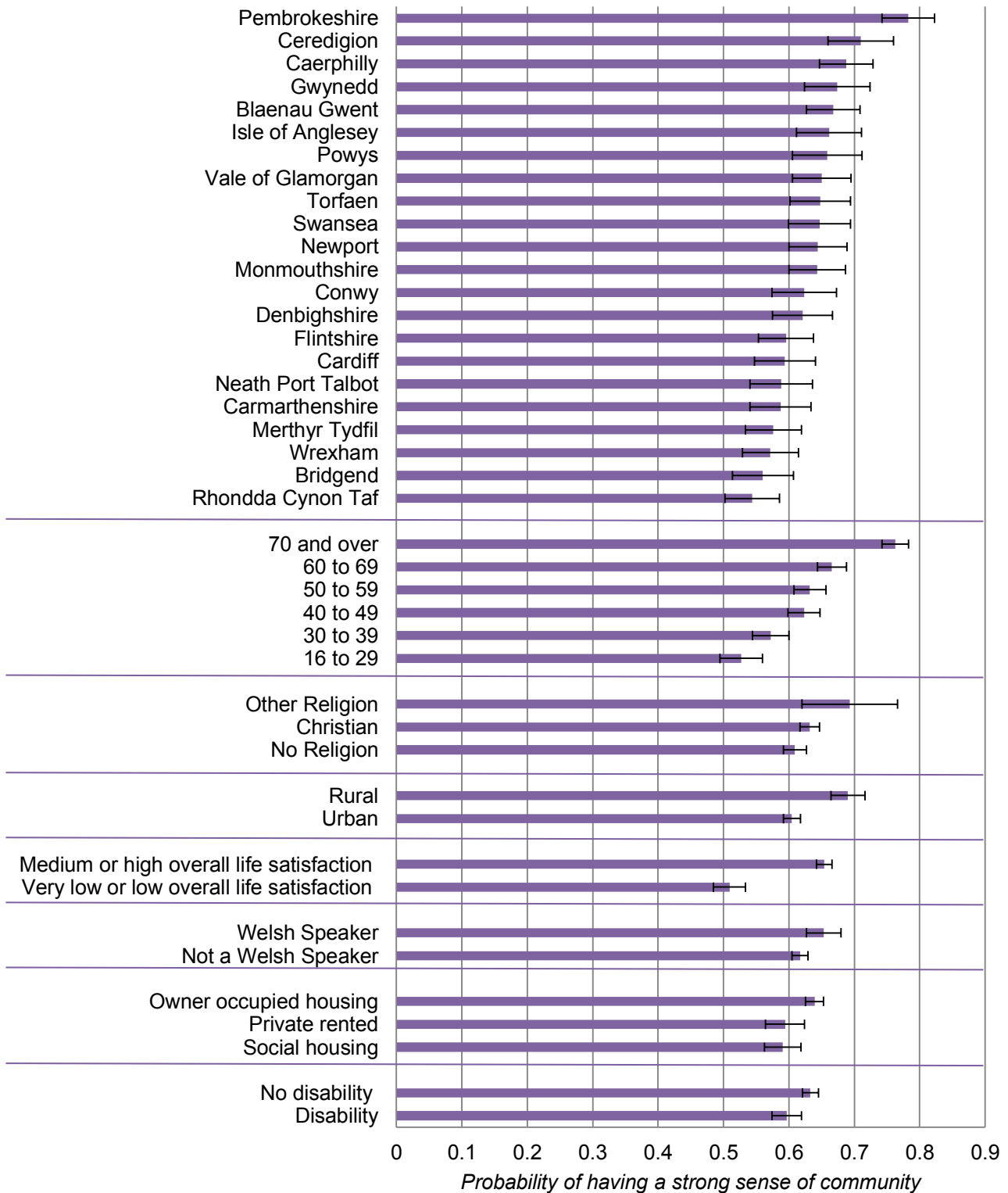*Figure 8: The link between local authority area and sense of community*

Figure 9 summarises the contribution of each factor on having a strong sense of community.

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* Holding the other factors constant.

Figure 9: Probability of having a strong sense of community [5]

Probability of having a strong sense of community

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[5] As before, the error bars can be used to see where there are statistically significant differences among categories of each variable: 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 variable (e.g. people aged 16 to 24) predicts agreeing with the statements significantly differently to a category of another variable (e.g. being a Welsh speaker).

4.3 Factors not linked to sense of community

We did not find a link between the following and having a strong sense of community: marital status; economic status; qualification levels; having children in the household; and having household internet access.

5. Analysis of individual questions

As the indicator contained three separate questions, we also looked at each question separately. This allowed us to see whether the predictors were the same as when the questions are combined into a single indicator.

"To what extent would you agree or disagree that you belong to the local area?"

82% of people agreed with this statement. The following factors were found to be important:

Predictor (strongest first)	Most likely to agree with statement	Least likely to agree with statement
Local Authority area	Blaenau Gwent	Bridgend
Age	70 and over	16 to 29
Employment status[6]	Unemployed	Economically inactive
Urban / rural area	Rural	Urban
Country of birth	Wales	England
Overall satisfaction with life	Medium or high	Low or very low
Highest qualification	No qualifications	Degree or above
Tenure	Owner occupied	Private rented
Martial Status [7]	Widowed	Divorced

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

79% of people agreed with this statement. The following factors were found to be important:

Predictor (strongest first)	Most likely to agree with statement	Least likely to agree with statement
Local authority area	Pembrokeshire	Bridgend
Age	70 and over	16 to 29
Urban / rural area	Rural	Urban
Overall satisfaction with life	Medium or high	Low or very low
Disability or long-term limiting illness	No disabled	Disabled

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[6] Economically inactive includes those who are students and pensioners.
[7] Due to small numbers, those who responded as being in a same sex civil partnership were coded as being married.

"People in my local area treat each other with respect and consideration"

82% of people agreed with this statement. The following factors were found to be important.

Predictor (strongest first)	Most likely to agree with statement	Least likely to agree with statement
Age	70 and over	16 to 29
Local Authority area	Pembrokeshire	Rhondda Cynon Taf
Urban/ Rural area	Rural	Urban
Country of Birth	Other (not England or Wales)	Wales
Tenure	Private rented	Social housing
Overall satisfaction with life	Medium or High	Low or very low
Disability or life limiting illness	No disabled	Disabled

Those from rural areas, aged 70+, and with medium or high life satisfaction are more likely to agree with each of the statements. Apart from these common factors, different factors were important for each question. Furthermore, while local authority area was a significant predictor of agreeing with each statement, the areas that were most likely to agree / disagree were different for different questions. This suggests that each of the three statements measures different aspects of 'sense of community'.

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.