healthwatch
Medway

A Spotlight Report

How people feel about living in Medway

A spotlight report focusing on the Medway villages of Parkwood, Hempstead and Wigmore.

October 2025

INSIGHTS AT EK36O

A spotlight report on the Building Blocks of Life, focusing on the area of Hempstead, Parkwood and Wigmore.

Contents

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 June 2025, we engaged with **54** residents living in Hempstead, Parkwood and Wigmore.

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.

Some percentages presented in this report may not total 100% exactly. This is either due to participants being able to select multiple responses for certain questions, or due to rounding of percentages to the nearest whole number.

Findings

The Impact Living in Hempstead, Parkwood and Wigmore has on Residents

What's good about living in your area?

We asked 54 residents living in Hempstead, Parkwood and Wigmore what they like about their area. *Figure **1*** shows the number of mentions by positive theme. 2 people said 'nothing'.
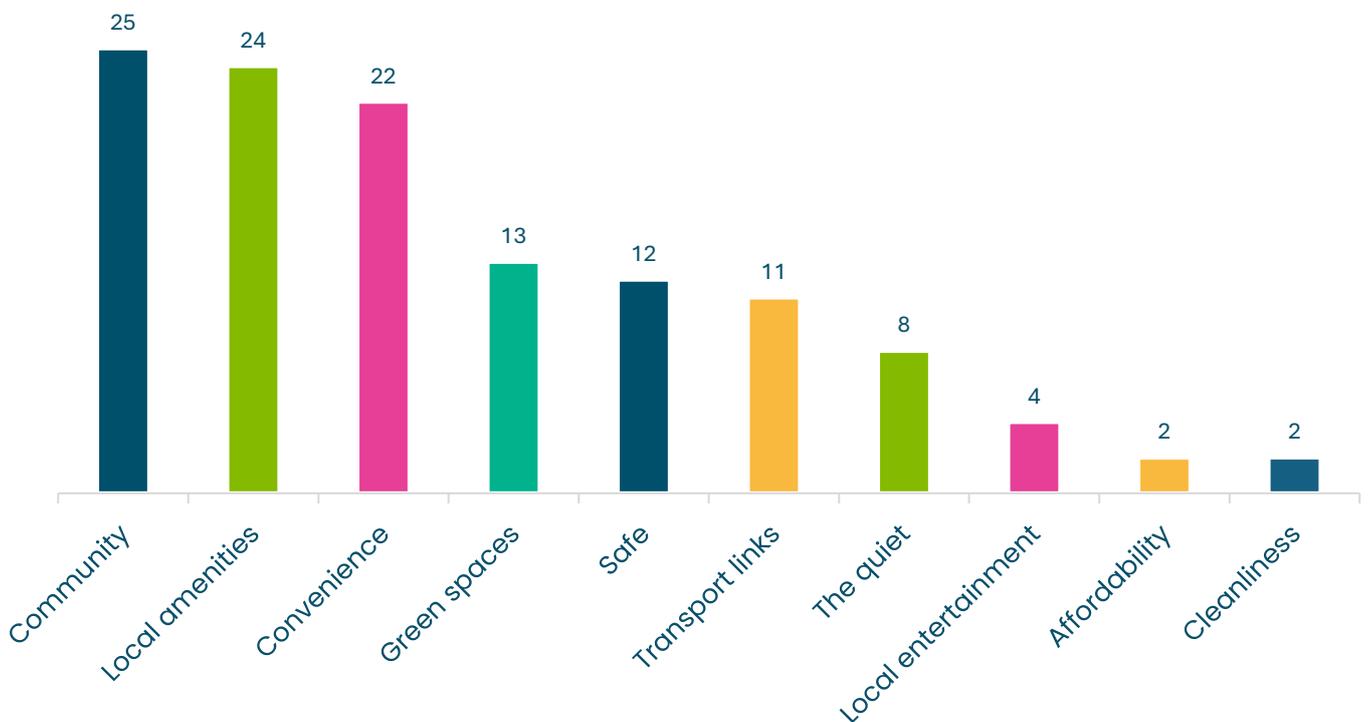
	Community	Local amenities	Convenience	Green spaces	Safe	Transport links	The quiet	Local entertainment	Affordability	Cleanliness
Mentions	25	24	22	13	12	11	8	4	2	2

Figure 1 – Number of mentions by positive theme

The community (25 mentions)

46% told us the community is a positive aspect of where they live.

- "It's still quite a community - a village spirit. Everyone knows each other."
- "Everybody is so friendly."
- "Very nice, good community who help each other."

Local amenities (24 mentions)

44% mentioned local amenities.

- "Local shopping centre only 10 mins walk. Pharmacy, clinic here. Good cafe. Everything you need here - all local."
- "It's good with the local shops. Local healthcare is fantastic - I got an appointment today for my daughter when I needed it. The schools are really good - my daughter is at Fairview School."
- "The amenities - good medical facilities, cafes and shops that are available locally, so you can just pop in."

Convenience (22 mentions)

41% mentioned convenience.

- "It is very convenient to the shops, doctors, dentist, bus stops, I do not drive."
- "I use a mobility scooter so it is helpful to have local shops that I can get to easily."
- "It's convenient. There's the shops, the motorway. Even the station is not far if I need to get there."

Green spaces (13 mentions)

24% of participants mentioned that they enjoy the green spaces in their area.

- "I love the nature reserve and fields. The countryside being within a few minutes and the woods."
- "The trees - we haven't quite demolished all of them yet - which is good air. They are the lungs of the area."

Safe (12 mentions)

22% mentioned feeling safe in the area.

- "It's inherently safe, you don't get trouble up here generally."
- "[It's] vandal free and the police do a good job."

Transport links (11 mentions)

20% mentioned transport links.

- "I used to drive, can't anymore. There's a good taxi service."
- "Buses excellent. I use them 2 to 3 times per week."

The Quiet (8 mentions)

15% mentioned the quiet.

- "It's quiet. Less cars around. There's a lot of children but quiet."
- "It's quiet. I'm a night shift worker so I need it quiet during the day. It's good that I don't live on the main road."

Local Entertainment (4 mentions)

7% mentioned local entertainment.

- "There are plenty of clubs - Parkwood Community Association Gillingham meet on the last Friday of the month and there is the Hub at St Paul's church."
- "[There is] lots happening. There's the Christmas tree, Hempstead Fair."
- "Plenty to do with local clubs: for children - football. For elderly – Hempstead Active Retirement Association (Hempstead ARA's)."

Affordability (2 mentions)

4% mentioned affordability.

- "There is a cheap gym."
- "The free parking is great."

Cleanliness (2 mentions)

4% told us about the cleanliness of the area.

- "The council do their best to keep it clean."
- "A clean place to live."

Positive Impacts of the Area

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

47 of the 54 respondents (**87%**) said that where they live has a positive impact on them. 7 respondents (**13%**) did not answer. Some respondents specified multiple positive impacts. *Figure 2* represents the specified positive impacts of the area.
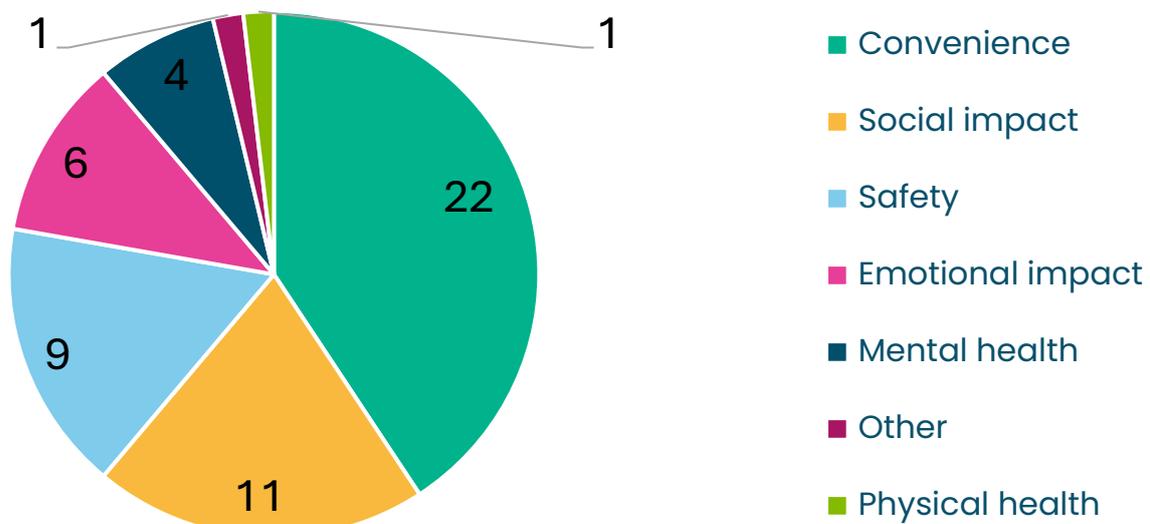

Figure 2 – Number of mentions by positive impact

Convenience (22 mentions)

41% mentioned that where they live had a positive impact as it's convenient.

- "It makes life easier. I don't drive so I can walk to the shops and park."
- "It makes it pleasant to come out. It means I can get the things I need without having to go miles."

Social impact (11 mentions)

20% of people mentioned that where they live had a positive impact on their social life.

- "It gives you a feeling of belonging. I know all my neighbours, and I know they will help if I need it. It means you're not completely isolated as we are all good friends."
- "Not worried about asking for help. There is a community spirit."

Safety (9 mentions)

17% of people mentioned feeling safe.

- "I feel secure if I have to walk anywhere."
- "Feeling safe helps you feel better. When my children went to secondary school they had to get the bus and it was good knowing that they were safe to do so."

Emotional impact (6 mentions)

11% mentioned that where they live had a positive emotional impact.

- "I'm quite happy to live here. I'm happy."
- "I don't want to move. I feel happy. It's good for my wellbeing."

Mental health (4 mentions)

7% of respondents said that where they live had a positive impact on their mental health.

- "Helps with my social anxiety. Knowing the area and people. I feel welcome here."
- "It's positive for my mental health as you are not enclosed, you can get out, you can walk about."

Other (1 mention)

2% mentioned other positive impacts.

- "Being able to sleep."

Physical health (1 mention)

2% of respondents said that where they live had a positive impact on their physical health.

- "I tend to do more walking now. It makes me feel good."

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What are the negatives about living in your area?

We asked 54 respondents what they dislike about the area they live in. *Figure 3* shows the number of mentions by negative theme.
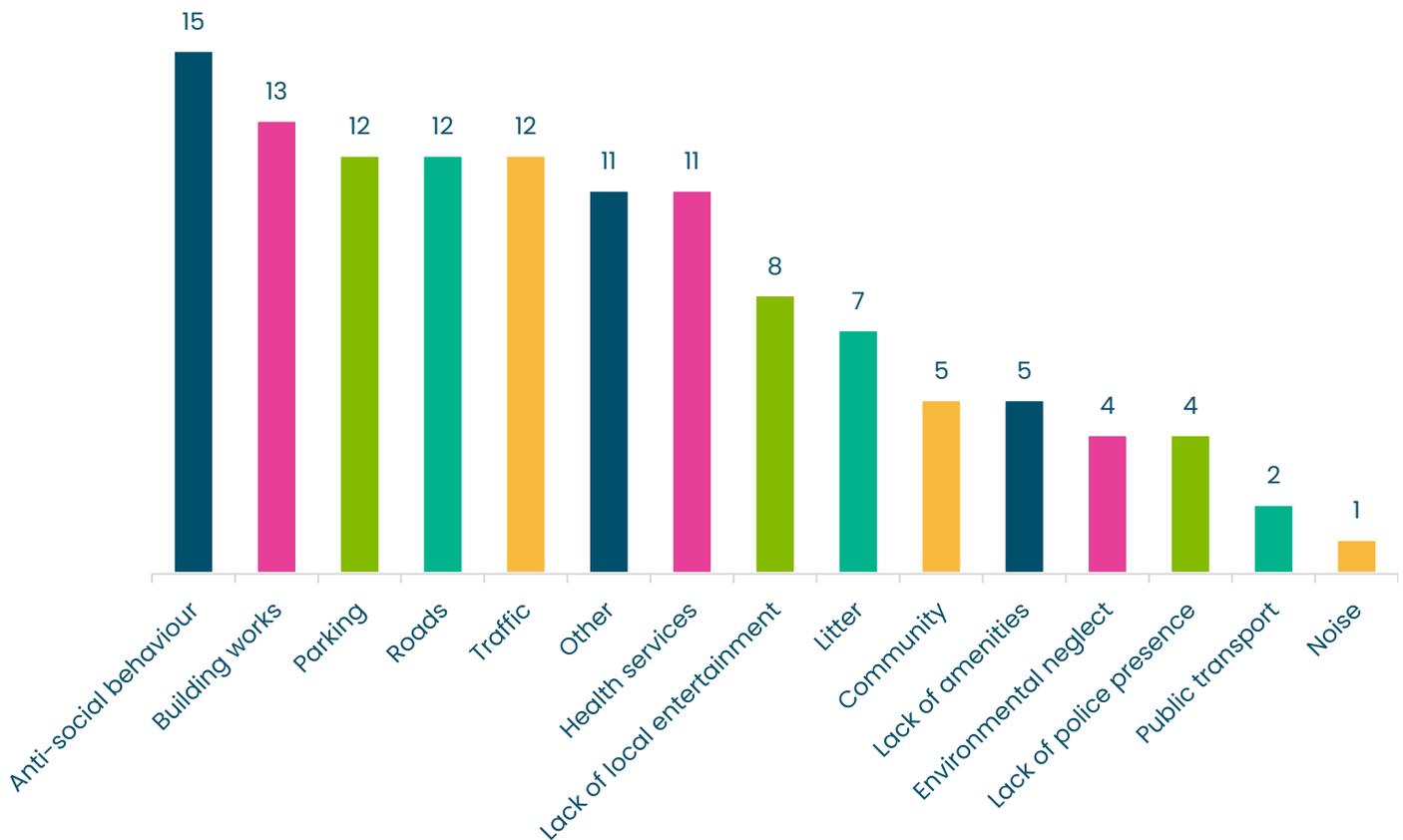

Figure 3 – Number of mentions by negative theme

Anti-social behaviour (15 mentions)

28% mentioned anti-social behaviour in the area.

- "I don't like the bikes and e-scooter. Something needs to be done about them. I am worried that there will be a serious injury. They zoom on the pavements, the green and through the precinct. Day time is most clear but evening it is busy. There are signs up to say "no biking" but these are ignored."
- "The youngsters terrorise the shop owners: lack of respect. They are running in and out of the shops. They take things. The youngsters are on scooter and bikes up and down precinct."
- "Friday nights the kids are everywhere on bikes and scooters. It's so busy it feels like 100's of kids around causing mayhem."
- "50 to 70 youths hanging out in the precinct on bikes and doing wheelies. This has got worse."

Building works (13 mentions)

24% of participants mentioned issues with building works in the area.

- "Building too many houses, and they're too close together. There's no space to breathe."
- "Too much development. It's a shame there is so much. Seems crazy to be building on land that's not suitable - like on really steep gradients. The building is a blot on the landscape and means I'm losing my [dog] walking places."
- "I don't like the way the area is having more houses, we've got more than we can cope with already. Medical services are struggling with what we have already."

Parking (12 mentions)

22% spoke about issues with parking.

- "Houses need more parking spaces, majority of new homes have 2 or 3 cars."
- "People park across your driveway, so if you have to be somewhere you need to park your car on the road so you can leave on time and not get blocked in."
- "School parking is a problem [specific reference to Hempstead Infant School]. I'm always getting by driveway blocked by someone taking their child to school."

Roads (12 mentions)

22% told us about issues with roads.

- "Constant road works and road closures. Pot holes need sorting."
- "Pot holes and road conditions are poor."
- "The roads are becoming more congested, and then the roadworks are bad. They are doing the same thing in the same place over and over. Why can't the council enforce the roadworks so they don't overrun? Why can't they coordinate at the same time?"

Traffic (12 mentions)

22% of respondents mentioned the traffic in their area.

- "I live right near the motorway. There's a lot of car racing quite late at night."
- "Cycling is dangerous because of the drivers on the road [need more cycle paths]"
- "The road near the shops are dangerous. The cars are too fast and dangerous."

Other (11 mentions)

20% of respondents mentioned other negative aspects of Hempstead, Parkwood and Wigmore.

- "There's no delivery services available with takeaway places for the elderly."
- "The council has not been helpful. I've had issues with council tax, but they won't talk to me to fix it. They'd rather go to court than work with me or talk to me. And they aren't recording payments accurately."
- "A bit lonely. I haven't joined any clubs."
- "No green spaces nearby where I live."

Health services (11 mentions)

20% of participants mentioned issues with health services.

- "It's impossible to get a GP appointment in the morning so I have to use private healthcare because its quicker and easier."
- "The Diabetic clinic isn't working. Everything is centralised now. They cancelled my appointment and I can't get a new one, even though I'm supposed to have a check-up every year."
- "I have been waiting over 8 months for hospital clinic appointments for my knee and back issues."

Lack of local entertainment (8 mentions)

15% of respondents mentioned a lack of local entertainment, particularly for young people.

- "There is not a lot for teenagers to do other than hang around and be bored."
- "Not a lot of things to do in the area."

Litter (7 mentions)

13% mentioned litter.

- "Litter everywhere on the floor. It is thrown out the car window down the hill."
- "Not everyone picks up their dog poo."

The community (5 mentions)

9% mentioned the community are a negative aspect of the area.

- "I feel that some people can be very judgemental."
- "Illegal immigrants not wanting to adapt or interact with the British way of life – this will not be good in the future."
- "The migrants around. Totally different people."

Lack of amenities (5 mentions)

9% of people mentioned the lack of amenities where they live.

- "It's a shame the pub closed down. That was a real community thing."
- "The pub has gone; it was a real social hub for the community they used to do special meal deals."
- "The range of shops are not as good as they were."

Environmental neglect (4 mentions)

7% mentioned environmental neglect.

- "Local area used to be kept nice and clean and tidy, now [the] weeds are overgrown."
- "In Bayswater, the council don't maintain the area. There are issues with emergency access and they don't cut the grass. Where I live there's a walk way that's overgrown, but they won't clean it or clear it. It needs cutting right bck but they won't do it without lots of nagging, and even then they don't fix it. It's always a battle. They seem to have a 'I don't care' attitude. I'm disabled so its dangerous, but they still won't do anything."

Lack of police presence (4 mentions)

7% mentioned lack of police in the area.

- "There are no PCSOs (Police Community Support Officers)."
- "No policemen (only community bobby occasionally)."

Public transport (2 mentions)

4% of respondents spoke about public transport.

- "They are reducing the number of buses and increasing the costs so people don't use them, so they end up using cars (leading to more parking problems)."

- "Can we get the buses on time? It causes problems getting to work. I had to spend £18 to get to work today via Uber because I couldn't get on the bus and it was late. That's the cost on top of the weekly bus pass."

Noise (1 mention)

4% mentioned noise.

- "The noise is an issue, and it can be any time of the day or night."

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. 47 out of the 54 respondents (**87%**) said that where they live does have a negative impact on them and 5 respondents (**9%**) said that it does not. 2 respondents (**4%**) did not answer. Some respondents specified multiple negative impacts. *Figure 4* shows the specified negative impacts of the area.
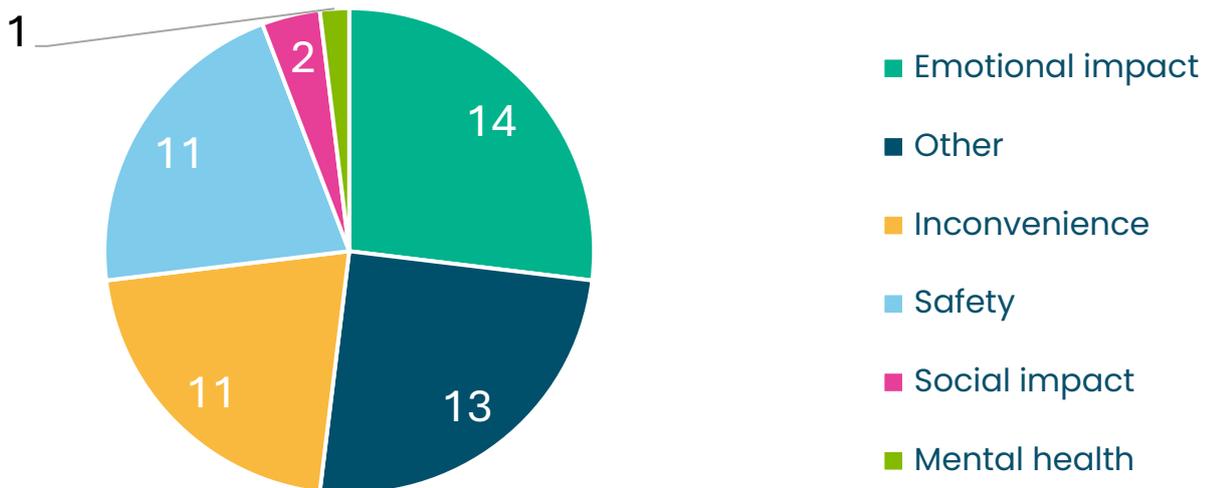

Figure 4 – Number of mentions by negative impact

Emotional impact (14 mentions)

26% of people mentioned negative emotional impact, making residents feel frustrated, annoyed and stressed.

- "Everything is stressful."
- "[I] get worried and am unhappy."
- "Worried about the impact on facilities with extra housing. Extra pressure."

Other (13 mentions)

24% of people mentioned other impacts.

- "Without anything for the teenagers to do, I feel it encourages them to go online."
- "Losing my walking routes with my dog means less exercise."
- "During the night sleep can be disrupted because of the traffic noise."

Inconvenience (11 mentions)

20% spoke about the negative impact of inconvenience.

- "If I want to go somewhere I have to allow half an hour for a journey that should take about 10 minutes."
- "I have to travel further to get what I want or need."
- "It takes longer to get to places especially if you have to travel in rush hour which I try to avoid, but sometimes you might get an early appointment at the hospital which you cannot change."

Safety (11 mentions)

20% of people mentioned feeling unsafe.

- "If you were driving, you worry you might hit one of the youths on their bikes because they have come out of nowhere. Also, they like to play 'chicken' and stand in the road."
- "If I am on my own I feel intimidated."
- "I have to be careful with my daughter as she could be hit on the pavement outside my house because of the way people drive. It wasn't nice seeing the old lady run over here."

Social Impact (2 mentions)

4% of people mentioned where they live has an impact on their social life.

- "Makes me not want to go out as much. Won't let my 17-year-old go out on her own. This is restricting our lives and choices."
- "My husband was the social one. Now he has died I find it hard to talk to people."

Mental health (1 mention)

2% of people mentioned the impact on their mental health.

- "This makes me feel anxious."

Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Medway Residents

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

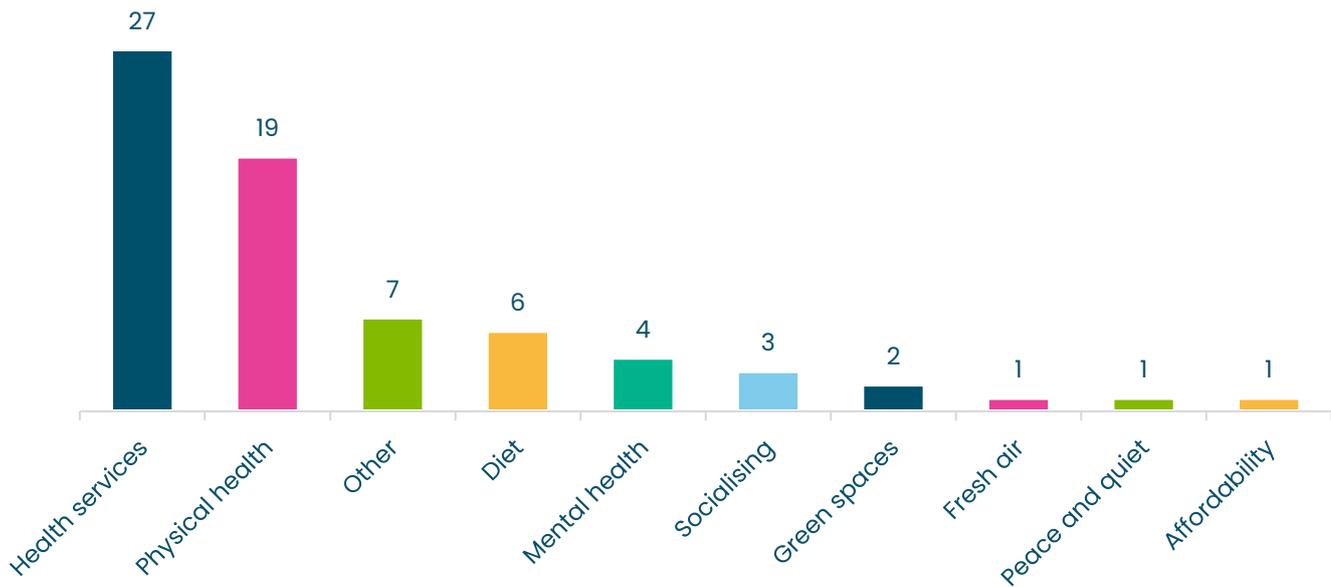We asked respondents what comes to mind when they think of health and wellbeing.

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

Health Services (27 mentions)

50% of people spoken to mentioned health services as something they think of when prompted by the question.

- "I suffer from poor health so I'm very appreciative of the hospitals and medical centres in the area. It's good other than the trouble of getting appointments - the dentist is overwhelmed for example, and the GP and chemist staff are under pressure."
- "There aren't enough healthcare facilities around Medway - particularly not enough care in the community. Community care, acute and mental health care don't talk to each other or work well together."
- "Dementia/Alzheimer's - all staff working in hospitals need to be more aware of patients with these conditions. In Medway hospital, the porter and healthcare assistants didn't know how to deal with my relative who has dementia and they were not nice to them."

Physical health (19 mentions)

35% of respondents mentioned they associate physical health with health and wellbeing.

- "Keeping healthy, walking, exercising. Keeping the body fit."
- "Trying to be as healthy as you can. Going to the gym; walking the dog; exercise."

Other (7 mentions)

13% of people mentioned other things that come to mind when they think of health and wellbeing.

- "I want a clean way of life."
- "Can I walk safely...and things like that."

Diet (6 mentions)

11% of people mentioned diet.

- "That not enough it being done to help people with weight issues. Not enough warnings of the rubbish that is in people's food. Not enough preventative health care is carried out."

Mental health (4 mentions)

7% mentioned mental health.

- "You and your wellbeing; your mental state."

Socialising (3 mentions)

6% of people mentioned socialising.

- "Walking and socialising. Its a shame they took the pub away as lots of people used that for socialising."
- "Meeting people when I walk around the park."

Green spaces (2 mentions)

2% mentioned green spaces.

Fresh air (1 mention)

2% of people mentioned fresh air.

- "Air quality is good here."

Peace and quiet (1 mention)

2% of people mentioned feeling peaceful.

Affordability (1 mention)

2% of people mentioned affordability.

- "I think of basic needs - home, food, water, electricity and lights. If you can afford them then you can take manage your health and wellbeing."

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. 13 people (**24%**) said, 'don't know/nothing'. 6 people (**11%**) did not answer.
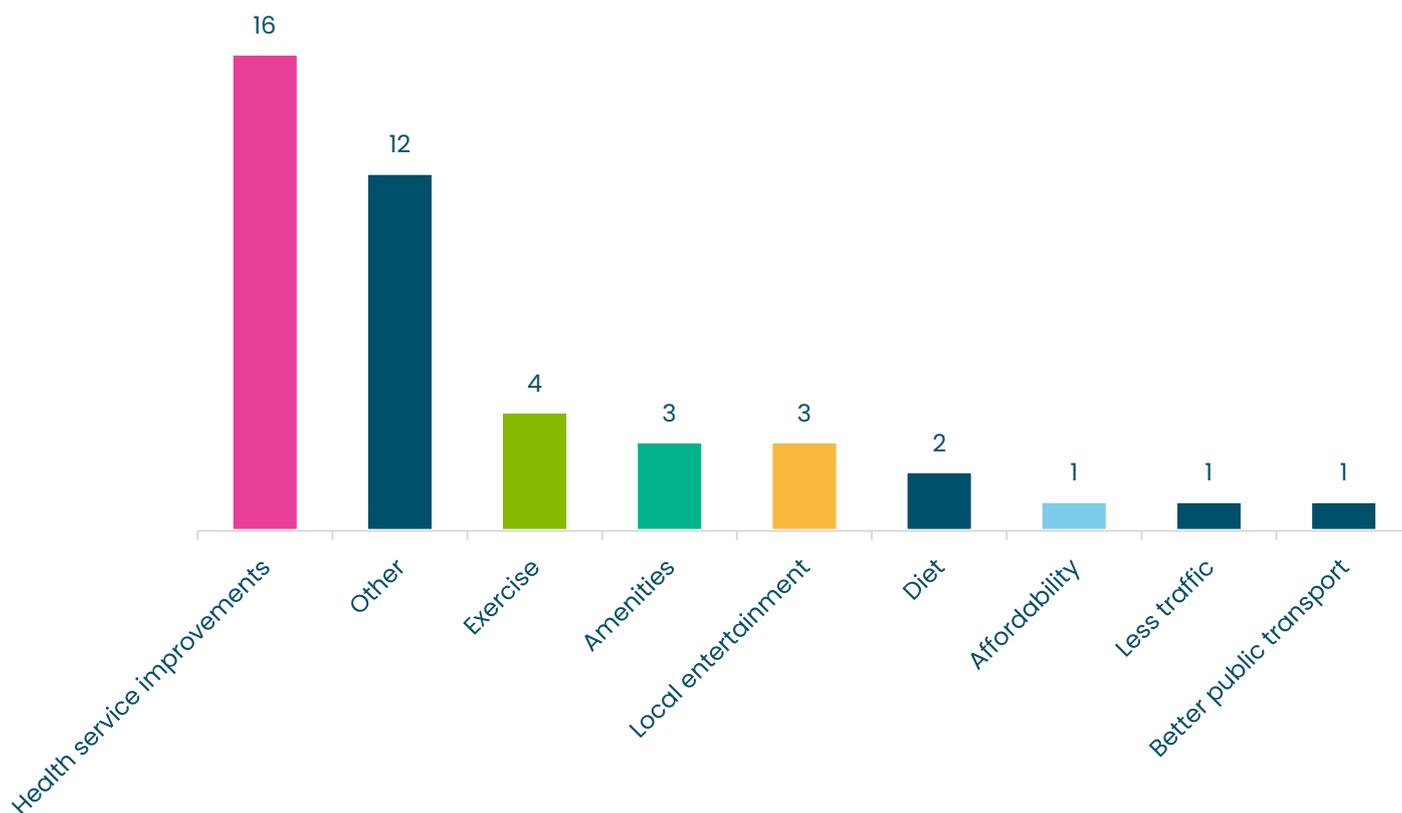
Figure 6 – Number of mentions by response to the question: "What would help you to improve your health and wellbeing?"

Health service improvements (16 mentions)

30% mentioned that improvements to health services would improve their health and wellbeing.

- "I don't trust the Medway Hospital. I've had experience of two people dying there in the last few years. It's shocking. It's not the staff, just the lack of facilities."
- "Having more confidence in healthcare services (particularly Medway Hospital) would be good as it becomes a barrier to access [don't want to go there because it's so bad]. I also don't have confidence in community care for my mum - if it wasn't for me, I don't have confidence services would be there to help."

Other (12 mentions)

22% mentioned other things that would improve their health and wellbeing.

- "Decent cycle paths so I don't have to worry about traffic. It's good for my exercise, but also for people commuting."
- "I need a disabled badge, but it takes time to do it."
- "Improving the state of the country. It has a big negative impact on people's mental health. It's very negative in this country."
- "Clean up the precinct, Re-pot and care for the large plant pots. Care for the area."

Exercise (4 mentions)

7% spoke about exercise as something that would improve their health and wellbeing

- "Doing more exercise. I am going to be a grandma again soon and want to be able to run around after them, have as much time as possible to see them grow up."

Amenities (3 mentions)

6% mentioned amenities.

- "Have a few less takeaways and betting shops in the area. More nice food shops. More healthy shops."

Local entertainment (3 mentions)

6% mentioned local entertainment.

- "More leisure activities. I would like to see Badminton, Tennis, indoors locally. There is nothing here."

Diet (2 mentions)

4% of respondents told us that improving their diet would help improve their health and wellbeing.

Affordability (1 mention)

2% mentioned affordability.

- "Perhaps having more swimming and gym facilities, and making them more available to people - it's expensive and not everyone can afford it."

Less traffic (1 mention)

2% mentioned less traffic would improve their health and wellbeing.

Better public transport (1 mention)

2% mentioned better public transport would improve their health and wellbeing.

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. 3 people (**6%**) did not answer.
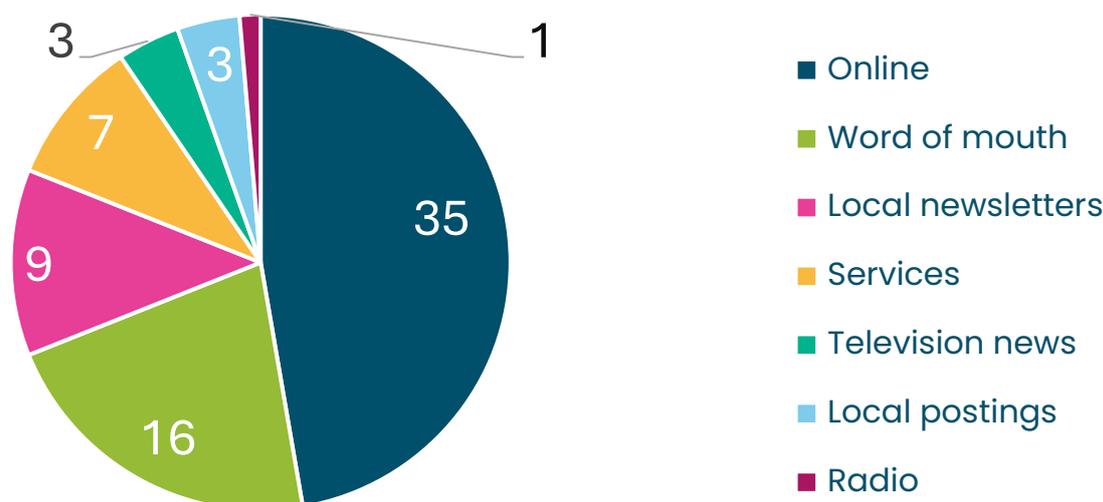

Figure 7 – Number of mentions by response to the question: "Where do you go to find out information for what is available locally?"

Online (35 mentions)

65% of people mentioned they would go online for information about what is happening locally, with **19%** specifically mentioning Facebook sites.

- "Facebook for Parkwood and Hempstead- the person who runs it is like the Oracle – they know everything going on."

Word of mouth (16 mentions)

30% said that they would find out what is happening locally through word of mouth.

Local newsletters (9 mentions)

17% get their local information through local newsletters.

- "Medway Matters, although it is often late and events have already happened."
- "Medway Matters - although some things have happened by the time it is delivered."

Services (7 mentions)

13% said they would look to services, including the library and the local church, to find out local information.

Television news (3 mentions)

8% find out local information through the news on the television.

Local postings (3 mentions)

8% find out local information through local postings.

Radio (1 mention)

2% find out local information through local radio.

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. 3 people (**6%**) did not answer, and 4 people (**7%**) said 'don't know/nothing'.
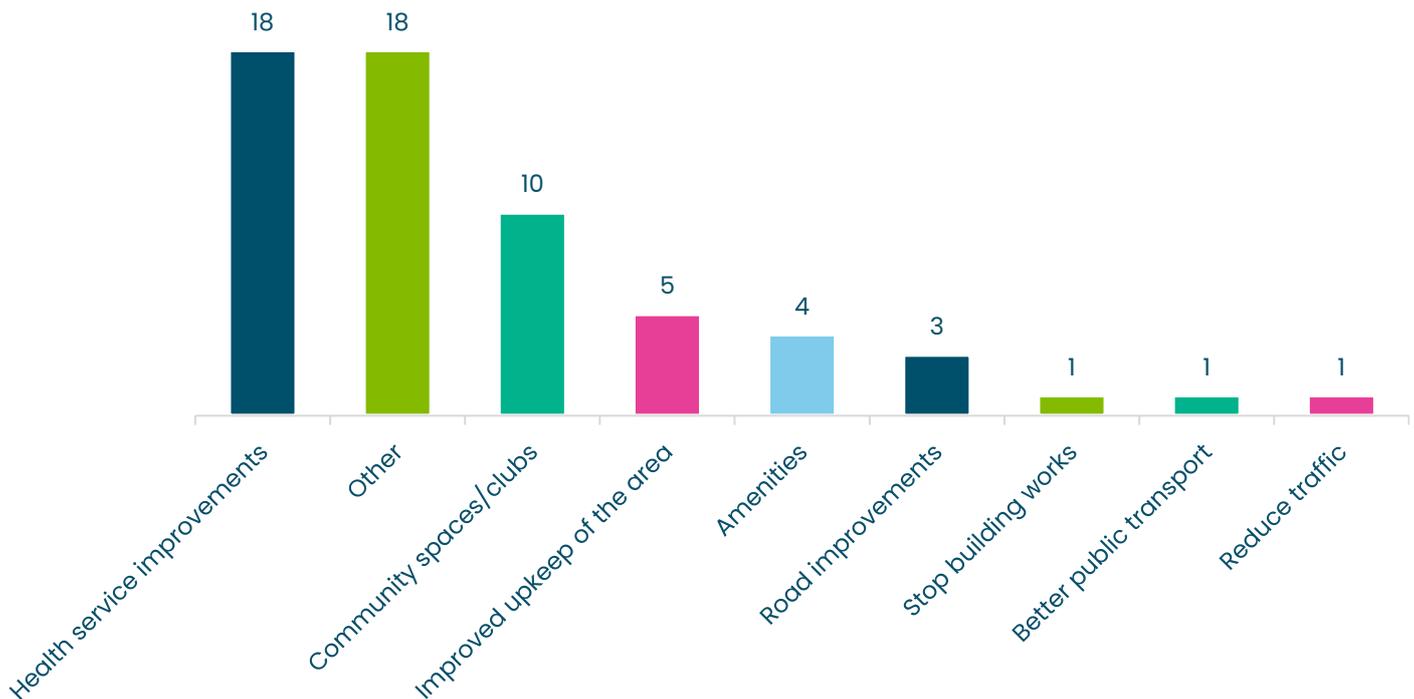

Figure 8 – Number of mentions by response to the question: "What could be done to promote health and wellbeing within your community?

Health service improvements (18 mentions)

33% of respondents said that improvements to health services will improve community health and wellbeing.

- "Make the hospital bigger and fit for purpose to accommodate the needs of local and future patients."
- "Would like the doctors at Hempstead Medical Centre to be open more often (only open 2 days each week)."
- "I'd build a new hospital that's more accessible. Even ambulances can't get into the hospital because of the access (congestion in and around the hospital). Around 2pm [at visiting times] it's almost impossible to get in unless you walk."

Other (18 mentions)

33% of people spoke about other ways to improve community health and wellbeing.

- "As a young person, I feel there should be more of a collective effort to get the younger people off and away from screens and to get them to live in the real world and move away from the virtual one, becoming more aware of what is going on around them. For instance; ban phones at certain events so they actually enjoy the event itself and not having to place a photo or film it."
- "I'd build decent cycle paths to get to places and I'd re-open the pub as a community asset."
- "A mixture of things. I think schools need to be more lenient with holidays [during term time] because family time is so important. And employers need to be more understanding and have a better work life balance."
- "We want things monitored more for safety e.g. Community Police officer."

Community spaces/clubs (10 mentions)

19% of people mentioned community spaces/clubs, particularly for young people.

- "I having something like a skateboard park for the teenagers, youth groups, local walking groups - more advertising for the existing ones especially for older people."
- "The Youth club needs an overhaul. Something for the teenagers to do and go to and feel welcome. People there to support them and a place to feel safe."
- "Investment in kids 0 to 20. There used to be a youth club but there isn't one now and for anyone 16 or over it is not great as there is nothing for them to do in the village."

Improved upkeep of the area (5 mentions)

9% of people mentioned improved upkeep of the area would improve health and wellbeing.

- "Improve the local area, litter pick, grass cutting, weeding etc."
- "Repair the pavements. It will help me stop tripping."

Amenities (4 mentions)

7% mentioned amenities.

- "Look at the shops, mainly takeaway and food outlets, need more variety, we used to have a launderette."
- "It would be nice to have a library closer to the precinct."

Road improvements (3 mentions)

6% mentioned improving roads.

- "Fix the potholes in the roads [it's a] tragic state. So many potholes to be fixed."

Stop building works (1 mention)

2% mentioned building works in the area.

- "Spread the number of people out further. I'd encourage the government to build houses up north. It's not helpful to pile more people into the South East of England which is already over-populated."

Better public transport (1 mention)

2% of respondents mentioned better public transport would improve community health and wellbeing.

- "Improve upon the bus service times, currently the last bus is 5.20 pm."

Reduce traffic (1 mention)

2% of respondents mentioned reducing traffic would be beneficial.

Demographic Breakdown

- **Age**: The largest response was from people aged 65-74 (**28%**). The full range of ages is shown in *Figure* **9**.
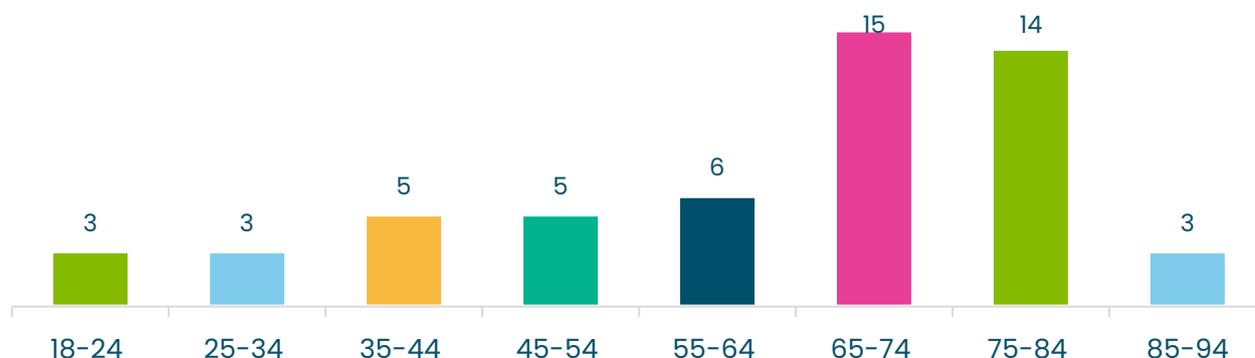
Figure 9 – Number of participants by age

- **Gender**: **60%** of participants identified as female and **40%** identified as male. **94%** of participants' gender identity was the same as their sex recorded at birth.

- **Sexual orientation**: **91%** of participants identified as heterosexual/straight, **2%** identified as bisexual, **2%** preferred to self-describe and **6%** preferred not to say.

- **Ethnicity**: **93%** were White/White British, **2%** were from other white backgrounds (Eastern European), **2%** were African. **6%** did not answer.

- **English as a first language: 98%** of participants told us that English was their first language, **2%** told us that their first language was not English (Hungarian). **2%** preferred not to say.

- **Religion:** **51%** told us they were Christian, **34%** told us they had no religion, **7%** told us they were Catholic, **2%** told us they were Agnostic, **2%** told us they were Jehovah's Witness. **4%** did not answer.

- **Disability**: **24%** reported having a disability.

- **Long-term health conditions**: **39%** of participants reported having a long-term health condition.

- **Mental Health: 4%** reported experiencing a mental health issue.

- **Neurodiversity**: **6%** identified as neurodiverse and **94%** identified as neurotypical.

- **Employment status**: The largest response was from people who were retired (**57%**). The full range of employment status is shown in *Figure 10*. 1 person preferred not to say.
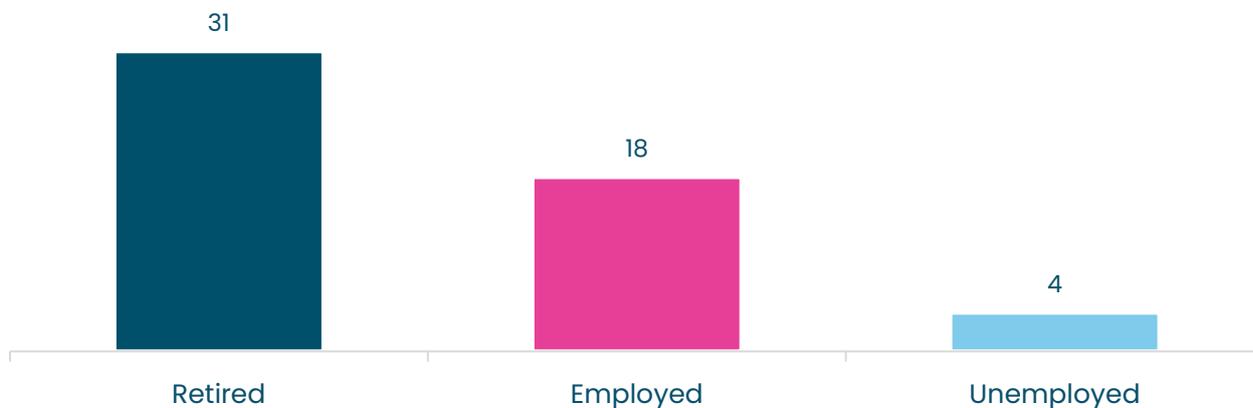
Figure 10 – Number of participants by employment status

- **Financial status:** The largest response was from people who told us that they never struggle to pay for basic necessities (**83%**). The full range of financial status responses is provided in *Figure 11*. 1 person did not answer.
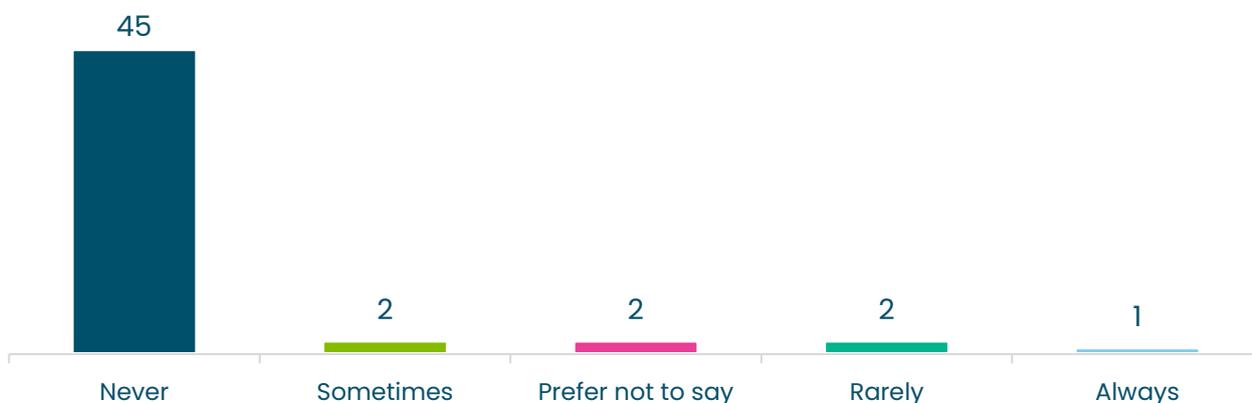

Figure 11 – Number of participants by responses to the question: "In the past six months, have you struggled to pay for basic necessities?"

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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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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