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What factors are linked to people agreeing that their local area has a **sense of community**?

Future Generations Indicator 27

This report outlines some factors linked to whether people think their local area has a strong sense of community. The [National Survey for Wales](#) measures a person's experience of sense of community based on three individual factors: feeling of belonging to the local area; whether they feel people from different backgrounds get on well together in the area; and whether people in the area treat each other with respect and consideration.

This report is based on National Survey interviews carried out in **2018-19**. It provides an update of [previous analysis based on the 2013-14 results](#).

Key findings

Holding other factors constant¹, the factors below were found to be linked with people feeling that their local area has a **sense of community**.

- Being **older**.
- Having **high mental well-being**.
- **Feeling safe** in different situations (e.g. walking in the area after dark).
- Being **satisfied with the local area** as a place to live.
- Having a good understanding of what the **local councillor** does for the community.
- Feeling able to **influence decisions** affecting the local area.
- Feeling **satisfied with the availability of local services and facilities**.

There are 5 factors included in our analysis and found **not** linked to people feeling able to influence decisions that affect their local area, including: tenure; and whether a person speaks Welsh. As with all analysis of this type, we are unable to attribute cause and effect or to allow for factors not measured in the survey.

¹ For this analysis, we have controlled for a range of factors so that even if they are related (e.g. general health and age), the link between each factor and the percentage of people feeling that their local area has a sense of community can be explored independently.

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1. Background

[The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) focuses on improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales. To achieve this, the Act requires public bodies in Wales to think about long-term issues and targets, work better with communities and stakeholders, and to take a more joined-up and cohesive approach to decision-making. To ensure that this vision is achieved, the Act put in place seven well-being goals² (**Figure 1**).

The Act requires the Welsh Government to set [national indicators](#) measuring achievement against the well-being goals. The [National Survey for Wales](#) measures progress against 15 of the 46 national indicators. The survey involves face-to-face interviews with a random sample of 12,000 people across Wales each year.

This report focuses on [National Indicator 27](#): ‘Percentage of people who agree that their local area has a sense of community (that they belong to the area; that people from different backgrounds in the area get on well together; and that people in the area treat each other with respect and consideration)’.

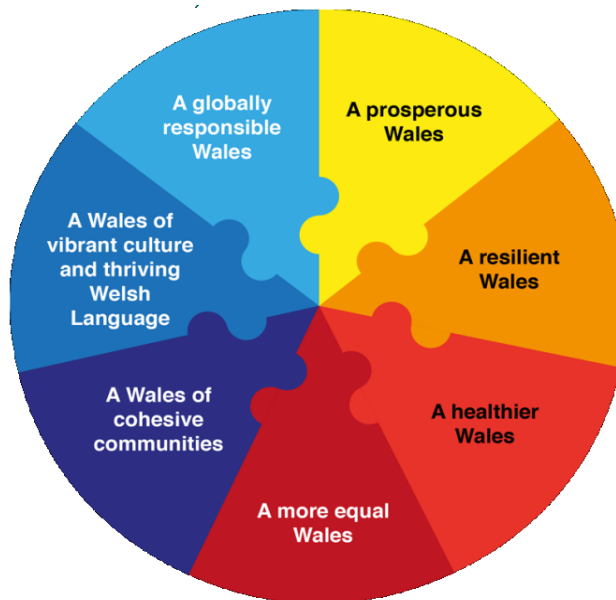


Figure 1. *The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: seven well-being goals³.*

2. Questions used in the National Survey

Information relating to National Indicator 27 was collected by asking National Survey respondents to what extent they agreed the following statements were true for their local community: 1) sense of belonging to local area; 2) people in the area from different backgrounds get on; 3) people in the area treat each other with respect and consideration.³ Each of these three statements were answered using a five-point Likert scale ranging from ‘1 = strongly agree’ to ‘5 = strongly disagree’. For the analysis in this report, respondents who answered ‘strongly’ or ‘tend to’ agree were grouped together. Respondents who answered ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘tend to disagree’ to the sense of community questions were also grouped together. People who had ‘neutral’ responses to this question were not included in the analysis.

Overall, 52% of adults agreed that there was a sense of community in their local area.

² Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: The Essentials, which can be viewed [online](#).

³ See the National indicators for Wales [technical document](#) for more information.

3. Method of analysis

To get a clear understanding of how particular factors contribute to whether people feel their local area has a sense of community, we used a **statistical technique⁴ to explore the link⁵ between each factor and sense of community**, whilst holding all other factors constant. Holding other factors constant (also referred to as controlling for other factors) is important because it allows us to look at each predicting factor independently (i.e. ensuring that the effect we are measuring is not influenced by external factors). We can then get a much clearer idea of how one single factor links to sense of community, without the influence of other factors.

The complexity of relationships between factors

To understand these results, we cannot always be sure about what factors are *linked to*, and which are *affected by*, people feeling their local area has a sense of community. For some factors this relationship is clear based on prior knowledge. For instance, being of an older age might be linked to people feeling their area has a greater sense of community; however we know that feeling an area has a sense of community is not linked to changes in age. For other factors, this relationship is not as obvious⁶.

Interpreting the results

All of the factors presented in the charts in this report are statistically significant predictors of people feeling their local area has a sense of community, as tested by our chosen regression model. In this report, we use 'predictive margins' – presented as percentages (%) – to show the probability of a relationship between each factor (whilst holding other factors constant) and the dependent variable (people feeling their local area has a sense of community). The results show within a particular factor (e.g. sex) the likelihood of one 'average' group of people with a shared characteristic (e.g. females) people feeling their local area has a sense of community, compared with another 'average' group of people with a different shared characteristic (e.g. males). Error bars on the charts show the 95% confidence interval of the predictive margins for each group. Overlapping error bars mean that while a factor is a significant predictor of people feeling their local area has a sense of community, it is not entirely clear which group within the factor is the most predictive.

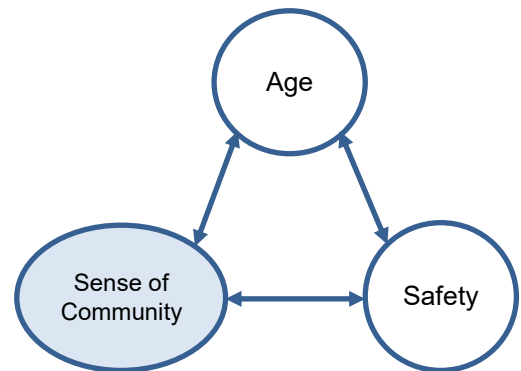


Figure 2 The importance of holding other factors constant in statistical analysis.

⁴ This technique is known as logistic regression. More information about the methods used in this report can be found in the accompanying [regression methodology report and technical report](#).

⁵ While this analysis can tell us about the *likelihood* of relationships between factors, it cannot tell us about causal relationships (e.g. it would be incorrect to say that feeling unsafe in their local area *causes* people to feel their local area has no sense of community).

⁶ This relationship can be even more complex, as there could be other factors which we haven't considered (and are not available from the National Survey) which may be linked to feeling an area has no sense of community *and* feeling unsafe.

4. Main factors linked to people feeling that there is a sense of community in their local area

Overall, **52% of National Survey respondents** agreed that there was a sense of community in their local area. **Figure 3.1** shows all the individual factors (whilst **holding other factors constant**) which were found to have an association with people feeling that their local area has a sense of community. Within each factor, the group with the highest probability (percentage) of feeling that their local area has a sense of community is highlighted in light blue. The following sections provide a more in-depth analysis of each of these factors.

Figure 3.1 Main factors linked with people feeling that there is a sense of community in their local area.

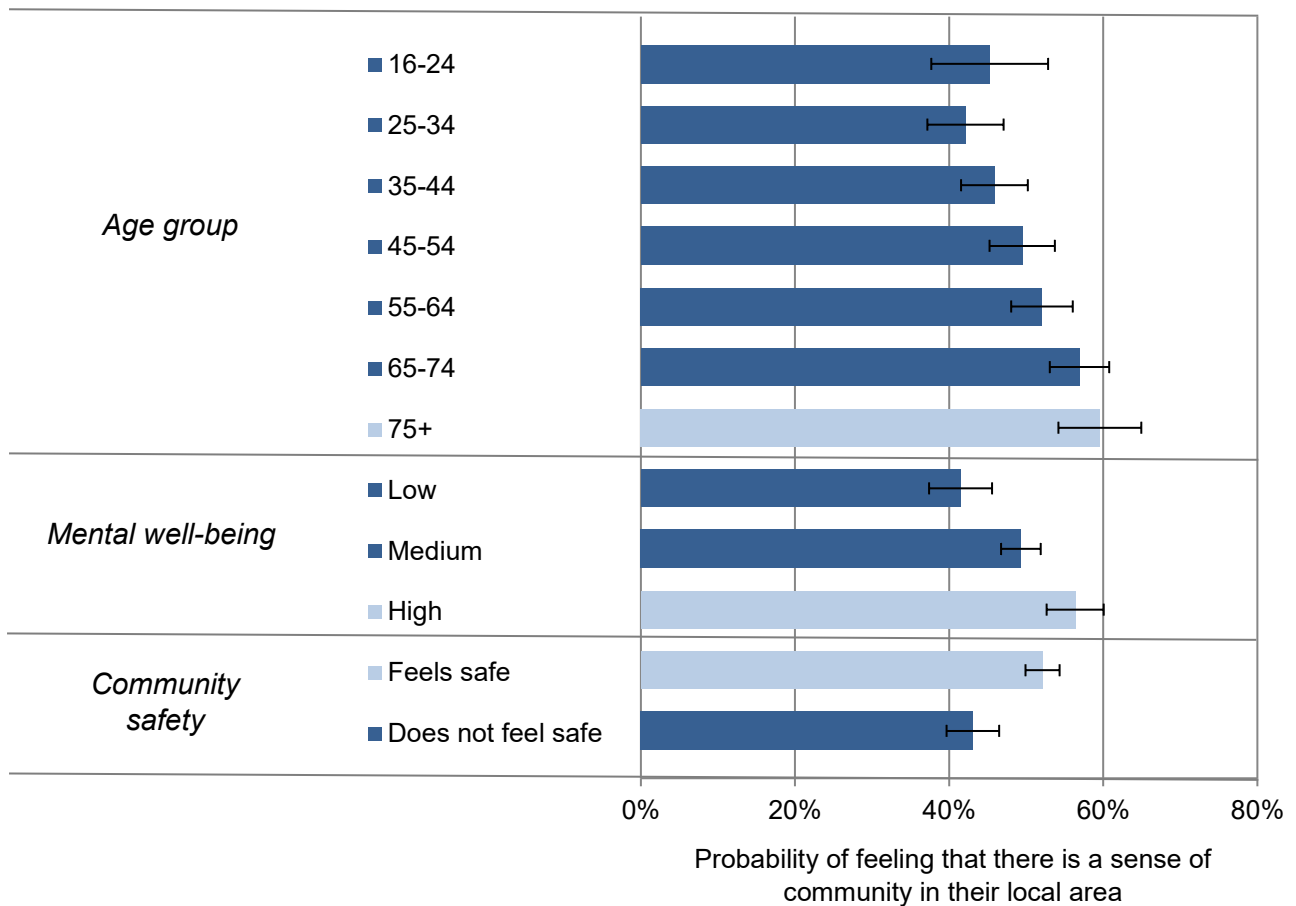
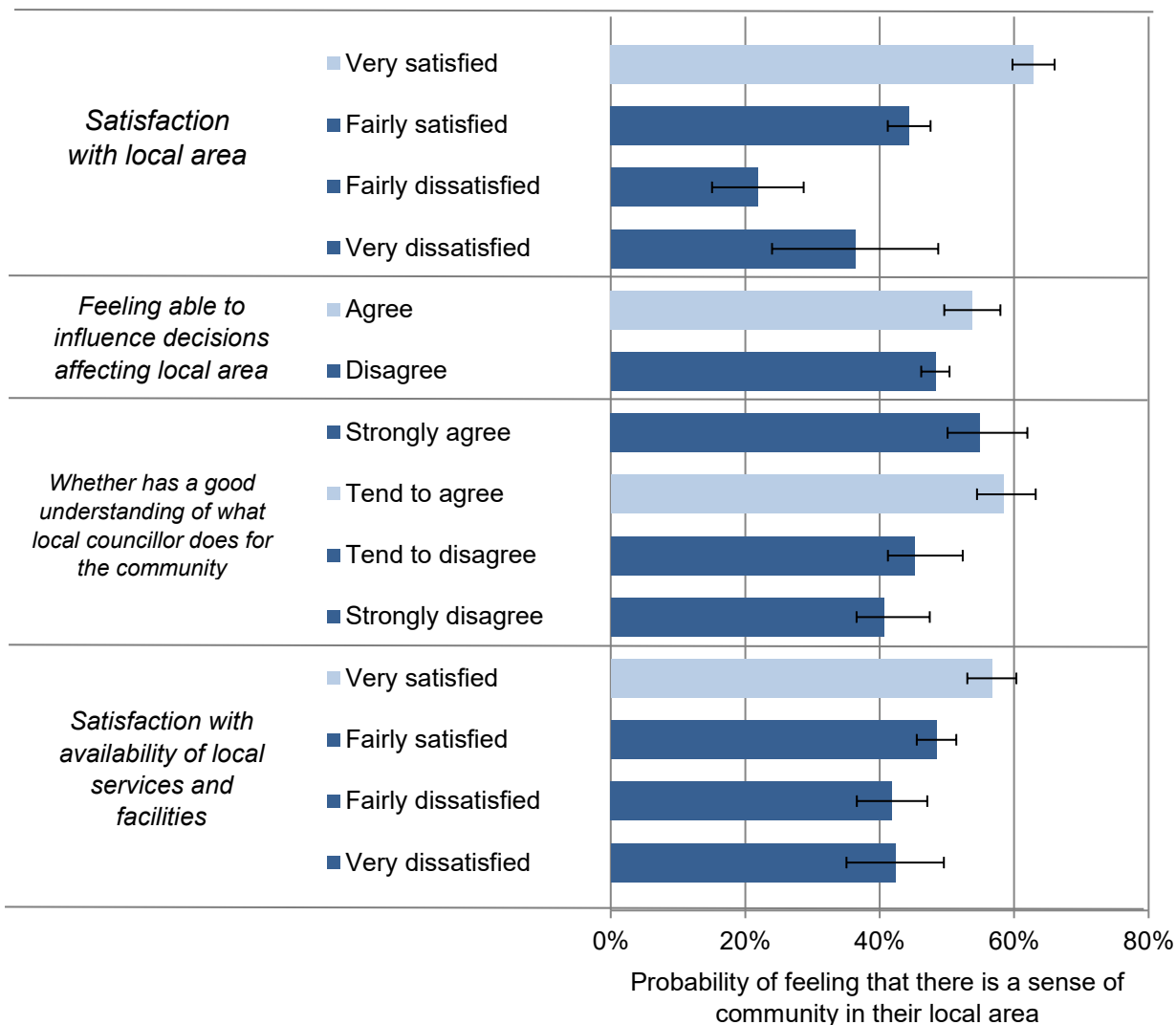


Figure 3.1 (continued) Main factors linked with people feeling that there is a sense of community in their local area.



4.1 Analysis

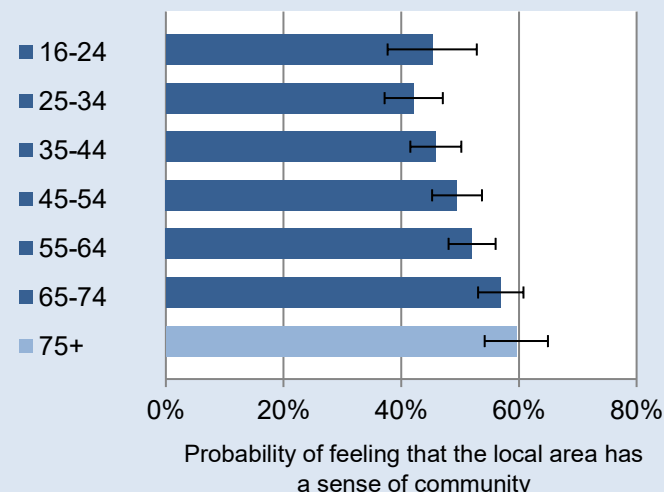
Holding all other factors constant, the factors discussed in this section were found to be linked to people feeling that their local area has a sense of community. Individual factors which share a similar characteristic are grouped into **themes** (e.g. demographic factors). Factors **not** found to be linked to people feeling that their local area has a sense of community are listed in [Section 4.2](#).

4.1.1 Demographic factors

Age group

Older people were more likely to feel that there was a sense of community in their local area, compared with younger people. This is shown in **Figure 4.1**. Specifically, **25-34** year olds were the least likely to agree, and people aged **75+** were the most likely to agree.

Figure 4.1 The relationship between sense of community and age group.

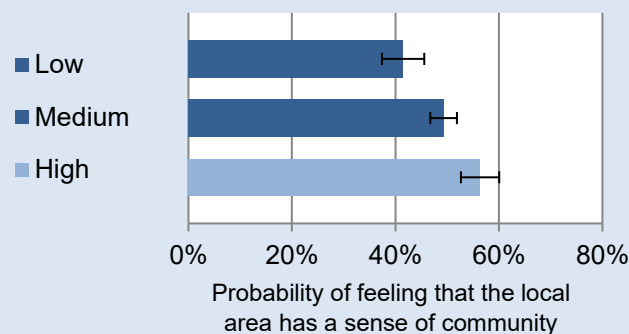


4.1.2 Well-being factors

Mental well-being

The National Survey includes a measure of **mental well-being**.⁷ Overall, people with high mental well-being were the most likely to feel that their local area has a sense of community, and people with low mental well-being were the least likely. See **Figure 4.2**.

Figure 4.2 The relationship between sense of community and mental well-being.

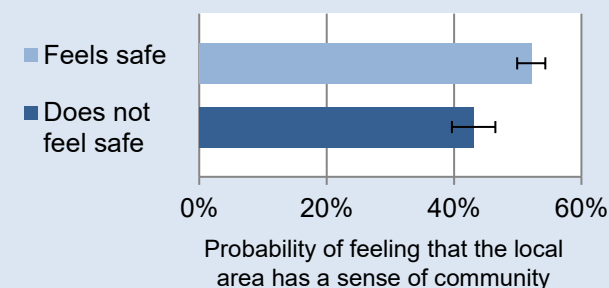


4.1.3 Community safety

Feeling safe

People who feel safe after dark (in various situations: at home, when walking in the local area, travelling by car, and by public transport) **were more likely to feel that their local area has a sense of community**, compared with those who do not feel safe. See **Figure 4.3**.

Figure 4.3 The relationship between sense of community and feeling safe.



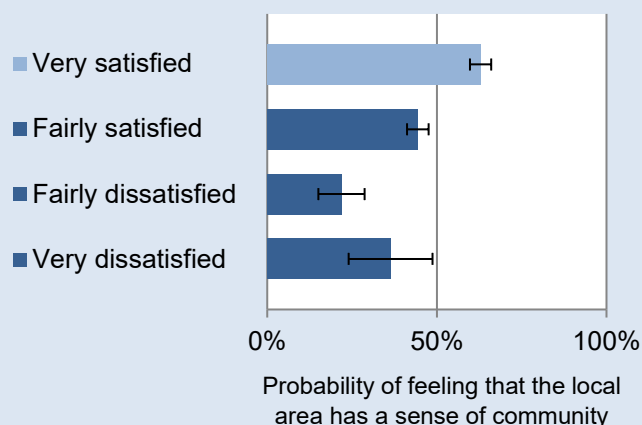
⁷ The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing scale was developed to enable the monitoring of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing. Higher scores on this scale indicate a higher mental well-being, and lower scores indicate lower mental well-being. For more information, [follow this link](#).

4.1.4 Community cohesion

Overall satisfaction with local area

People who were **satisfied with their local area as a place to live** were more likely to feel that their area has a sense of community, compared with those who were dissatisfied. People who were 'very satisfied' were the most likely to agree that there was a sense of community in their local area, compared with those who were 'very dissatisfied'. See **Figure 4.4**.

Figure 4.4 The relationship between sense of community and overall satisfaction with local area.

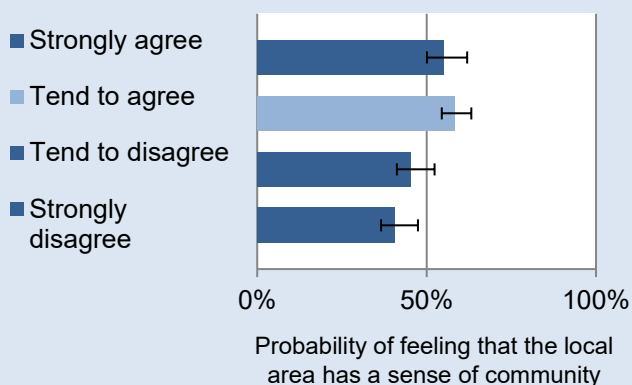


4.1.5 Local democracy

Understanding of what the local Councillor does for the community

Overall, people who **strongly agreed** that they have a good understanding of what their local councillor does for the local community were more likely to feel that their local area has a sense of community, compared with those who strongly disagreed. See **Figure 4.5**.

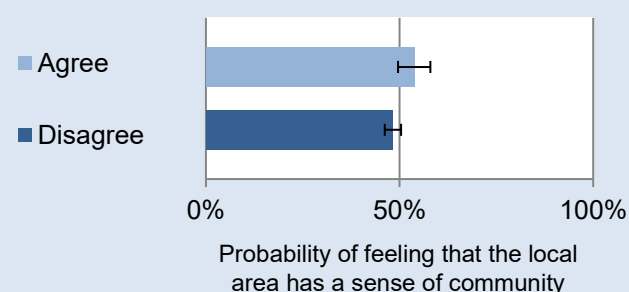
Figure 4.5 The relationship between sense of community and understanding what the local councillor does.



Feeling able to influence decisions affecting the local area

People who **agreed** that they felt that they could influence decisions which affected their local area were more likely to feel that their local area has a sense of community, compared with those who disagreed. See **Figure 4.6**.

Figure 4.6 The relationship between sense of community and feeling able to influence local decisions.

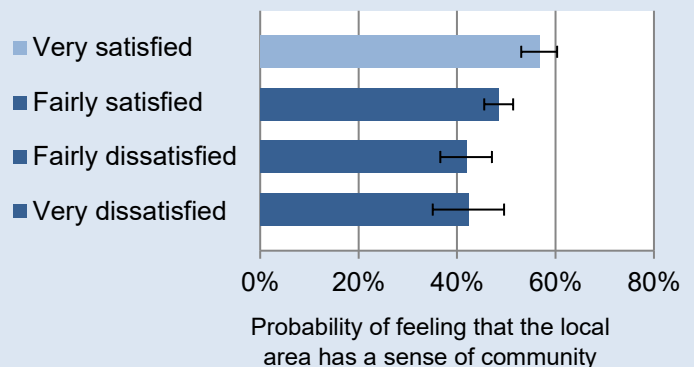


4.1.6 Local authority services

Satisfaction with availability of local services and facilities

People who were satisfied with the availability of local services and facilities were more likely to feel a sense of community in their local area, than those who were unsatisfied (see **Figure 4.7**). Specifically, people who were 'very satisfied' with the availability of local services and facilities, compared with those who were dissatisfied.

Figure 4.7 The relationship between sense of community and ability to get to local services.



4.2 Factors not linked to feeling there is a sense of community in the local area

In this analysis, other factors were included in our regression model, but we did **not** find a link between the following factors and people feeling that their local area to have a sense of community:

- Household type (tenure).
- Whether a person has a long-term limiting condition.
- Whether a person speaks Welsh.
- Whether the local authority consults local people when setting a budget.
- Whether the person lives in a rural or an urban area.

5. Analysis of individual questions

National indicator 27, sense of community, is a single measure which consists of three individual questions about: 1) **sense of belonging to the local area**; 2) **people from different backgrounds getting on well together in the local area**; and 3) **people treating each other with respect and consideration in the local area**. In the previous section we looked at factors relating to this combined measure; in the following section, we look at factors linked to each of these three questions separately to see whether the factors were the same as for the single measure.

5.1 Sense of belonging to the local area

Overall, **89%** of people agreed that they feel a sense of belonging to their local area⁸. **Table 1** provides a summary of all the factors linked to this individual measure of sense of community. See **Appendix A** for a detailed breakdown of each of these factors.

Table 1. Summary of factors found to be linked to people feeling a sense of belonging to the local area.

Theme	Factor	Most likely to feel sense of belonging to local area
Demographic factors	<i>Age</i>	Older people
Well-being factors	<i>Life satisfaction</i>	High life satisfaction
	<i>Feeling safe</i>	Feels safe
Community cohesion	<i>Overall satisfaction with local area</i>	Satisfied
Local democracy	<i>Local councillor works closely with local community</i>	Agree

5.2 People from different backgrounds get on well together

Overall, **90%** of people agreed that people from different backgrounds get on well together in the local area⁹. **Table 2** provides a summary of all the factors linked to this individual measure of sense of community. See **Appendix B** for a detailed breakdown of each of these factors.

⁸ 17% answered 'neither agree nor disagree'.

⁹ 14% answered 'neither agree nor disagree'.

Table 2. Summary of factors found to be linked to feeling that people from different backgrounds get on well together in the local area.

Theme	Factor	Most likely to feel that people from different backgrounds get on well together
Demographic factors	<i>Age</i>	Older people
Well-being factors	<i>Mental well-being</i>	High mental well-being
	<i>Feeling safe</i>	Feels safe
Community cohesion	<i>Overall satisfaction with local area</i>	Satisfied
Local democracy	<i>Has a good understanding of what the local councilor does for the local community</i>	Agree
	<i>Local authority consults local people when setting a budget</i>	Agree

5.3 People in the local area treat each other with respect and consideration

Overall, 87% of people agreed that people from different backgrounds get on well together in their local area¹⁰. **Table 3** provides a summary of all the factors linked to this indicator of sense of community. See **Appendix C** for a detailed breakdown of each of these factors.

Table 3. Summary of factors found to be linked to feeling that people in the local area treat each other with respect and consideration.

Theme	Factor	Most likely to feel that people treat each other with respect and consideration
Demographic factors	<i>Age</i>	Older people
Housing factors	<i>Tenure</i>	Home owner
Well-being factors	<i>Mental well-being</i>	High mental well-being
	<i>Feeling safe</i>	Feels safe
Community cohesion	<i>Overall satisfaction with local area</i>	Satisfied
Local democracy	<i>Has a good understanding of what the local councilor does for the local community</i>	Agree
Welsh language	<i>Whether use Welsh language in everyday life</i>	Speaks Welsh

¹⁰ 13% answered 'neither agree nor disagree'.

6. Summary and recommendations for further research

In summary, we have provided an analysis of factors (and overall themes) linked to **Future Generations National Indicator 27: ‘Percentage of people who agree that their local area has a sense of community** (that they belong to the area; that people from different backgrounds get on well together; and that people treat each other with respect and consideration). Overall, seven central themes¹¹ emerged from our analysis:

1. Demographic factors.
2. Housing factors.
3. Well-being factors.
4. Community cohesion.
5. Local democracy.
6. Local authority services.
7. Welsh language.

The relationship between particular factors and people feeling that their local area has a sense of community could be more complex than suggested in this analysis, and the results could **vary** between and within different areas. Therefore, further research could include more small-scale investigations involving qualitative¹² or mixed-methods¹³ approaches.

¹¹ In total, we looked at factors linked to **7 National Indicators for Well-being** as part of a project using data from the 2018-19 National Survey for Wales. As some factors were found to be linked to more than one National Indicator, we have provided a separate document which highlights the similarities and differences between the individual factors, and overall themes, found to be linked to all National Indicators. This document is available online: Hafferty, C. (2020). *Key themes linked to a selection of National Indicators for Well-being in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR Report. Available at: <https://gov.wales/national-survey-wales-april-2018-march-2019>.

¹² **Qualitative research** is often used to understand people's underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations to uncover trends in people's thoughts and opinions to provide a better understanding of a particular issue. Qualitative data collection methods are often small-scale and collect non-numeric data by using techniques such as interviews and focus groups. On the other hand, *quantitative* research seeks to understand a problem by collecting numerical data which can be used in statistical analysis, often to produce generalised results for a large sample of a population (e.g. attitudes, behaviours, and opinions). For example, the National Survey for Wales predominantly collects and analyses information in this way.

¹³ **‘Mixed-methods’** is an approach to research which involves the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data within the same study. As policy makers, practitioners, and others in applied areas strive to produce well-informed research based on multiple forms of evidence (such as the multi-faceted well-being of communities and future generations), mixed-methods research can be a good way to explore these complex social situations.

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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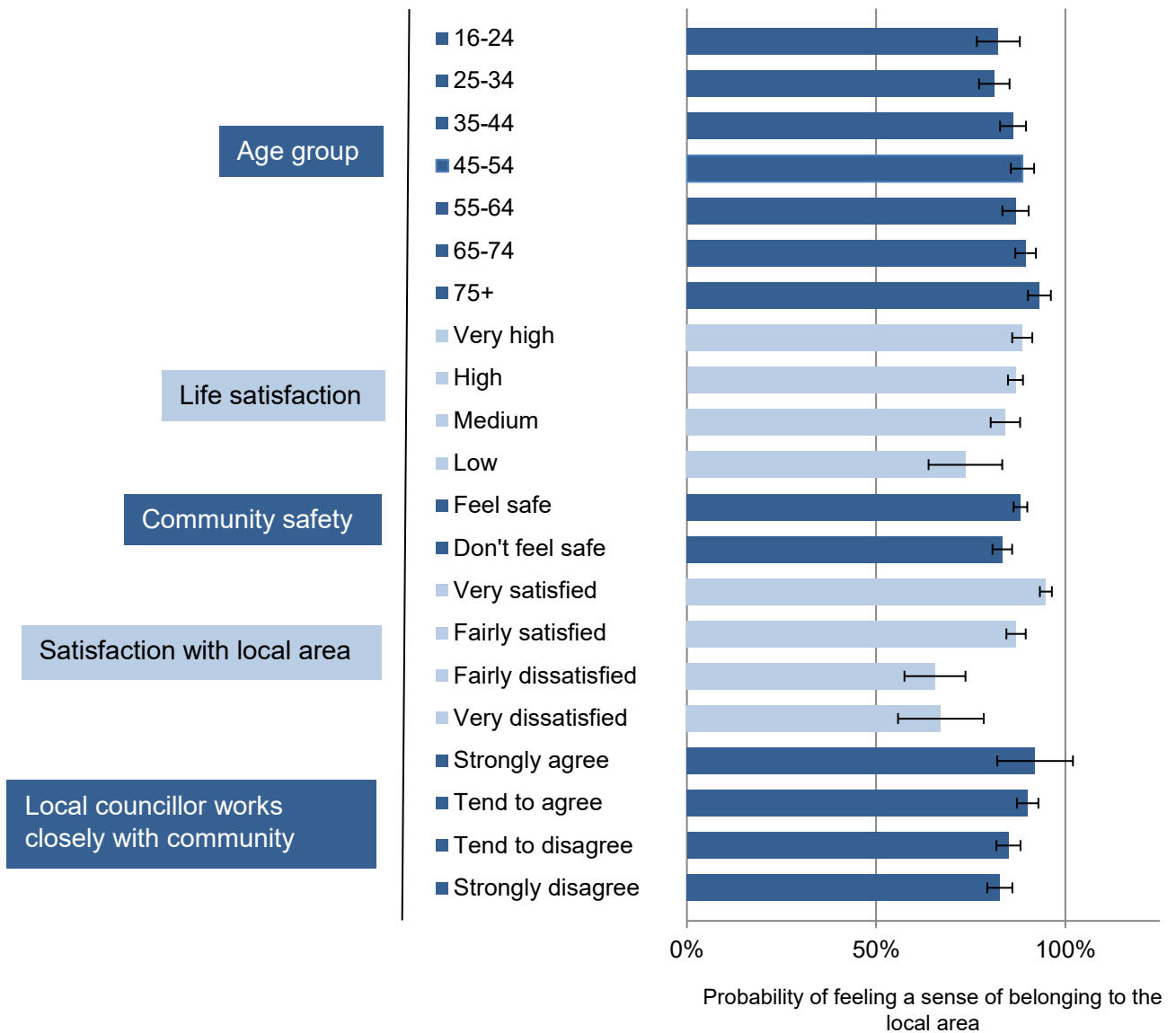
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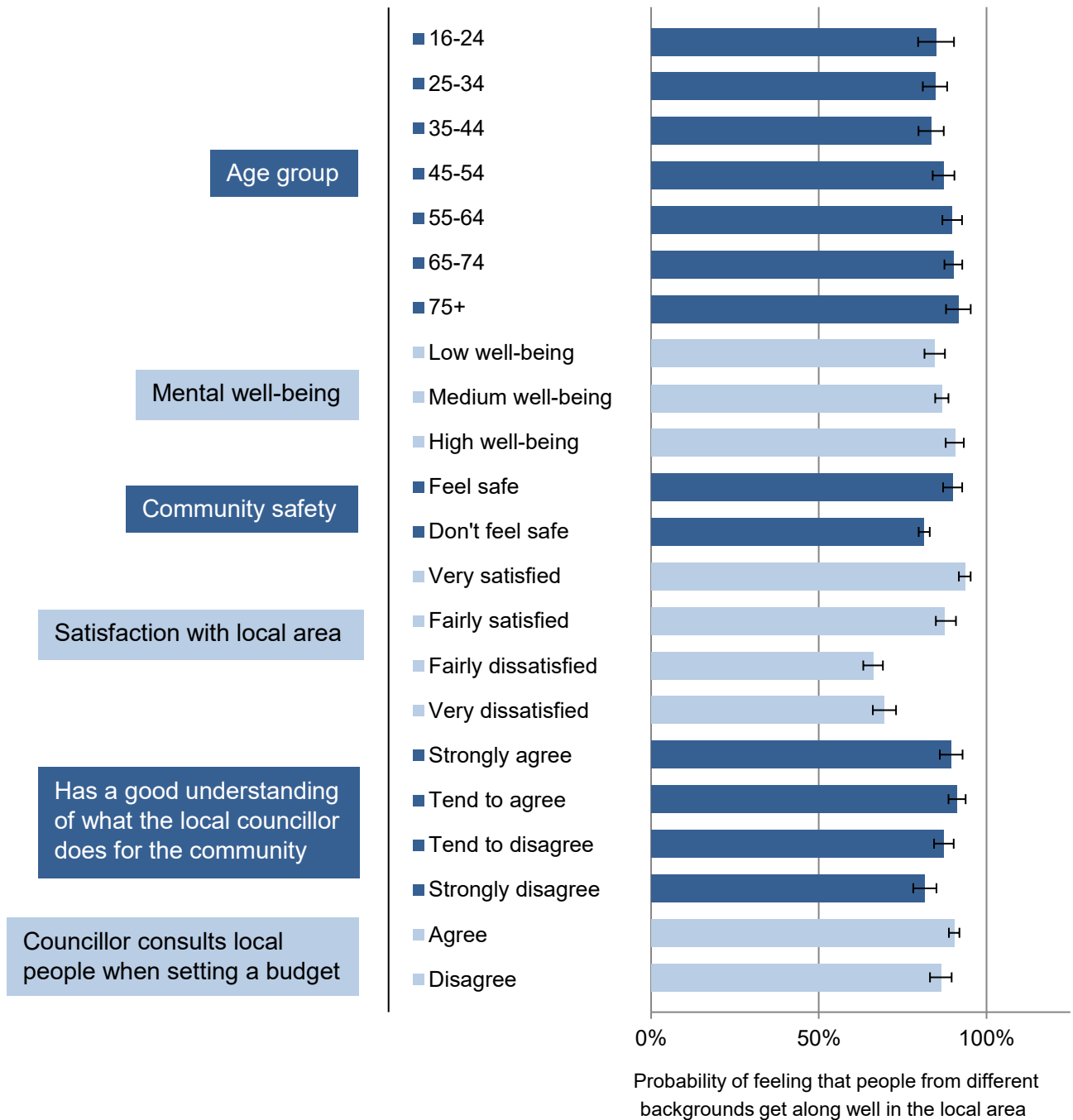
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Appendices

Appendix A – Summary of the main factors linked to people feeling a sense of belonging to their local area.



Appendix B – Summary of the main factors linked to feeling that people from different backgrounds get along well in the local area.



Appendix C - Summary of the main factors linked to feeling that people in the local area treat each other with respect and consideration.

