

A Spotlight Report

How people feel about living in Medway



A spotlight report
focusing on the
Medway villages
Halling and
Cuxton.

**April
2025**

A spotlight report on the Building Blocks of Life, focusing on the areas Halling and Cuxton.

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About Us

Healthwatch Medway are independent champions for health and social care in Medway. Our aim is to improve services by ensuring local voices are heard – we want to hear about health and social care experiences so as to influence positive change for communities across the Medway area. We have the power to influence NHS leaders and other decision makers to listen to your feedback and improve standards of care.

Healthwatch Medway is hosted by EK360.

Background

Our health and wellbeing can be affected by things that we experience in everyday life. There is increasing interest in these wider determinants of health, and Healthwatch Medway wanted to understand what positively and negatively impacts the health and wellbeing of people in Medway. Medway has a range of diverse settlements, from isolated rural villages and hamlets on the peninsula to densely populated urban towns. In April 2025, we engaged with **30** residents living in Halling (15) and Cuxton (15).

Healthwatch Medway will share this report with health and social care services to help build an understanding of how the areas where people live impact on them, and how we can work together with services to improve Medway residents' quality of life. This report summarises what we have heard.

There will be 9 reports in this series coming out across 2025, as a follow on from the 9 reports in our 'Medway Areas' series in 2024.

Methodology

Using a semi-structured interview, we approached people face-to-face in local community areas. Participants were selected by a randomised sample of who was out and about in their local area on the days we were engaging.

Findings

The Impact Living in Halling/Cuxton has on Residents

What’s good about living in your area?

We asked 30 residents living in Halling and Cuxton what they like about the area they live in. *Figure 1* shows the number of mentions by positive theme. 1 person said ‘nothing’.

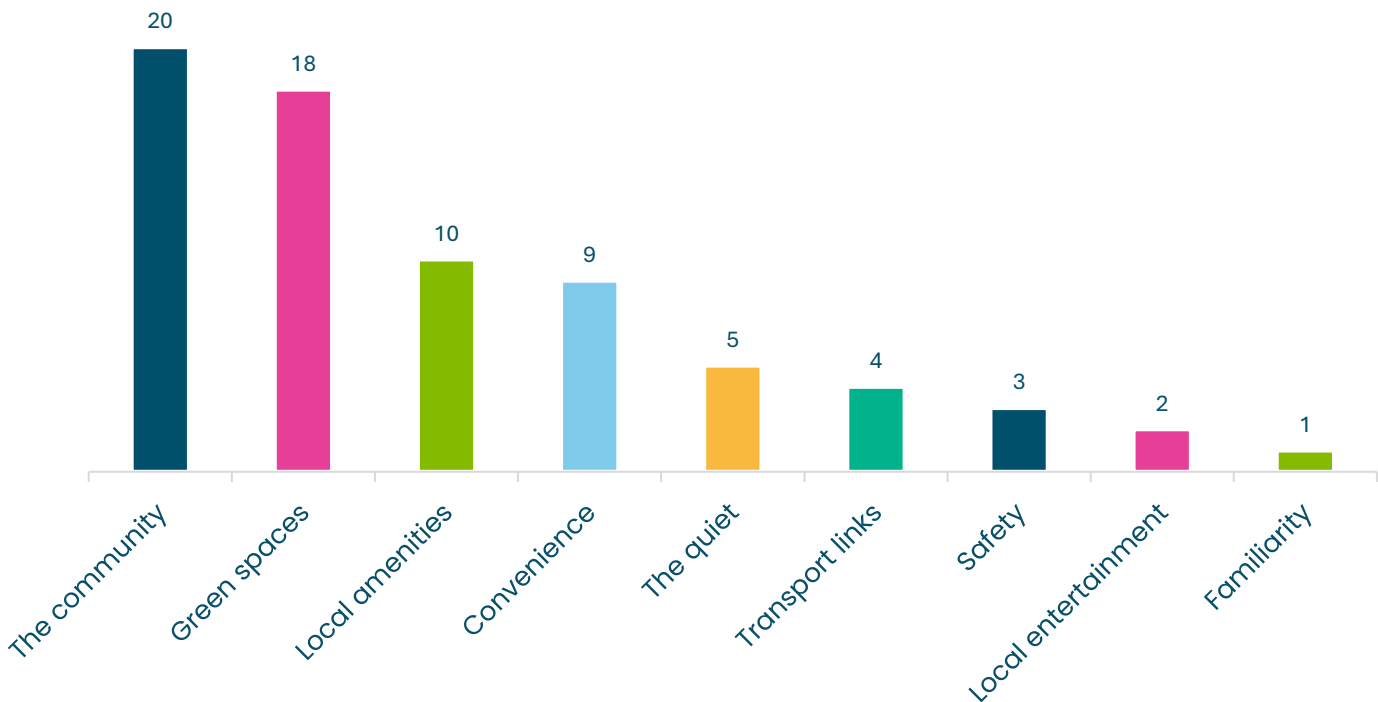


Figure 1 – Number of mentions by positive theme

The community (20 mentions)

67% mentioned the community, how friendly locals and neighbours are.

- “It’s a village community. Everybody’s nice and friendly and they help each other out.”
- “It’s a friendly village community and people don’t live on top of everybody else.”
- “I like the whole countryside community. They help us at the school, For example the older people come in and read with the children. The volunteers help to build up the community.”

- "I am lucky that I have good neighbours, they look after me, we look out for each other. People are friendly and say good morning to each other."

Green spaces (18 mentions)

60% of respondents mentioned that they enjoy the green spaces in the area.

- "Walking – there are great places to walk. The woods, the countryside."
- "I love the countryside it's fantastic. Much better than living a Maidstone where I lived in the town centre, it's more rural."
- "I go walking in the countryside as there's lots of that around."
- "I love the river, the scenery."
- "Feels like I am living in the countryside, I can breathe, there are so many lovely walks"
- "I love this walk, it is the best bit of my day. It's stunning whatever time of the year – spring, summer, autumn, winter – and I love the changes in the seasons. It's so beautiful here"

Local amenities (10 mentions)

33% mentioned local amenities.

- "There are a lot of shops nearby and nice people."
- "It feels like the country, but you still have all the amenities around you like the Co-op, the M&S and the Tesco."
- "There's shops and a library and lots of facilities."
- "There are good schools and a nursery."
- "There's a good church, the pub's not bad. It's a village, but there is everything here you need for daily life."

Convenience (9 mentions)

30% of respondents mentioned convenience.

- "Shops are within walking distance."
- "Easy to get into town (admittedly I do drive)."
- "It's very convenient."
- "I can reach nature without having to get in a car – I can walk here from home."

The quiet (5 mentions)

17% mentioned the quiet.

- "It is quiet, there isn't much going on. I like the fact that it isn't loud and hectic."
- "I like that's it is very quiet and there is not much going on, that there are not too many cars on the road."
- "Is fairly quiet."

Transport links (4 mentions)

16% of respondents mentioned good transport links.

- "There's a bus and the train station and you're near the motorway."
- "The transport services are good like the train station and the bus service."
- "The train station - we get to London or Maidstone easily."

Safety (3 mentions)

13% of respondents mentioned feeling safe in the area.

- "People are nice, and I do feel safe."
- "I feel safe in the area and the people are nice."
- "It's safe and there are good people, friendly."

Local entertainment (2 mentions)

7% mentioned local entertainment and groups.

- "There are events that bring people together - we do fireworks, lunch in the park in the summer where a company brings a big lorry and the kids can play all day, there are burgers. Just before Christmas, Santa Claus comes to the village and I think it's £10, but he will knock on doors and give a present. The tractor takes him round, there's music, it's a spectacle, a lovely big thing."

Familiarity (1 mention)

3% mentioned familiarity.

- "We've lived here for 24 years."

Positive Impacts of the Area

Following up on our first question, we asked respondents, 'How does that have a positive impact on you?'

28 of the 30 respondents (**93%**) said that where they live has a positive impact on them, and 2 respondents (**7%**) did not answer. Some respondents specified multiple positive impacts. *Figure 2* represents the specified positive impacts of the area.

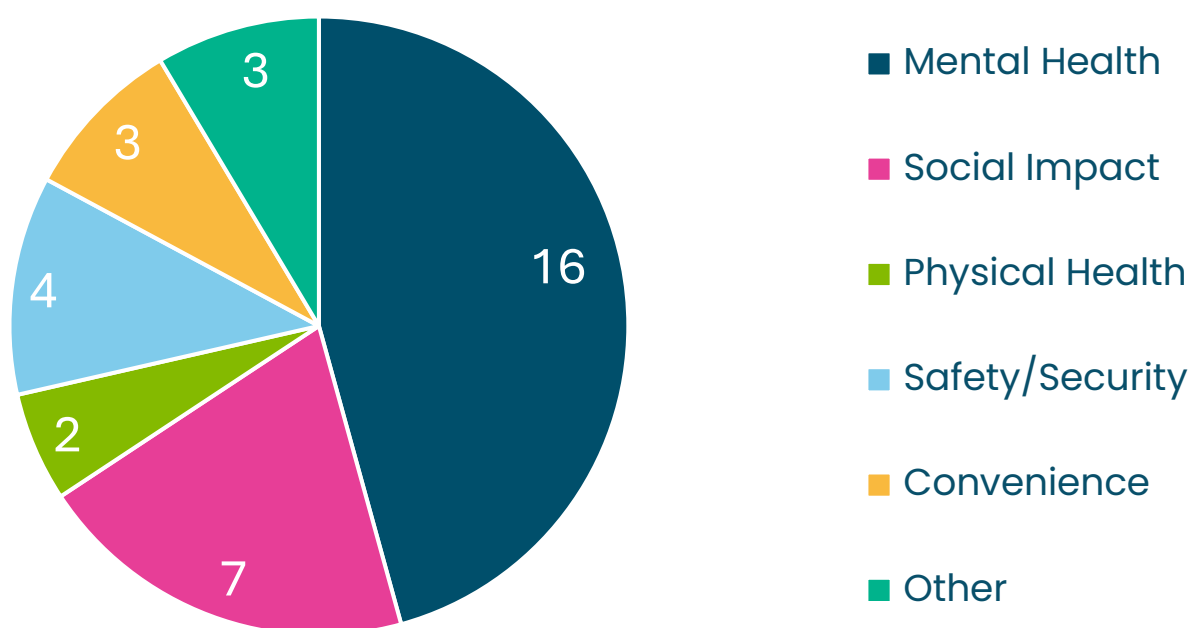


Figure 2 – Number of mentions by positive impact

Mental Health (16 mentions)

53% of respondents said that where they live had a positive impact on their mental health, making them feel happy and relaxed.

- "Feel more relaxed, not so claustrophobic as living in a bigger town or city, it's not like London. You feel like you can breathe, it's good for your mental health."
- "The mental health side of things is good for that"
- "It's good for my mental health as I work from home."
- "It totally does on my mental health. I go on de-stress walks with my friends."

Social Impact (7 mentions)

23% of people mentioned a positive impact on their social life.

- "It's just nice that it's social, it's nice that people say hello."
- "It gets you out of the house and you speak to people and you have friends around you."
- "Loneliness is tough, I have had a lot of loss, but there is always someone to turn to."
- "It's very nice to go out and know there will always be people who speak to you, recognise you."

Safety (4 mentions)

13% of respondents mentioned a positive impact of living in the area was that they felt safe.

- "I feel calmer, I don't worry living in Cuxton. I don't jump when I hear a loud noise or a crash."
- "I have people working on my house at the moment and I know I can trust them, come out and just leave them to it. It is nice to be working with people you can trust."

Convenience (3 mentions)

10% mentioned that where they live has a positive impact as it's convenient.

- "We're blessed to be so close to the shops and we can walk to the train station."
- "You don't need to travel or drive. You're in a sweet spot of everything."

Other (3 mentions)

10% mentioned other positive impacts.

- "In summer it's fantastic you can see all the way to the next village over."
- "You enjoy living here, you don't want to move, you want to come back."

Physical Health (2 mentions)

7% of people mentioned a positive physical health impact.

- "I go out trail running and walking around the whole area. Can see the positives of that."
- "We do lots of walking which is also positive for our physical health."

What are the negatives about living in your area?

We asked 30 respondents what they dislike about the area they live in. *Figure 3* shows the number of mentions by negative theme. 5 people said there was nothing they dislike about their area.

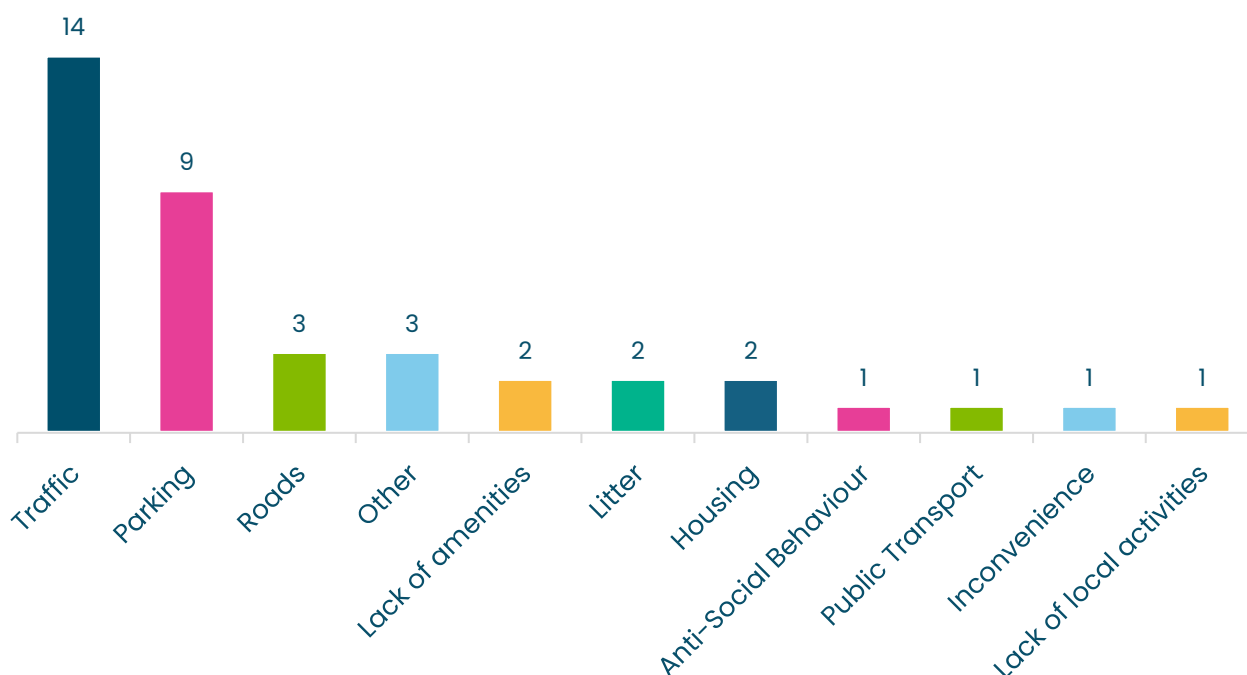


Figure 3 – Number of mentions by negative theme

Traffic (14 mentions)

47% of respondents mentioned the traffic in their area, particularly at school times. Almost half also mentioned problems with speeding in the area.

- "All the traffic is dangerous to the children."
- "The roads there's a lot of congestion and traffic and because there's one way in and one way out. People use the area as a shortcut."
- "The speed of cars is worrying. My mobility isn't great and when I go to cross the road, I am never sur if people are going to stop."
- "The idiots who speed and fly up the main road as we don't have speed bumps. There are some that drive like bloody idiots."
- "The roads are getting busier and cars are speeding more and more through the village."

Parking (9 mentions)

30% mentioned issues with parking, with the majority mentioning this being a problem specifically during school times.

- "The school is getting more and more full and the parking is a nightmare."
- "There's all sorts of bad parking that happens at school collection and drop off."
- "The parking in the village is getting out of order now."
- "The parking around the school – they are doing a consultation as parents parking on the surrounding streets can be a bit of a nightmare at drop-off and pick-up times."

Roads (3 mentions)

10% mentioned the potholes and state of roads.

- "They're always digging it up, the A228. There are literally road works here right now. It's a busy road between the motorway."
- "The roads are getting busier and cars are speeding more and more through the village. There are always some sort of roadworks, which means people use the village as a thoroughfare."
- "There are too many potholes."

Other (2 mentions)

7% mentioned other negatives about living in the area.

- "We need better broadband in Cuxton but nobody really thinks about us."
- "The trees from Six Acre Wood are so tall that in Winter, they make the surrounding area very cold and block out the light."

Lack of Amenities (2 mentions)

7% of people mentioned the lack of local amenities where they live.

- "There's nowhere to do a big shop in town as the Co-op is okay, but a bit expensive and not too much choice."
- "The shops, the lack of choice. Things are getting better as there is now a Tesco Express at St Andrews."

Litter (2 mentions)

7% of people mentioned litter.

- "There's a lot of dog mess."
- "Since the new McDonald's opened, there has been more litter – I go running and you practically have to weave in and out of everyone's rubbish."

Housing (2 mentions)

7% of respondents spoke about housing issues.

- "The school is too small now and there are too many houses being built in the surrounding areas. It feels like you can't move, you can't breathe."

Anti-social Behaviour (1 mention)

3% mentioned anti-social behaviour in the area.

- "The drugs, it is a village for drug dealers or people doing drugs."

Public Transport (1 mention)

3% of respondents spoke about public transport.

- "I don't like driving, and it would be good to have more regular buses that go to more places."

Inconvenience (1 mention)

3% mentioned the inconvenience of where they live.

- "I like walking but there is not much flat pavement as the pavement disappears and becomes country roads not too far from here. You can't get out if you don't drive and the train station is a bit of a schlep; it's also a bit hidden away."

Lack of activities (1 mention)

3% mentioned lack of activities.

- "It lacks community. My son tried to get a fitness class going, but not enough people were interested."

How does that have a negative impact on you?

We followed up the previous question by asking respondents how the negatives they had identified had had an impact on them. 15 people out of the 30 respondents (**50%**) said that where they live does have a negative impact on them and 13 respondents (**43%**) said that it does not. 2 respondents (**7%**) did not answer. Some respondents specified multiple negative impacts. *Figure 4* shows the specified negative impacts of the area.

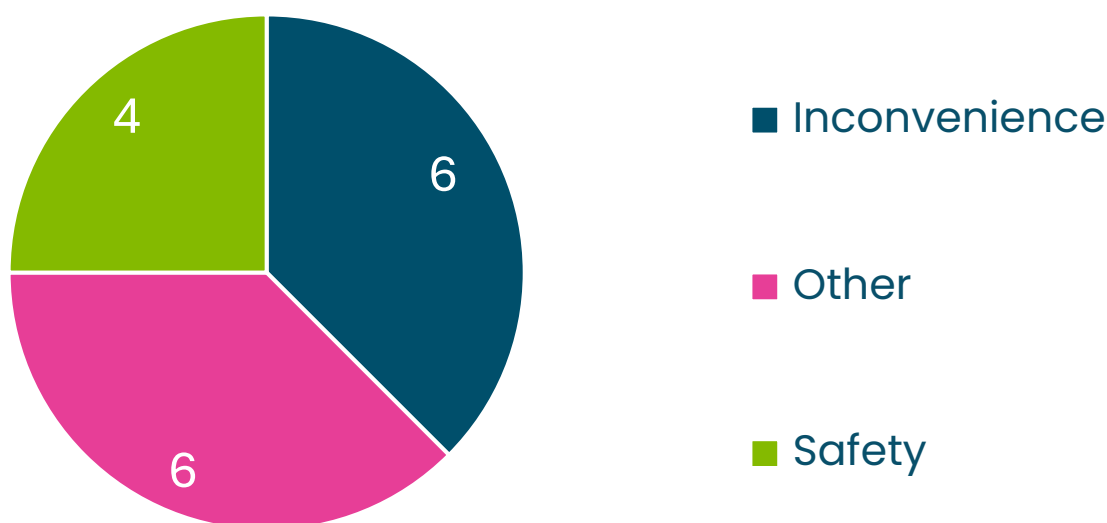


Figure 4 – Number of mentions by negative impact

Inconvenience (6 mentions)

20% spoke about the negative impact of inconvenience.

- “You have to plan your day like coming home and go and shopping around the traffic and around the road works as it can take an extra 20 minutes to get there. Lots of people using the road as well as there are other road works that divert them through here and it's just not a fit for purpose road anymore.”
- “It can be restrictive, you are limited to where you can go and when. You have to think ahead.”

Other (6 mentions)

20% of people mentioned other negative impacts.

- “They sit with their engines running and it's just polluting the air of the lovely green area.”
- “It can do it makes you think about moving, like whether to stay in the area or not.”

Safety (5 mention)

17% of people mentioned the impact on personal safety.

- "I got knocked over on this road buy a car 2 1/2 years ago so it makes me very wary when I have to walk around here."
- "Sometimes it does I can walk to the school but it can be a bit dangerous when there's lots of children around and there's also lorries on the road. All the through traffic is ruining the roads too."
- "I don't feel safe walking on the country roads as the speed gets too high and I am not sure people wouldn't hit you."

Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Medway Residents

When you think of health and wellbeing what comes to mind?

We asked respondents what comes to mind when they think of health and wellbeing. Figure 5 shows the number of mentions by response. 1 respondent said nothing, and 1 did not answer.

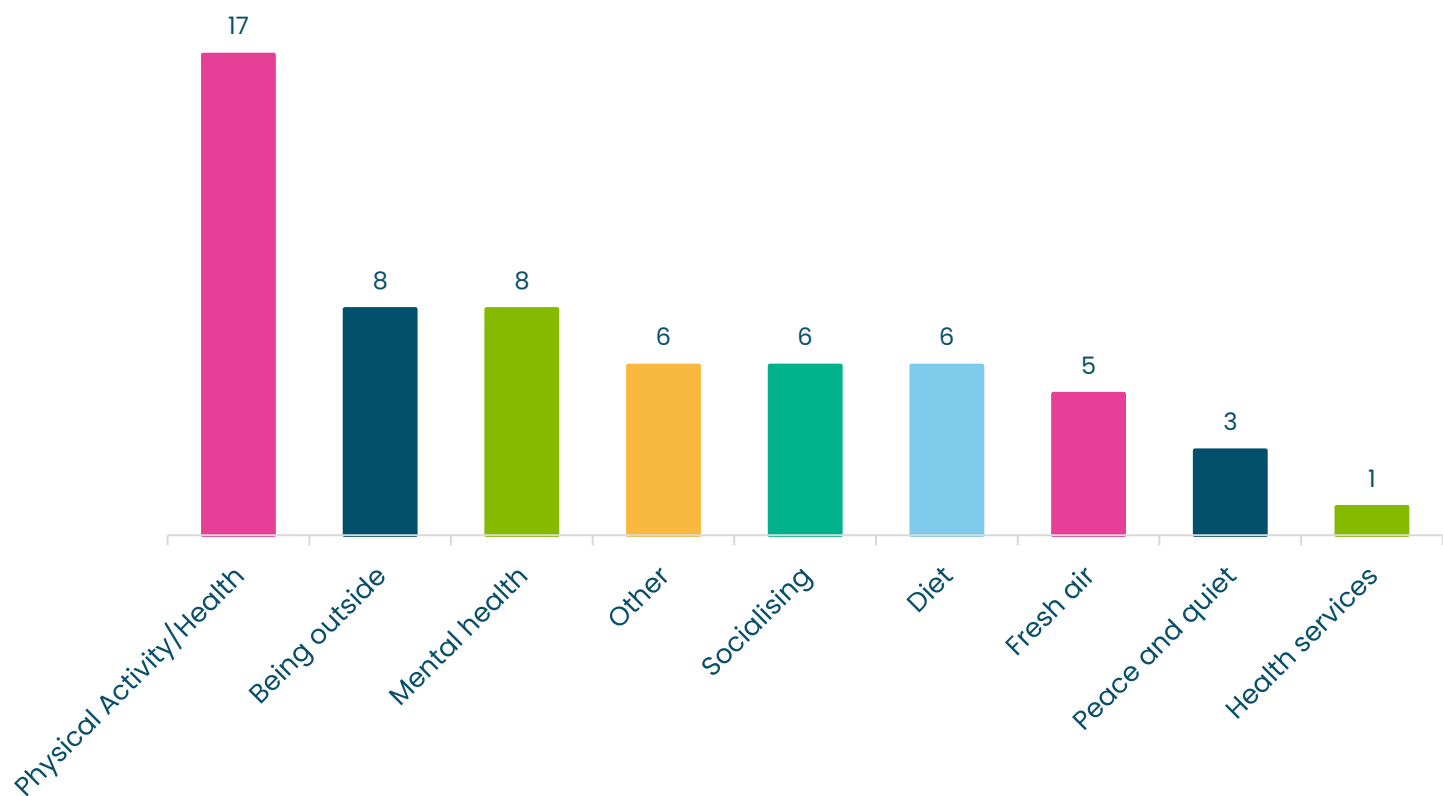


Figure 5 – Number of mentions by response to the question: “When you think of health and wellbeing, what comes to mind?”

Physical Activity/Health (17 mentions)

57% of respondents mentioned physical activity and physical health as something that comes to mind when they think of health and wellbeing.

- “Being fit being healthy. I take the dog for walks every day.”
- “Football, physical activity.”
- “Walks, somewhere lovely to walk the dogs”

Being outside (8 mentions)

27% of people mentioned being outside.

- "Getting out and seeing greenery."
- "Getting out and about. We have lots of people who walk their dogs around here – they get to go out, enjoy the scenery, it's a win-win."
- "I live alone. When the weather is right, I love the garden."

Mental Health (8 mentions)

27% mentioned mental health.

- "Taking care of your psychological state."
- "Mental wellbeing and not feeling depressed."
- "Mental health, looking after yourself."

Other (6 mentions)

20% mentioned other things that come to mind, such as work-life balance and holidays.

- "Taking the opportunity to balance out your life. Work-life balance is key."
- "Exercise, sun, holidays."

Socialising (6 mentions)

20% mentioned socialising.

- "Company of people, connection – like here, you walk past people and they say hello."
- "Happiness, freedom, friendships."

Diet (6 mentions)

20% of people mentioned diet.

- "Mission is to be the healthiest person I can be. And I eat healthily."
- "Eating well"
- "Having a good diet."

Fresh Air (5 mentions)

17% of people mentioned getting fresh air.

- "Getting out in the fresh air or walking. It's nice and calm round here and it calms me down."
- "I think of clean air."

Peace and Quiet (3 mentions)

10% mentioned that peace and quiet is something that contributes to their health and wellbeing.

- "Living in a relaxing place."
- "Relaxing, having peace and quiet."

Health Services (1 mention)

3% of people mentioned health services as something they think of when prompted by the question.

- "We are really lucky to have the doctors we do – they are amazing, and you can always get an appointment. You ring up in the morning and can often get one for that day."

What would help you to improve your health and wellbeing?

We asked people what they think would help them to improve their health and wellbeing. *Figure 6* shows the number of mentions by response. 10 people said don't know/nothing.

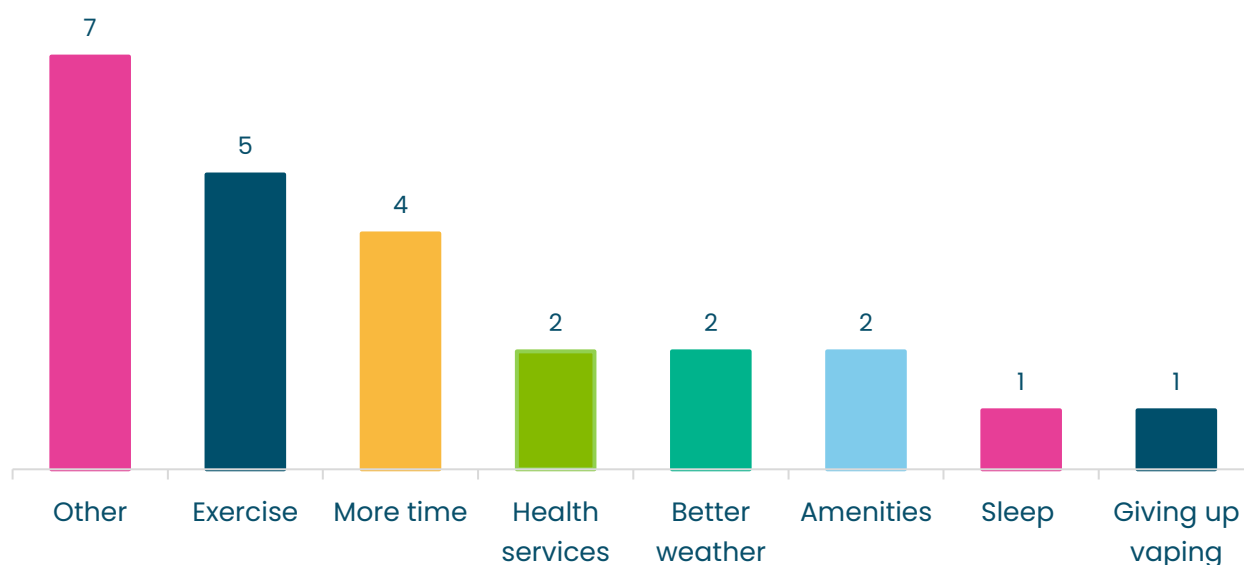


Figure 6 – Number of mentions by response to the question: "What would help you to improve your health and wellbeing?"

Other (7 mentions)

23% of people spoke about other ways to improve their health and wellbeing, such as improved work-life balance.

- "4 day working week to recharge the batteries and have more time for you."
- "In general to get people to stop arguing and think about the kid's future."
- "I think a lot of places gear towards youngsters – there is an app for this and an app for that – what about the people who don't use them or don't know how to? I prefer to speak to a person. They are forgetting about the older generation. They need to stop and consider older people. There is a digital divide. They don't want to be on apps for this and that – they want to speak to people. You hear about cybercrime all the time, about people being scammed. I don't want to be another statistic."

Exercise (5 mentions)

17% spoke about exercise as something that would improve their health and wellbeing.

- "More exercise, but is finding the time. I don't have enough time between work, home, children. My dog makes me go out, which is a good thing as I am not sure I always would if I didn't have one."
- "Being able to walk more."
- "To exercise more. I have POTS, so I am limited on how much I can do safely."

More time (4 mentions)

13% said that having more time would improve their health and wellbeing.

- "A little more time to do the things I like to do, to stay healthy and happy."
- "There aren't always enough hours in the day. It's about finding the balance between work and being able to get outside and blow away the cobwebs."

Health services (2 mentions)

7% mentioned that improvement in health services would help to improve their health and wellbeing.

- "I know it is not just around here, but sometimes it can be a nightmare getting a doctor's appointment. It is still difficult when need to see someone that day."
- "If the NHS was better, it's so slow. Medway hospital is really bad. I was waiting over one year for Medway Maritime Hospital appointment, and I got referred to Maidstone and I've already got an appointment."

Better weather (2 mentions)

7% mentioned that better weather would help to improve their health and wellbeing.

Amenities (2 mentions)

7% of people mentioned that more amenities would help to improve their health and wellbeing.

- "Having public gyms. The closest gym is very far away they should have one closer."
- "What we really need is a social hub in the village. We need a change of parish council plans for spaces in the village that aren't being used."

Sleep (1 mention)

3% mentioned more sleep would improve their health and wellbeing.

- “More sleep! I have two young kids.”

Give Up Smoking (1 mention)

3% of people we spoke to said that giving up smoking would improve their health and wellbeing.

- “If I stopped vaping.”

Where do you go to find out information for what is available locally?

We also asked people where they would most likely go to find out information for what is available locally. *Figure 7* shows the number of mentions by response. 2 people did not answer.

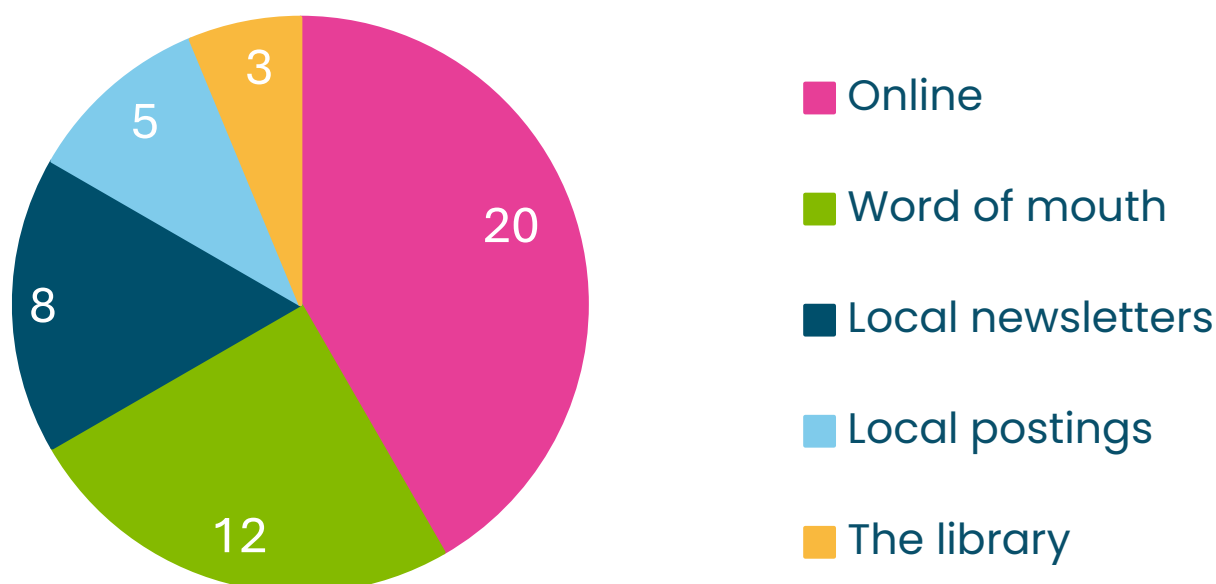


Figure 7 – Number of mentions by response to the question: “Where do you go to find out information for what is available locally?”

Online (20 mentions)

67% of people mentioned they would go online for information on what is happening locally, with **37%** specifically mentioning Facebook sites.

- “Online and the Facebook groups.”
- “Facebook – useful for finding out information, such as the best Chinese and other information.”
- “I usually go on Cuxton Facebook site.”
- “The simply Halling website.”

Word of Mouth (12 mentions)

40% said that they would find out what is happening locally through word of mouth.

- “From other people in the village.”
- “My friends – they recommend places they have been.”
- “My parents usually let me know what's happening.”

- “We have quite a community spirit around here, so people tell you what is going on.”
- “The post office the guy who runs it make sure you know what's going on.”

Local Newsletters (8 mentions)

27% get their local information through local newsletters.

- “We have a Cuxton newsletter which is informative.”
- “The Cuxton newsletter.”

Local Postings (5 mentions)

17% find out local information through local postings.

- “The bulletin boards near the Scout Hut. ”
- “There are also things like signs on the roundabouts about things that are going on locally.”

The library (3 mentions)

10% said they find out local information from the library.

- “The library has a notice board.”

What could be done to promote health and wellbeing within your community?

We asked people what could be done within their local areas and communities to improve their health and wellbeing. *Figure 8* shows the number of mentions by response theme.

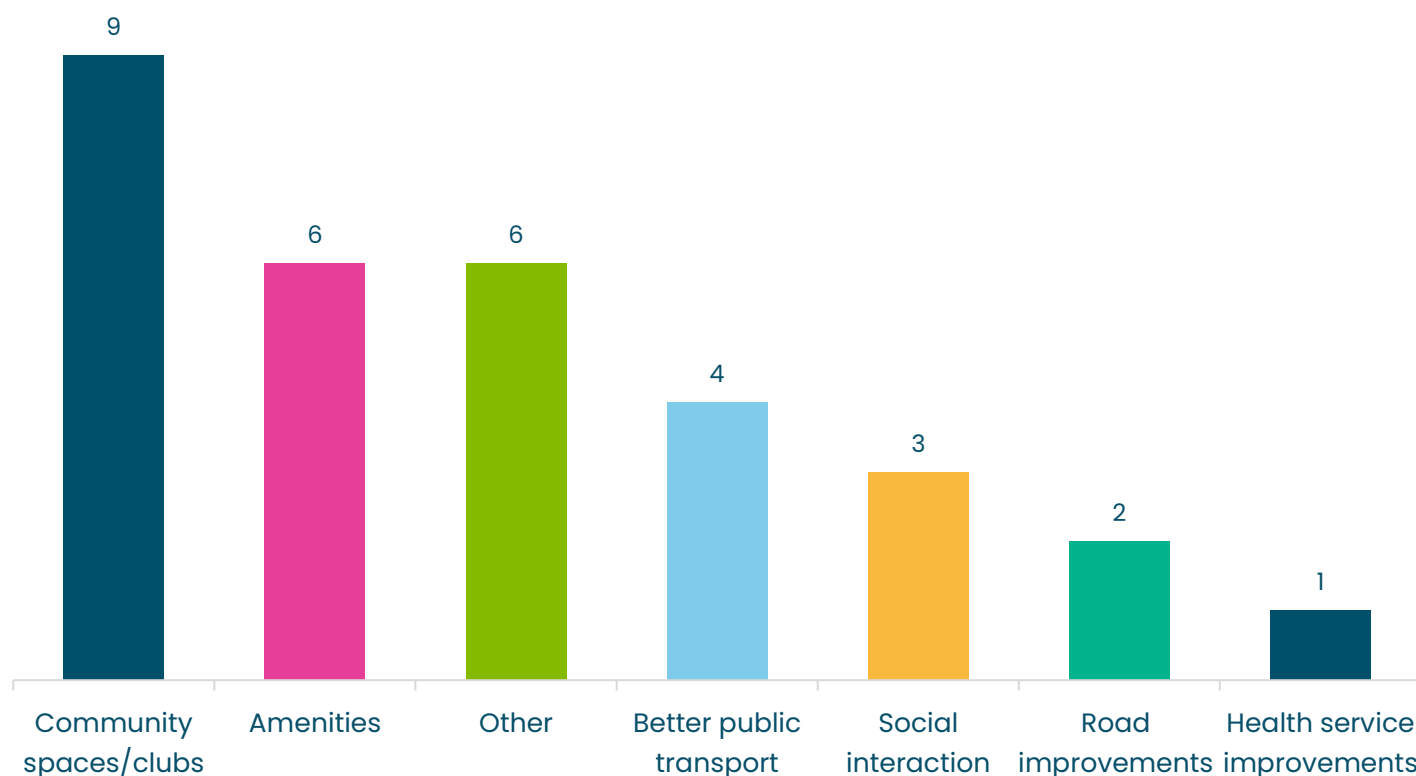


Figure 8 – Number of mentions by response to the question: "What could be done to promote health and wellbeing within your community?"

Community spaces/clubs (9 mentions)

30% of respondents mentioned community spaces/clubs.

- "More community hub clubs potentially one for the ageing population on days that they just can't get outside."
- "More things for the kids and younger people and older people too. Like a community social hub."
- "Get a Halling Parkrun. Make more of the outdoors."

Amenities (6 mentions)

20% mentioned more amenities will improve community health and wellbeing. **17%** made specific reference to the need for a local gym.

- “Have a local gym. You have to travel a little while out of the village to get to the most local one.”
- “Maybe a more health-oriented store as the Co-op isn't a specialty store, all the products are a bit generic. Maybe a farmers' market as we are surrounded by farms and local produce.”
- “A gym that youngsters could easily access.”

Other (6 mentions)

20% mentioned other things that would promote health and wellbeing.

- “People use their bikes more and not cause pollution.”
- “Look at the crime levels. Crime has gone up here recently and it has put people on edge – cars have been stolen or broken into. We are locking our doors now, which we didn't always do. It's left people feeling shaken up. Also do something about the litter – it's inevitable with all the changes, but it's not great to see. It feels like the changes around here haven't been for the better.”
- “Get people out walking more as we live in such a beautiful environment. Get people out of their cars or use them less. Maybe more cycling – but I can appreciate why people don't want to cycle on the roads, they don't feel safe.”

Better public transport (4 mentions)

13% of people mentioned better public transport would improve community health and wellbeing.

- “Better transport for people who don't drive, especially the older members of our community.”
- “The buses are terrible; I also wouldn't want [my children] travelling alone on public transport after dark.”
- “Maybe better transport links for people who don't drive?”

Social interaction (3 mentions)

10% of people mentioned more social interaction would improve community health and wellbeing.

- “Get everybody out of their houses and getting people active and speaking to each other. But how do you do that? It's not something that needs to cost money.”
- “A social place in the village would be great.”
- “Increased social interaction.”

Road improvements (2 mentions)

7% said that road improvements would improve health and wellbeing for their community.

- “Fewer roadworks as there always seems to be something on the A229.”
- “Make it a 20 zone.”

Health service improvements (1 mention)

3% of respondents said that improvements to health services will improve community health and wellbeing.

- “Give more money to the NHS.”

Demographics

- **Age:** The largest response was from people aged 45–54 (**23%**). The least common response was from people aged 0–9 and 85–94 (each at **3%**). The full range of ages is shown in *Figure 9*.

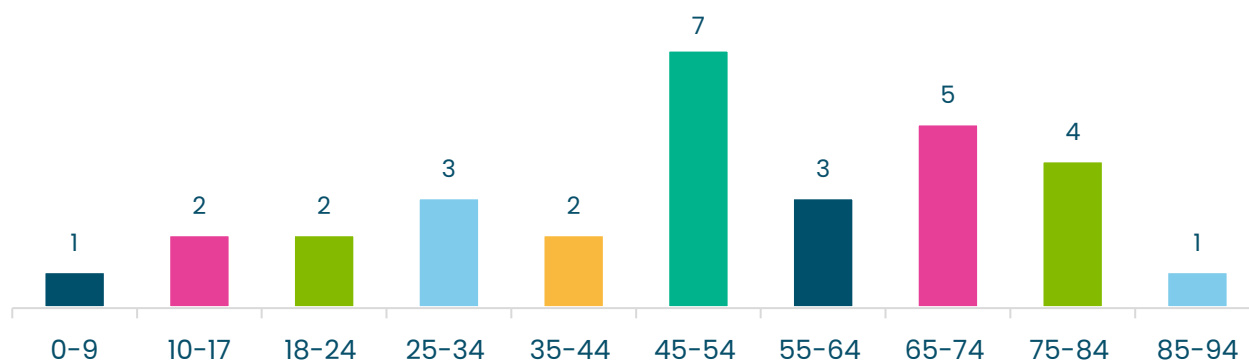


Figure 9 – Number of participants by age

- **Gender:** **50%** of participants identified as female, **47%** identified as male, and **3%** identified as non-binary. **90%** of participants' gender identity was the same as their sex recorded at birth, **3%** of participant's gender identity was not the same as their sex recorded at birth, and **7%** did not answer.
- **Sexual orientation:** **84%** of participants identified as heterosexual/straight, **3%** identified as gay or lesbian, **3%** identified as queer, and **10%** did not answer.
- **Ethnicity:** **90%** were White/White British and **10%** were White European.
- **English as a first language:** **94%** of participants told us that English was their first language, **3%** told us that Bulgarian was their first language, and **3%** did not answer.
- **Religion:** **50%** of participants told us they were Christian, **37%** told us they did not have a religion, **3%** told us that they were agnostic, and **10%** did not answer.
- **Disability:** **3%** reported having a disability.
- **Long-term health conditions:** **20%** of participants reported having a long-term health condition.
- **Mental Health:** **3%** reported experiencing a mental health issue.
- **Neurodiversity:** **3%** identified as neurodiverse and **97%** identified as neurotypical.

- **Employment status:** The largest response was from people who were retired (50%). The full range of employment status is shown in *Figure 10*.

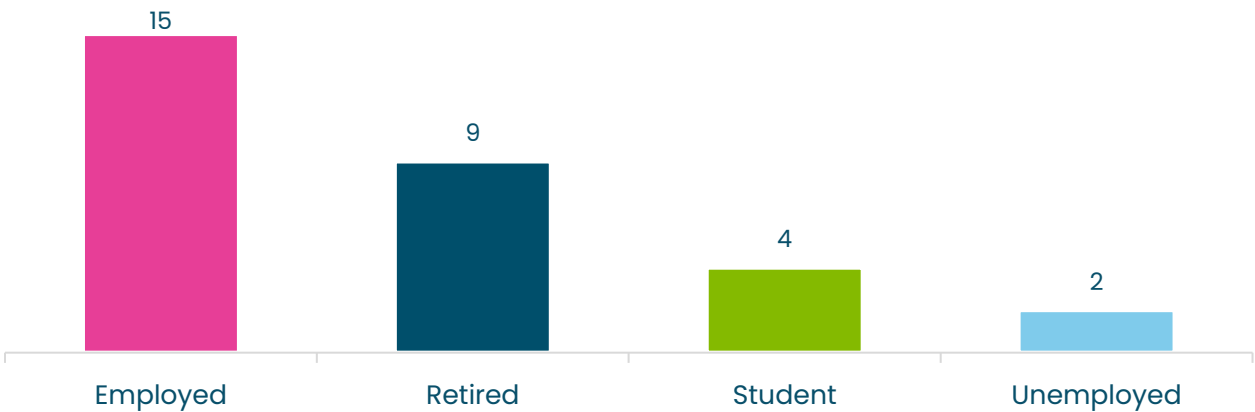


Figure 10 – Number of participants by employment status

- **Financial status:** The largest response was from people who told us that they never struggle to pay for basic necessities (70%). The full range of financial status responses is provided in *Figure 11*.

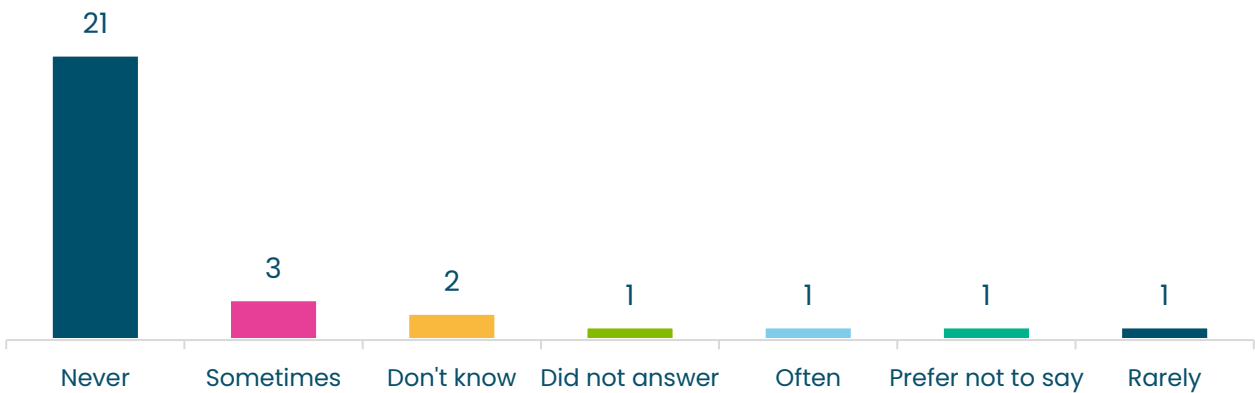


Figure 11 – Number of participants by responses to the question: “In the past six months, have you struggled to pay for basic necessities?”

Insights to Inform

These insights to inform are meant for this series of reports as a whole. There will be 9 reports in this series coming out across 2025, as a follow on from the 9 reports in our 'Medway Areas' series in 2024.

- For Medway Council and the NHS in Kent and Medway to use these insights to inform their work.



If you would like to chat with us about the report you can reach us through the following routes:

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Online:

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By Email:

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By Text:

**Text us on 07525 861 639. By
texting 'NEED BSL', Healthwatch's
British Sign Language interpreter will
make contact and arrange a time to
meet face-to-face**



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