

What factors are linked to people feeling able to influence decisions affecting their local area?

Future Generations Indicator 23

This report is based on National Survey interviews carried out in 2021-22. It provides an update of [previous analysis based on the 2018-19 results](#). The National Survey for Wales is a continuous, large-scale, random sample survey covering people across Wales. Prior to the start of the Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic in March 2020, the survey was carried out face-to-face in people's homes; since April 2020, it has been carried out by telephone instead (with an online section for some respondents). Due to the difference in mode and possible changes because of the pandemic, care should be taken when making direct comparisons with results from previous years.

This report outlines some factors linked to whether people felt they could influence decisions affecting their local area. The [National Survey for Wales](#) measures a person's level of agreement with the statement "I can influence decisions affecting my local area" based on a five-point scale, with those being classed as agreeing responding with either 'tend to agree' or 'strongly agree'.

Key findings

Holding other factors constant¹, the factors below were found to be linked with people feeling that they could influence decisions affecting their local area:

- Feeling that they have a good understanding of what their local councillor does for their community.
- Agreeing that the local councillor works closely with the local community.
- Feeling satisfied with the availability of local services and facilities.
- Being in good health.
- Living in privately rented accommodation.

Other factors included in our analysis and found not to be linked to people feeling that they could influence decisions affecting their local area are listed in Section 5. 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 they can influence decisions affecting their local area 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 in 2021-22 involved telephone interviews with a random sample of over 12,000 people across Wales.

This report focuses on [National Indicator 23](#): 'Percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area'.

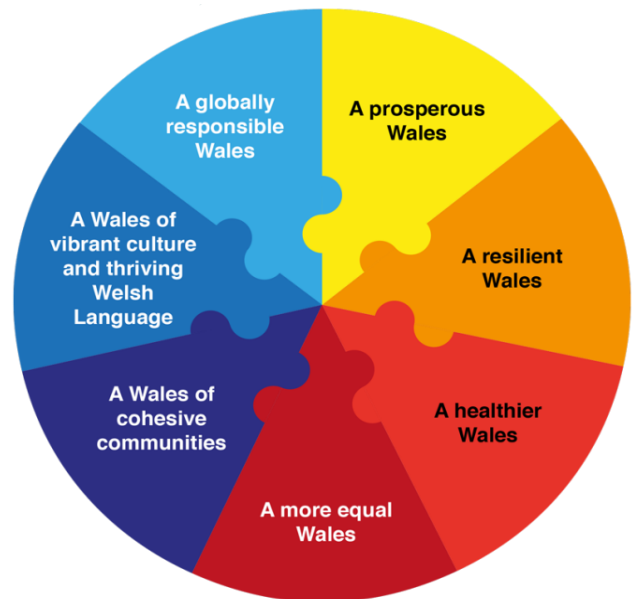


Figure 1. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: seven well-being goals².

2. Question used in the National Survey

Information relating to National Indicator 23 was collected by asking National Survey respondents if they felt they could influence decisions regarding their local area 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 agree' or 'tend to agree' were grouped together. Respondents who answered, 'strongly disagree', 'tend to disagree', or 'neither agree nor disagree' were also grouped together.

Overall, 30% of adults feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area. This is consistent with the results found in 2020-21 and 2018-19.

3. Method of analysis

To get a clear understanding of how particular factors contribute to whether people felt able to influence decisions affecting their local area, we used a statistical technique³ to explore the link⁴ between each factor and feeling able to influence decisions in their local area, 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 feeling able to influence decisions in their local area, without the influence of other factors.

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

³ 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](#).

⁴ 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 people being in good health causes them to feel they can influence decisions in their local area).

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, feeling able to influence decisions in their local area. For some factors the relationship is clear based on prior knowledge while for other factors, this relationship is not as obvious⁵.

Interpreting the results

All the factors presented in the charts in this report are statistically significant predictors of people feeling able to influence decisions in their local area 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 able to influence decisions in their local area). 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) feeling able to influence decisions in their local area, 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 able to influence decisions in their local area, it is not entirely clear which group within the factor is the most predictive.

⁵ 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 able to influence decisions in their local area and feeling unsafe.

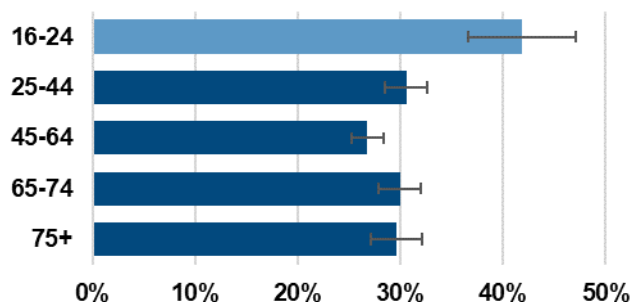
4. Main factors linked with feeling able to influence decisions in their local area

Overall, 89% of National Survey respondents felt able to influence decisions in their local area. The figures below show all the individual factors (whilst holding other factors constant) which were found to have an association with people feeling able to influence decisions in their local area. Within each factor, the group with the highest probability (percentage) of feeling able to influence decisions in their local area is highlighted in light blue. Also, the explanatory factors can be grouped into themes shown by the sub-heading titles.

Demography

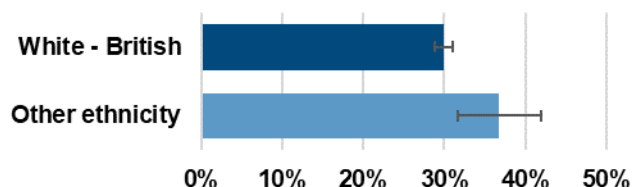
Age group

People aged between 16 and 24 years are more likely to feel that they can influence decisions affecting their local area than any other age group.



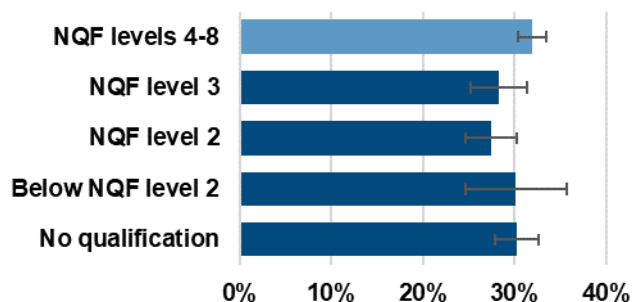
Ethnicity

People of an ethnicity other than 'white – British' were more likely to feel able to influence decisions in their local area.



Highest educational qualification

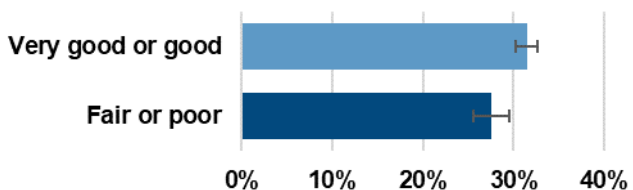
People with qualifications at degree level and above were more likely to feel they can influence decisions than people with GCSE and equivalent qualifications.



Well-being

General health

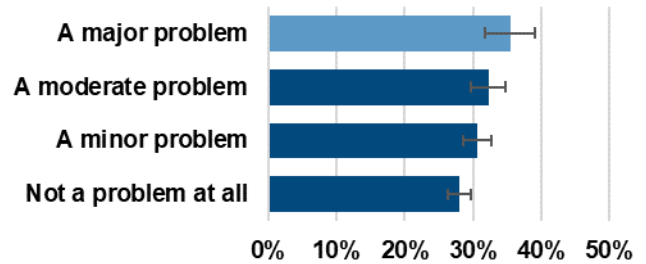
People who reported their general health as 'Good' or 'Very good' were the most likely to feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area.



Community Cohesion

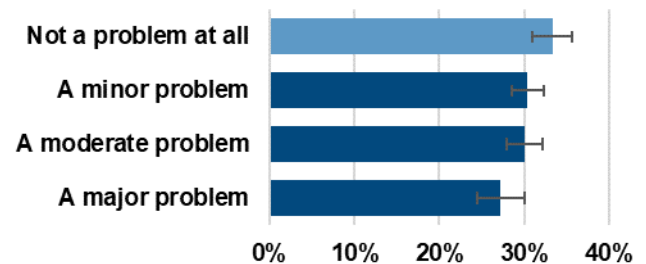
Whether views fly-tipping as a problem in the local area

People who viewed fly-tipping as a major problem in the local area were more likely to feel able to influence decisions in their local area, compared with those who did not view fly-tipping as a problem in their local area.



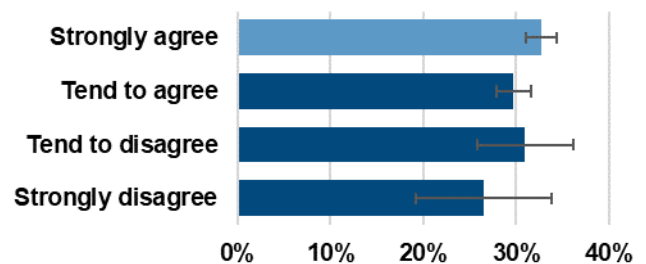
Whether views littering as a problem in the local area

People who viewed littering as 'not a problem at all' in the local area were more likely to feel able to influence decisions in their local area, when compared with those thought littering was 'a major problem' in their local area.



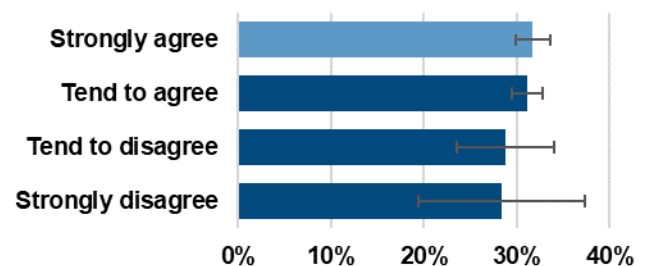
Whether feels a sense of belonging to the local area

While a relationship exists, between sense of belonging and the ability to influence decisions, the error bars overlap showing no significant difference between categories.



Whether feels people from different backgrounds in their local area get on well together

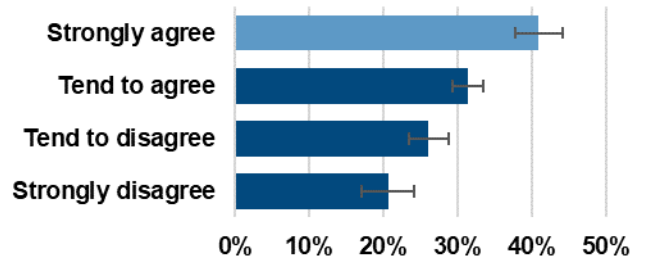
While a relationship exists, between people from different backgrounds getting on and the ability to influence decisions, the error bars overlap showing no significant difference between categories.



Local Democracy

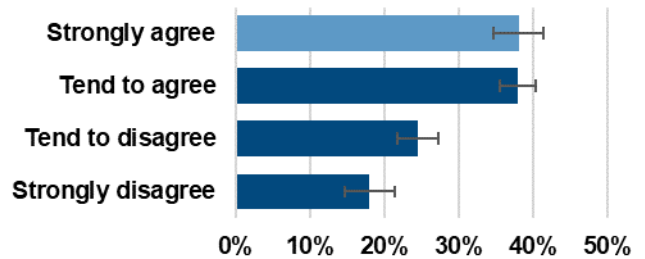
Whether has good understanding of what their local councillor does

People who strongly agreed that they had a good understanding of what their local councillor does for their local community were the most likely to feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area.



Whether feels local councillor works closely with local community

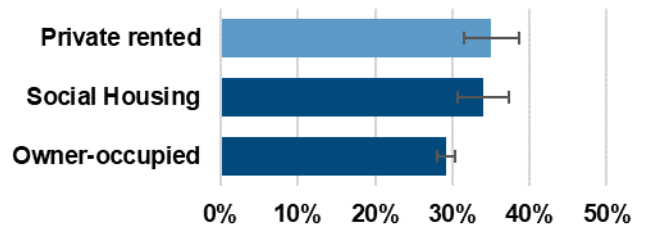
People who agreed that their local councillor works closely with their local community were most likely to feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area.



Economic Factors

Tenure

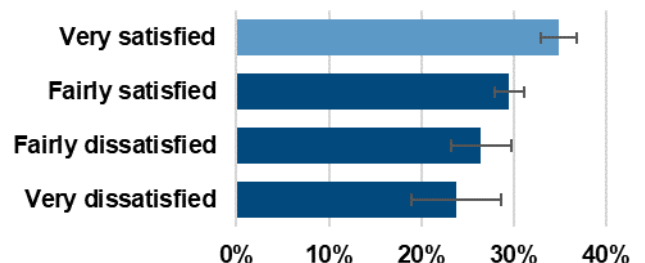
People living in privately rented accommodation or social housing were more likely to feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area compared with owner occupied.



Local Area

Satisfaction with services and facilities available in the local area

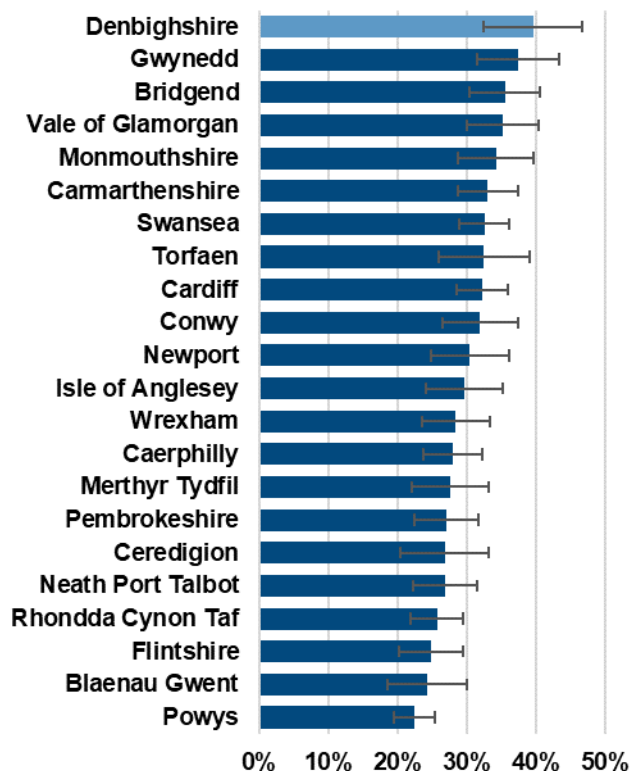
People who were very satisfied with their local services and facilities were the most likely to feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area.



Local Authority

Local Authority

People living in Denbighshire, Gwynedd and Bridgend were more likely to feel able to influence decisions in their local area compared with people from Powys, Blaenau Gwent, and Flintshire.



5. Factors not linked to feeling able to influence decisions in their 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 able to influence decisions in their local area:

- Sex.
- Religion.
- Economic status.
- Marital status.
- Whether has a limiting long-term condition.
- Whether views dog fouling as a problem in the local area.
- Whether views graffiti as a problem in the local area.
- Whether in material deprivation.
- Area deprivation (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation).
- Urban/Rural classification.
- Whether feels a sense of community.
- Overall satisfaction with local area.
- Satisfaction with ability to get to local services and facilities.
- Whether feels people treat each other with respect in the local area.
- Overall satisfaction with life.
- Welsh speaking ability.
- Whether has children.

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 23: 'Percentage of people who feel able to influence decisions affecting their local area'. Overall, seven central themes emerged from our analysis:

1. Demography.
2. Well-being.
3. Community Cohesion.
4. Local Democracy.
5. Economic Factors.
6. Local Area.
7. Local Authority.

The relationship between particular factors and people feeling able to influence decisions in their local area is likely to be more complex than suggested in this analysis and influenced by factors not measured in the National Survey. Additionally, most of the related factors first discussed in the earlier [2018-19](#) report appear to remain linked following analysis of the 2021-22 National Survey results. The regression models undertaken for both years remained broadly the same but due to the changing content of the survey some variables included in the 2018-19 analysis were not present in 2021-22 and vice versa. To investigate these associations further then additional research methods could include more small-scale investigations involving qualitative⁶ or mixed-methods⁷ approaches.

⁶ [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.

⁷ [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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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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