

OUR NEXT GENERATION

Young People in Outer Hebrides
Attitudes and aspirations.

Research report

September 2015



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
	APPROACH	1
	STUDY CONTEXT	1
	THE OUTER HEBRIDES CONTEXT	1
2	STAYING AND LEAVING	5
	SELF-IDENTIFICATION	5
	PERCEPTIONS OF STAYERS AND LEAVERS	6
	VIEWS ON THOSE WHO STAY	6
	ASPIRATIONS OF SCHOOL LEAVERS	8
	FACTORS INFLUENCING DECISIONS AFTER LEAVING SCHOOL	9
3	LEARNING IN THE OUTER HEBRIDES	11
	FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION PROVISION	11
	AWARENESS OF UHI AND ITS OFFER	12
	INVERNESS CAMPUS	13
	GRADUATE PLACEMENTS	14
4	WORKING IN THE OUTER HEBRIDES	16
	EMPLOYMENT-RELATED FACTORS IN THE LOCAL AREA	16
	EMPLOYMENT-RELATED FACTORS IN THE H&I	18
	IDEAL PLACE TO WORK	19
	VIEWS ON H&I GROWTH SECTORS	20
	DESIRED QUALITIES IN EMPLOYERS	22
5	LIFE ASPIRATIONS IN THE OUTER HEBRIDES	23
	HOUSING	23
	TRANSPORT	24
	DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY	26
	ARTS, LEISURE AND CULTURE	28
	COMMUNITY	29
6	FUTURE ASPIRATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE OUTER HEBRIDES	31
	MAKING THE HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS AN ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO LIVE IN	31
	FUTURE ASPIRATIONS	33
	HOW THE H&I HAS CHANGED	34
7	CONCLUSIONS	35
	KEY SUMMARY FINDINGS	35
	CONCLUDING REMARKS	38
A.	ANNEX 1: SURVEY RESPONSE PROFILE	39
	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	39
	AGE	39
	GENDER	39
	GEOGRAPHY	40
	STATUS	40
	SUMMARY	40

1 Introduction

1.1 This report presents the findings of a wide-ranging study to explore the attitudes and aspirations of young people aged 15-30 in relation to the Highlands and Islands (H&I) of Scotland, with a particular focus on young people in the Outer Hebrides (also known as Innse Gall). Overall, a total of 4,409 young people from within and outwith the H&I participated in the research, sharing their views on the region as a place to live, work and study. This summary report analyses the views of 457 young people in the Outer Hebrides who contributed to the research.

1.2 The report presents findings for the Outer Hebrides as a whole, providing comparisons with the results for the wider H&I. Where possible, analysis is also provided for young people from Lewis and Harris, highlighting where their views differ from those in Uist and Barra.¹

Approach

1.3 The approach made extensive use of social media, through which young people were invited to complete an online survey. Three high schools in the Outer Hebrides participated in the study. An online discussion portal allowed young people to provide further insight on their views. The study also gathered perspectives from stakeholders from both within and outwith the H&I region, including representatives from public sector and other organisations.

Study context

1.4 The H&I have a deficit of young people, and there has traditionally been an outflow of young people from the region; this has also been the case with the Outer Hebrides. There are a wide range of factors that impact on the choices and aspirations of young people, including educational and employment opportunities, the cost of living, transport, housing, cultural and connectivity issues. There are also strong local factors affecting decision-making, including close community ties for many young people in the region.

1.5 There are a range of policies and strategic interventions that have been, and are being, implemented, both locally within the Outer Hebrides, across the H&I region and nationally. These have a varying level of explicit focus and degree of impact on young people in the region.

The Outer Hebrides Context

Population and Impact of Geography

1.6 Census data from 2011 highlights the 'deficit' of young people that exists across the H&I, and this is especially the case in the Outer Hebrides. In 2011, there were 4,072 young people aged 15-29 recorded as living in the Outer Hebrides, 15% of the whole population, slightly below the 16% across the H&I and the 20% across Scotland.²

1.7 Between 2010 and 2012, the Outer Hebrides had a net out-migration of 97 young people aged 15-29. This was lower in absolute terms than all other H&I areas except Orkney and the Shetland Islands, but is relative to its generally smaller population. Indeed, population trends for young people are quite bleak: the Outer Hebrides registered only 1% growth of its 15-

¹Note: an overview of survey respondents by geography, age, gender, and status, can be found in Appendix 1

² Census 2011 (National Records of Scotland)

29 year-old population between 2001-2011 (the lowest in the H&I), and its young population is expected to decrease 38% between 2012 and 2037.³

1.8 The Outer Hebrides covers a large geographic area of approximately 3,070 km² and, with a total population of 27,684 at the time of the 2011 Census⁴, has a very low population density of approximately nine inhabitants per km². The largest population centre is Stornoway (which is also the administrative centre) on the Lewis part of the largest island of Lewis and Harris. Access between the Outer Hebrides, the rest of the H&I, and the rest of Scotland including the Central Belt, is achieved through air and ferry transport services. Across the Outer Hebrides, Gaelic culture and language are far more prevalent than in other H&I areas, and there is also a Norse influence similar to that in Orkney and Shetland.⁵

1.9 The economic picture in the Outer Hebrides is mixed; educational achievement is above average, and the area has more business start-ups per 10,000 adults than both the H&I and Scotland overall. However, unemployment rates are higher than the regional average (though still below Scottish levels) and employment levels are lower. Further, in spite of comparative advantages in sectors utilising natural resources, including Renewable energy and Food and drink, the Outer Hebrides' peripheral location and its low population density give rise to a number of economic challenges including service delivery issues, a lack of economic diversification⁶, and infrastructure⁷. To date, the connectivity issues that also affect the area's economic situation have been addressed through a wireless broadband provision programme, being taken forward by HIE, NHS Western Isles and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar⁸ although rollout of NGA broadband will go some way to alleviating this.

Key policies and strategies

1.10 Aside from the key public employment sectors of public administration, education and health, employment in the Outer Hebrides covers a number of growth sectors, supported by HIE's long-term strategy and current Operating Plan priorities. These include Agriculture and fishing, Food and drink, Renewable energy, Life sciences, Sustainable tourism, and Creative industries, all of which are seen as important to pursuing the regional goal of economic diversification, ownership and sustainability.⁹

1.11 The local authority, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Development Department is organised around two broad pillars, each of which contains a number of strategic priorities:

- **Business and Regeneration Support:** Business Gateway; Marine Resources; the Outer Hebrides LEADER Programme; Regeneration; and
- **Sectoral and Project Support:** Arts Development; Creative Industries; Crofting, Biodiversity and Community Land Resources; Strategic Projects; and Tourism¹⁰.

³ Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2014) *Young People in the Highlands and Islands: Socio-economic Profile*. May 2014, p.18

⁴ Census (2011)

⁵ <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/factfile/cultural/index.asp>

⁶ <http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/area-information/outer-hebrides/economic-profile.html>

⁷ <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/planningservice/documents/ldp/Outer%20Hebrides%20Local%20Development%20Plan.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/area-information/outer-hebrides/projects/connected-communities.html>

⁹ <http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/area-information/outer-hebrides/key-sectors.html>

¹⁰ <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/development/>

1.12 These areas of focus are largely in line with the national Strategic Priorities from the Scottish Government Economic Strategy of 2011, namely: a supportive business environment; transition to a low carbon economy; learning skills and well-being; infrastructure development and place; effective government; and equity. Most of these national priorities are being taken forward in new Scottish Economic Strategy 2015, where they have been consolidated into four streamlined categories: investment, innovation, inclusive growth, and internationalisation.¹¹

1.13 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar recognises the importance of maintaining the area's potential for tourism, the need to harness both the entrepreneurial potential of its citizens and the economic potential of the Fisheries and Cultural Industries, as well as the necessity of community-led solutions for rural challenges.¹²

1.14 The Community Planning Partnership's Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) is the framework that the Outer Hebrides has adopted to assess the outcomes of its Economic Development Policy Statement for 2013-2023.¹³ Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is committed to improving services and outcomes for young people, for example by consulting with them to understand their needs and concerns.^{14,15}

1.15 At a regional level, the Highlands and Islands Regional Skills Investment Plan¹⁶ (RSIP), developed by Skills Development Scotland (SDS), identifies skills challenges. It cites the greatest challenge for the H&I as the retention and attraction of working age people. Out-migration is also identified as a major skills challenge, with net out-migration evident for all ages from 15-39. The plan identifies growth opportunities for the region, including Energy and the Creative industries.

Key Investments

1.16 HIE, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, and other partners are responding to the opportunities and challenges in the Outer Hebrides through key investments. These include the Arnish Development Park, a site that seeks to capitalise on the area's natural resource for renewable and fossil fuel energy. The Park, funded by HIE in partnership with the European Regional Development Fund and the Scottish Government, offers a number of incentives to businesses wanting to invest or set up shop there.¹⁷ Burntisland Fabrications are currently the main company operating from the site.¹⁸

1.17 Funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and HIE, a £2.6m Media and Creative Industries Centre was opened in Stornoway, in March 2012. The Centre hosts *"1000m² of serviced office and hot desk facilities for lease to creative businesses and freelancers, and has also provided additional office and production-related space for MG Alba, the Gaelic media service."* The Centre is a hub for the Creative

¹¹ The Scottish Government (2015) *Scotland's Economic Strategy*, p.36.

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0047/00472389.pdf>

¹² <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/development/>

¹³ Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement, 2013-2023.

http://www.ohcpp.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=121:the-single-outcome-agreement&catid=35:aboutus&Itemid=175

¹⁴ Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement, 2013-2023, p.27.

¹⁵ Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement, 2013-2023, p.39

¹⁶ SDS (2014) Highlands and Islands Skills Investment Plan

¹⁷ <http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/area-information/outer-hebrides/projects/arnish-development-park.html>

¹⁸ <http://www.bifab.co.uk/view/arnish.aspx>

industries and will foster growth in the sector locally, with a particular focus on the potential of the Gaelic language to drive socio-economic growth.¹⁹

1.18 HIE, in partnership with the BIG Lottery Fund, administers the Scottish Land Fund which creates significant opportunities for crofting communities and others to grow through owning and managing their own assets. In the Outer Hebrides, 45% of land is now in community ownership and if current projects progress to acquisition, 84% of the population will live on community owned estates. One such estate, the South Uist Estate, has recently seen completion of a £10 million redevelopment of Lochboisdale Harbour, which has included road infrastructure, a new fishery pier and pontoon berths for use by fisherman and leisure sailors. It is anticipated that this investment will create significant new opportunities for growing the marine tourism industry in the Southern Hebrides.

1.19 Additional investments include Stornoway Airport, owned by Highlands and Islands Airport Limited, which provides a 'gateway' to the Outer Hebrides, just 10 miles from Stornoway itself and its various attractions, and more wide-scale infrastructure, such as the Next Generation Broadband Access (NGA) roll-out. Further, recent oil and gas discovery to the west of the Outer Hebrides²⁰ may translate into an increase in economic activity in the near future. Similar prospects have created many jobs in other H&I areas. Policy responses and investments have sought to create a more balanced and diversified economy, and to support local entrepreneurs and start-up business. As such, initiatives that are designed to support small business owners include the Outer Hebrides Fisheries Investment Scheme²¹ and the Micro Business Loan²², offered by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, in partnership with Business Gateway.

1.20 The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) Lews Castle College, the Outer Hebrides' principal institute of higher learning, will continue to support local industry with research, innovation, and overall skills development in line with community, regional and national priorities. In particular, Lews Castle College UHI is a centre of R&D in the renewable energy sector.²³

¹⁹ <http://www.hie.co.uk/about-hie/news-and-media/archive/new-creative-industries-and-media-centre-opened-in-stornoway.html#sthash.lexi6WxE.dpbs>

²⁰ <https://www.oilandgaspeople.com/news/1039/scottish-west-coast-untapped-oil-and-gas-reserves-worth-trillions/>

²¹ <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/eds/business/assistanceavailable/fls.asp>

²² <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/eds/business/assistanceavailable/mbi.asp>

²³ <http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/area-information/outer-hebrides/key-sectors.html>

2 Staying and Leaving

2.1 This section considers whether respondents are likely to either stay in or leave the Highlands and Islands (and whether this is out of choice or out of necessity, real or perceived), and how respondents view the choices of others.

Self-identification

2.2 The Outer Hebrides is broadly comparable to the H&I as a whole in terms of how young people self-identify. It has a similar proportion of **committed stayers** as the H&I (43%). However, whilst there is also a comparable proportion of **reluctant stayers** (5%) to regionally, there are slightly more **reluctant leavers** (15% compared to 13% regionally), and a slightly lower proportion of **committed leavers** (38% versus 40% regionally).

Table 2.1

Which of the following best describes you? <i>Expressed in terms of % of total excluding potential returners, new residents and none of the above</i>	Outer Hebrides (n=439)	Highlands & Islands (n=3,607)
	%	%
Committed stayer: <i>I live in the H&I and I plan on living and working here</i>	42	43
Reluctant stayer: <i>I live in the H&I; I would prefer to leave but I don't think I will be able to</i>	5	5
Reluctant leaver: <i>I live in the H&I; I would prefer to stay but I don't think I will be able to live and work here</i>	15	13
Committed leaver: <i>I live in the H&I, but I plan to leave, and live and work elsewhere</i>	38	40

Geographic variations

2.3 Respondents from Uist and Barra are slightly more likely to identify themselves as committed stayers – around 45% do so, compared to 41% in Lewis and Harris. However, those from Lewis and Harris are much more likely to identify themselves as committed leavers – over 40% do so, almost 10 percentage points more than for Uist and Barra (31%).

Variation by age and status

2.4 For all areas of the Outer Hebrides, the likelihood of identifying oneself as a committed stayer increases with age, and conversely young people are less likely to describe themselves as committed leavers. It is the 15-18 age group that is most likely to see themselves as committed leavers (51%, in keeping with the regional average of 52%), rising to 55% in Uist and Barra. Further, in Uist and Barra there are far fewer committed stayers in this age group than the Outer Hebrides average (13% versus 29%). Over a quarter (26%) of 15-18 year olds in Uist and Barra describe themselves as *reluctant leavers*, well above the H&I rate of 12%. Across the Outer Hebrides, 77% of 25-30 year-olds identify as committed stayers, rising to 81% in Uist and Barra (and 74% in Lewis and Harris).

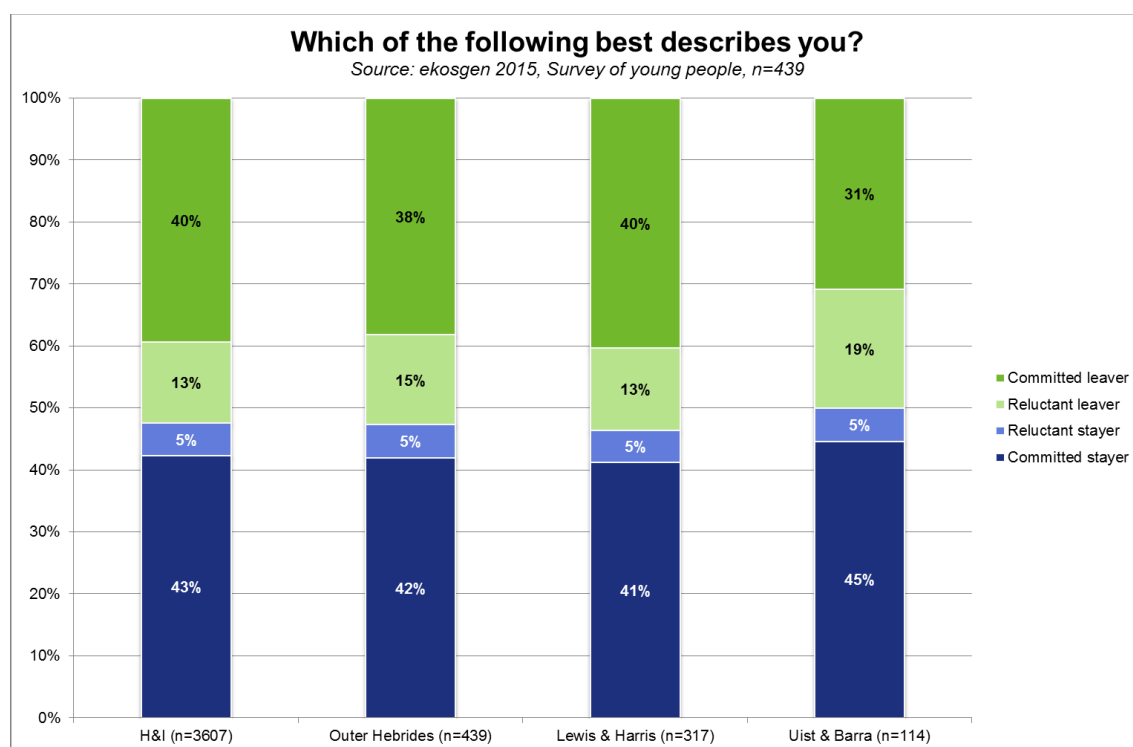
2.5 Similar to the H&I, school pupils in the Outer Hebrides are almost as likely to be committed leavers, although at 52% this is lower than the regional average of 56%, with a

somewhat higher proportion identifying as committed stayers (29% versus 23%). Again, in Uist and Barra, the proportion of school pupils who are committed leavers is higher (at 58%) which is slightly above the regional average (56%).

2.6 A greater proportion of *students* are likely to be committed stayers, at 48% compared to 29% in the H&I. This proportion is particularly high in Lewis and Harris (57%) but, at 25%, markedly lower for Uist and Barra, where 50% of students are committed leavers.

2.7 Young people in employment in the Outer Hebrides are much more likely to be committed stayers, and at 74%, this is much higher than the 58% in the H&I as a whole. This is particularly the case in Uist and Barra, at 82%, compared to 68% for Lewis and Harris.

Figure 2.1



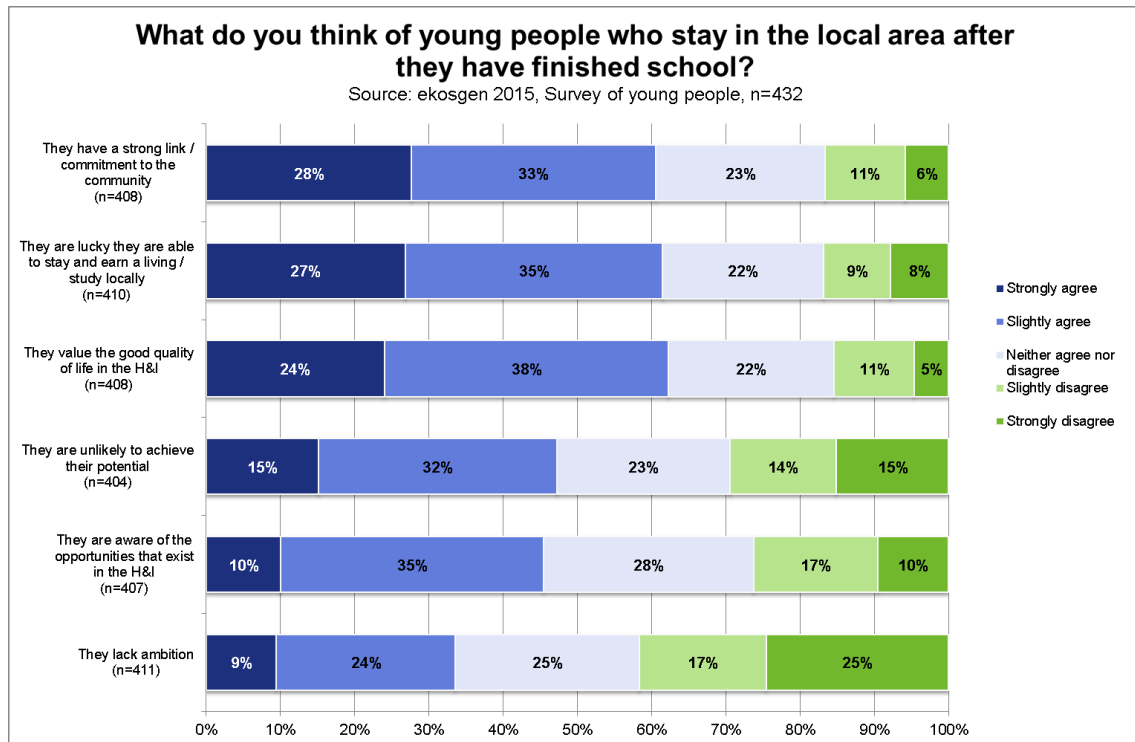
Perceptions of stayers and leavers

Views on those who stay

2.8 In all, 61% of young people in the Outer Hebrides consider that those who stay in the local area following school have a strong commitment to the local community, and this is higher than the 54% for the H&I. A similar proportion (62%) also think that those who stay value the good quality of life in the H&I, and that they are lucky to be able to stay and earn a living or study locally. This is comparable with the H&I as a whole, and indicative of positive views of those young people who choose to stay in the local area after finishing school; this perception also varies little between Lewis and Harris, and Uist and Barra.

2.9 Perceptions with more negative associations for leaving are similar to, or higher than regionally. Just under a half (47%) of young people in the Outer Hebrides think that stayers are unlikely to fulfil their potential, which is higher than the 39% regionally. A third (33%) also think stayers lack ambition (it is 34% in H&I), and this is marginally higher in Uist and Barra at 35%.

Figure 2.2



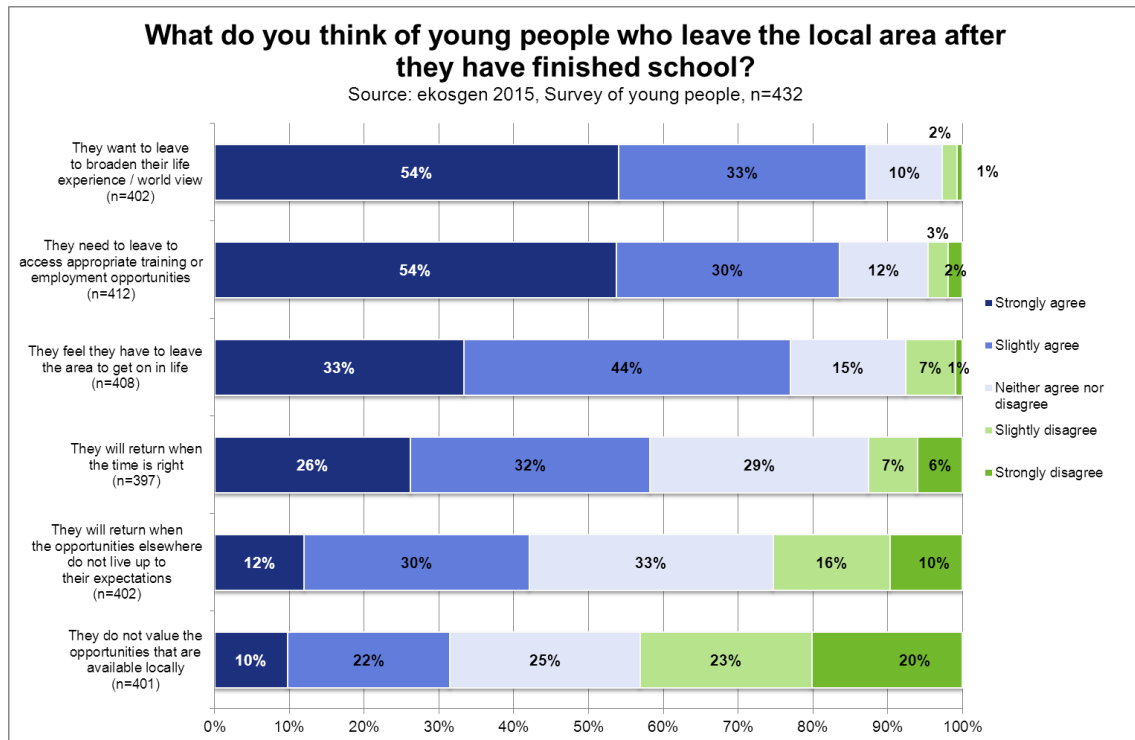
Views on those who leave

2.10 In terms of those who leave, 87% think leavers do so to broaden their world view, whilst 84% think they do so to access appropriate training or employment opportunities; in the case of the latter this is higher than regionally (78%). A further 58% consider that leavers will return when the time is right (slightly higher than the 56% across the H&I).

2.11 These views of leavers tended to be slightly stronger amongst respondents from Uist and Barra. More think leavers do so to broaden their world view (88%), and more think that leavers will return when the time is right (65%). A larger proportion of respondents from Lewis and Harris feel that leavers will return when opportunities elsewhere do not live up to their expectations (45% versus 35% in Uist and Barra).

2.12 A higher proportion of young people in the Outer Hebrides think that leavers do so to get on in life (77% compared to the regional average of 71%). This rises to 82% in Uist and Barra, compared to 75% in Lewis and Harris.

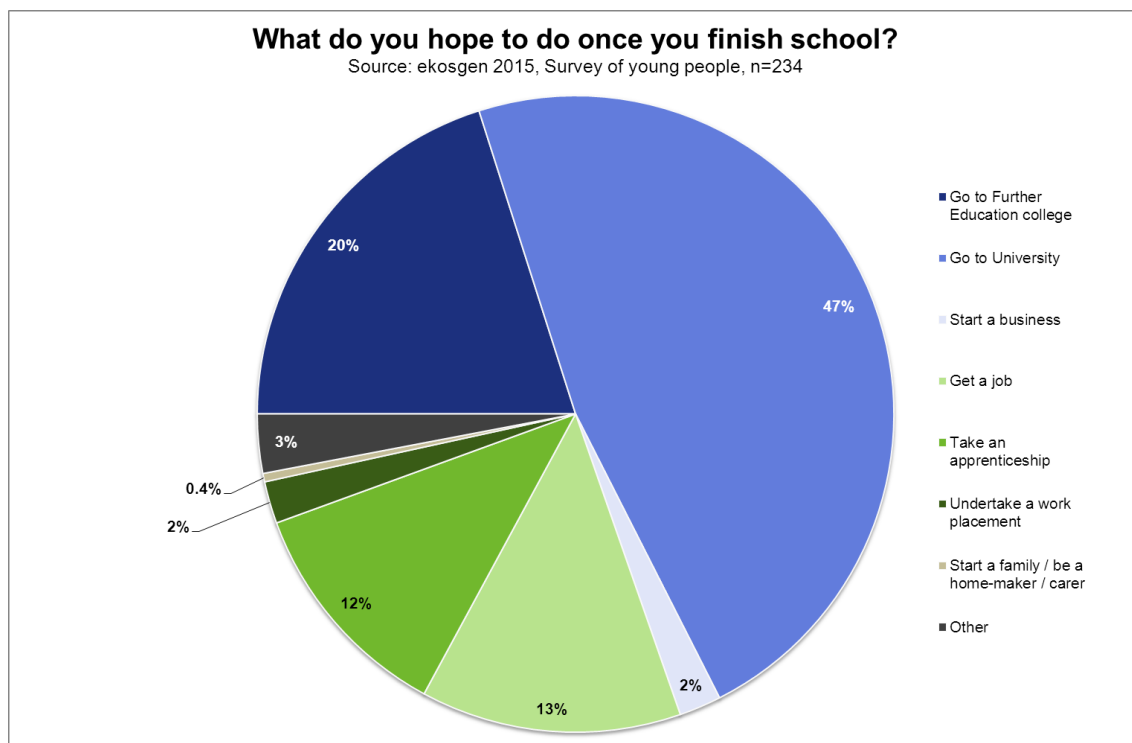
Figure 2.3



Aspirations of school leavers

2.13 The majority of school pupils in the Outer Hebrides wish to go to university (47%) or undertake further education (20%) after leaving school, although at 67% overall this is lower than for the H&I (72%). Amongst those in Uist and Barra, the proportion seeking to attend HE or FE after school is higher, at 76%; and 62% want to go to university compared with 46% in Lewis and Harris and 51% regionally. Additionally, 7% of school pupils in Uist and Barra wish to undertake a work placement following school, compared to 2% for the Outer Hebrides as a whole, and just 1% for the H&I.

Figure 2.4



2.14 A fifth of school pupils in the Outer Hebrides (20%) would like to stay locally post-school, compared with 14% regionally. For those in Uist and Barra, the proportion is half that of the Outer Hebrides as a whole, with just 10% wanting to stay locally, compared with 21% in Lewis and Harris. The Central Belt has more of a pull factor for those in Uist and Barra - 28% see it as their destination of choice compared to 11% in Lewis and Harris. Elsewhere in Scotland is a more attractive choice for Lewis and Harris respondents, with 31% stating so compared with 21% from Uist and Barra. Overall, males are more likely to want to stay locally – 24% wish to do so, whilst only 17% of females want to, preferring the Central Belt (18%) or elsewhere in Scotland (31%).

Factors influencing decisions after leaving school

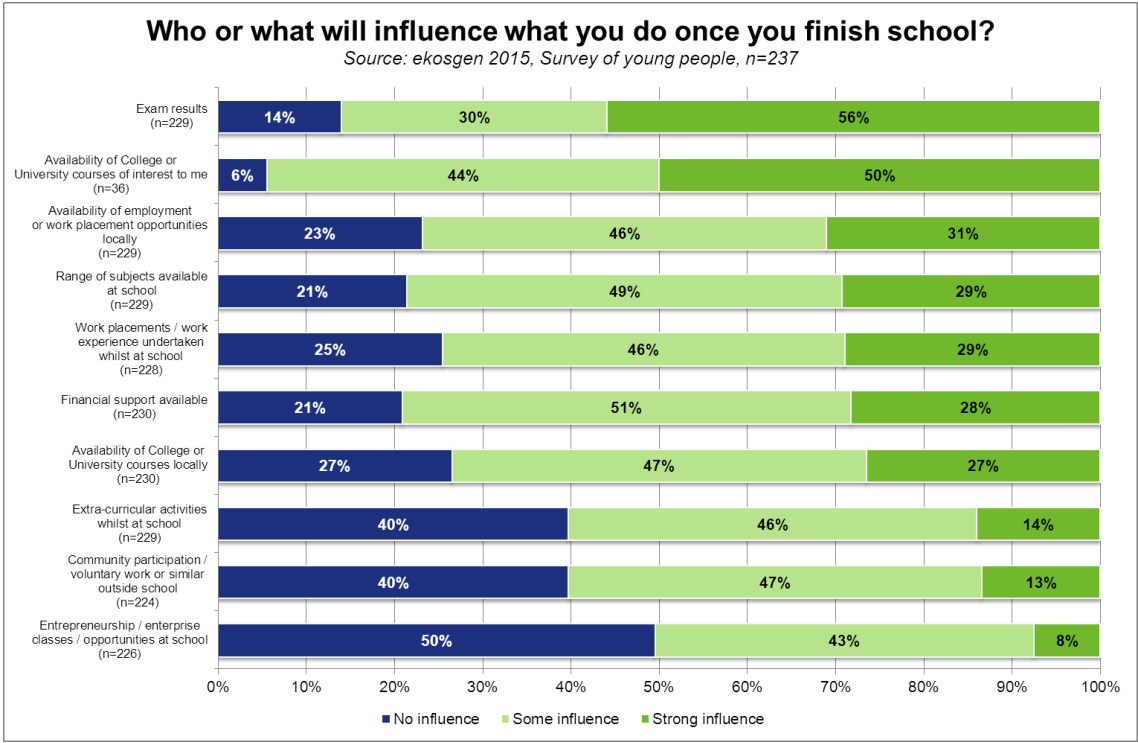
2.15 Factors that may influence post-school decisions for young people in the Outer Hebrides are broadly comparable with those in the H&I as a whole, though in most cases not as strongly influential. The availability of college or university courses of interest was the most influential factor overall, with 94% stating this would have at least some influence (and 50% strongly influential, slightly below the 55% for the H&I). Exam results are also influential (for 86%) and for 56% they are a strong factor (the largest “strong influence” in the Outer Hebrides), although this was still lower than the regional averages of 91% and 62% respectively. The *availability* of local university/ college courses is more influential than regionally; 74% thought so compared to 69% across the H&I.

2.16 For those in Uist and Barra, the availability of local college or university courses was less influential – 43% considered it to have no influence versus 31% regionally, suggesting many are expecting to study away from their local area post-school. In Lewis and Harris, however, the availability of interesting university / college courses was strongly influential for all respondents.²⁴ Further, the proportion of school pupils from Uist and Barra who felt that

²⁴ Please note, however, that this is based on a small sample respondents

entrepreneurship and enterprise classes would be strongly influential on post-school decisions was more than double that of pupils in Lewis and Harris (14% versus 7%), and relatively influential overall – 69% compared to around one half for the Outer Hebrides as a whole and 52% for the H&I.

Figure 2.5



3 Learning in the Outer Hebrides

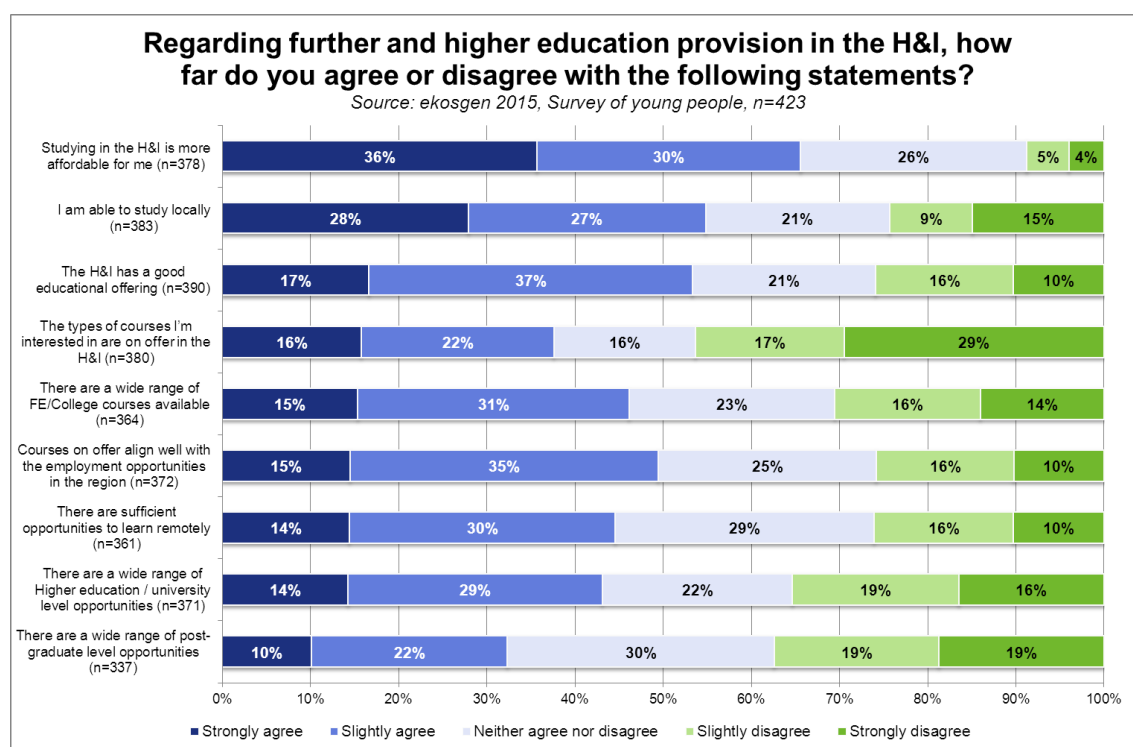
3.1 This chapter explores attitudes and aspirations evident in the Outer Hebrides in relation to learning, covering Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE), and related matters such as graduate placements and the opportunities presented in terms of routes into employment from FE and HE.

Further and higher education provision

3.2 Young people in the Outer Hebrides generally consider there to be a good educational offering; just over half think so, slightly lower than the 56% for the H&I. Young people also think studying in the H&I is relatively affordable, and two thirds agree this is the case (66%, compared to 61% for the H&I), although fewer feel that they are able to study locally (55% compared with 57%).

3.3 There is *less* agreement in the Outer Hebrides than regionally on the range of FE / college courses available (46% think it good, compared to 54% across the H&I). This is also the case, albeit to a lesser extent, for HE courses (43%, versus 45%) and postgraduate courses (32%, compared to 35%).

Figure 3.1



3.4 Around half (50%) think the education offer is well aligned with employment opportunities, which is slightly lower than regionally (53%). Fewer also consider there to be courses of interest on offer: 38% rather than 40% regionally, and more strongly disagree (29% versus 24%) that this is the case.

3.5 The range of opportunities is far more limited for those from Uist and Barra. Less than 30% agree that there is a wide range of FE and HE opportunities available, whilst fewer than one in five think that there is a wide range of postgraduate opportunities. Further, only one fifth (19%) agrees that what is on offer is of interest to them. Conversely, around half from Lewis

and Harris agree that there is a good range of FE and HE courses, whilst nearly four in 10 agree on the range of postgraduate opportunities, and over half think that there are interesting courses on offer.

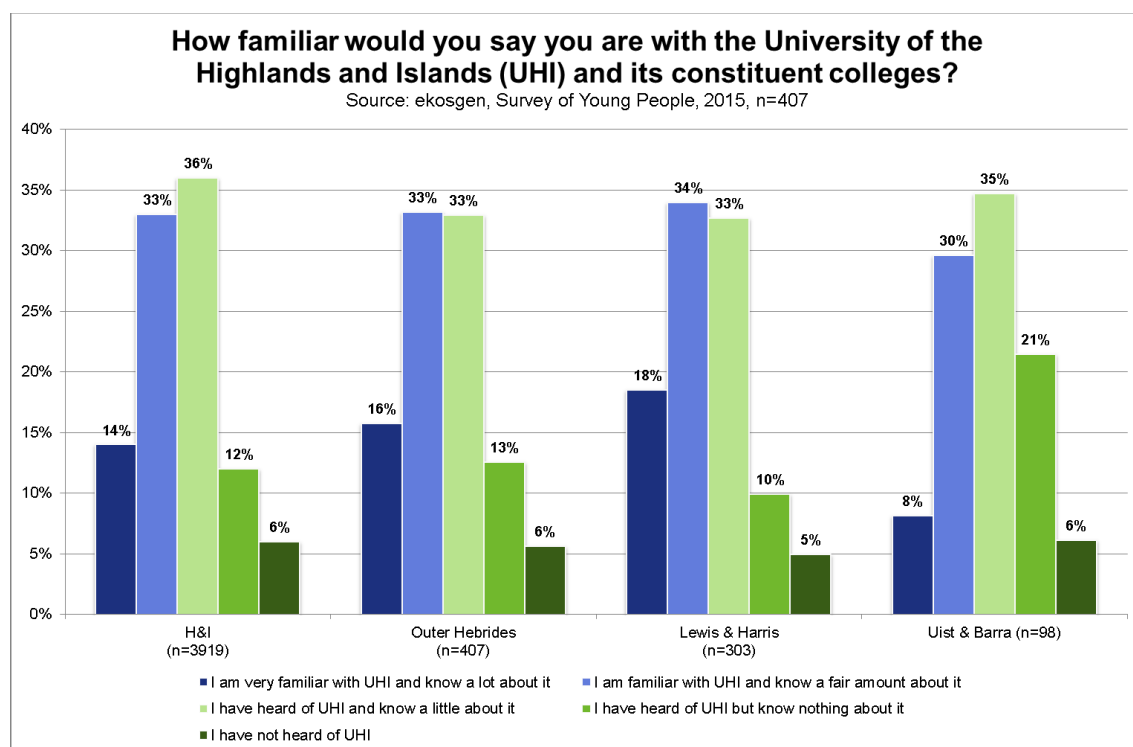
3.6 Young people aged 15-18 are more likely than other age groups to strongly agree with assertions on the range of courses and opportunities on offer in the H&I, and to agree overall, though the proportions are just under the regional average. It is worth noting that those at college / university age (19-24) and those that are currently students in the Outer Hebrides are generally *less* likely than students as a whole across the H&I to agree that the range of courses available and educational offering is good; it is only current students (in the case of the range of HE courses) that agree more – 47% do, more than for the Outer Hebrides as a whole (43%) and more than in the H&I overall (43%). Just half the current students in the Outer Hebrides agree that the H&I has a good educational offering, compared to almost two thirds regionally.

3.7 Fewer young people in the Outer Hebrides overall consider themselves able to study locally (55% compared to 57% for the H&I). This falls to 44% in Uist and Barra but rises to 59% in Lewis and Harris. In Lewis and Harris, around half feel there are sufficient opportunities to learn remotely, falling to 30% in Uist and Barra, compared to 44% in total in the Outer Hebrides, and 49% regionally.

Awareness of UHI and its offer

3.8 There is good awareness of UHI across the H&I, and there are similarly high levels of awareness in the Outer Hebrides (82% knowing something, and 16% knowing a lot). Awareness is stronger amongst those from Lewis and Harris – 52% (14 percentage points more than those in Uist and Barra) know at least a fair amount about UHI.

Figure 3.2



3.9 Awareness is unsurprisingly highest amongst those aged 19-24 (62% know at least a fair amount) and students specifically (75%); though in Uist and Barra, it is those aged 25-30 that know most (at least a fair amount) about UHI (48%).

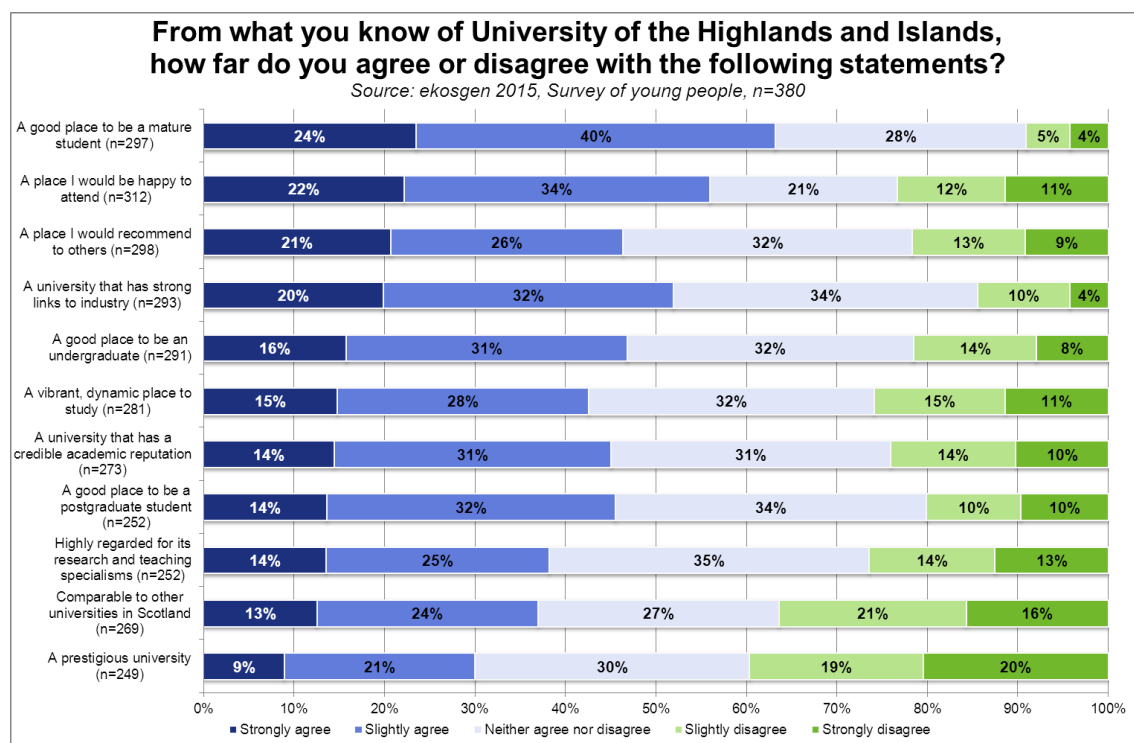
3.10 UHI is seen as a good place to be a mature student. In the Outer Hebrides, 64% of respondents think so, in line with the regional average.

3.11 Slightly fewer respondents see UHI as a good place to be an *undergraduate* student (around 47% against 48% for the H&I), though slightly more regard it as being suitable for postgraduate study (46% versus 43%). Almost half of students strongly agree that it is good for undergraduate and postgraduate study, whilst similar proportions of school pupils also think so.

3.12 Around 45% of respondents regard UHI as having a credible academic reputation, in contrast to the regional picture (42% for H&I), and this is stronger in Lewis and Harris, where 47% think so. Almost four in 10 consider it comparable to other universities in Scotland.

3.13 Overall, 56% of the Outer Hebrides respondents would be happy to attend UHI, compared to 57% in the H&I; though for college students this is lower at 43%, and for 19-24 year-olds the proportion is 51% (compared to 58% at the regional level). In all, 56% of school pupils would be happy to attend – more than for the H&I (50%). Within the Outer Hebrides, 58% of those in Lewis and Harris would be happy attending UHI, compared to 52% in Uist and Barra.

Figure 3.3

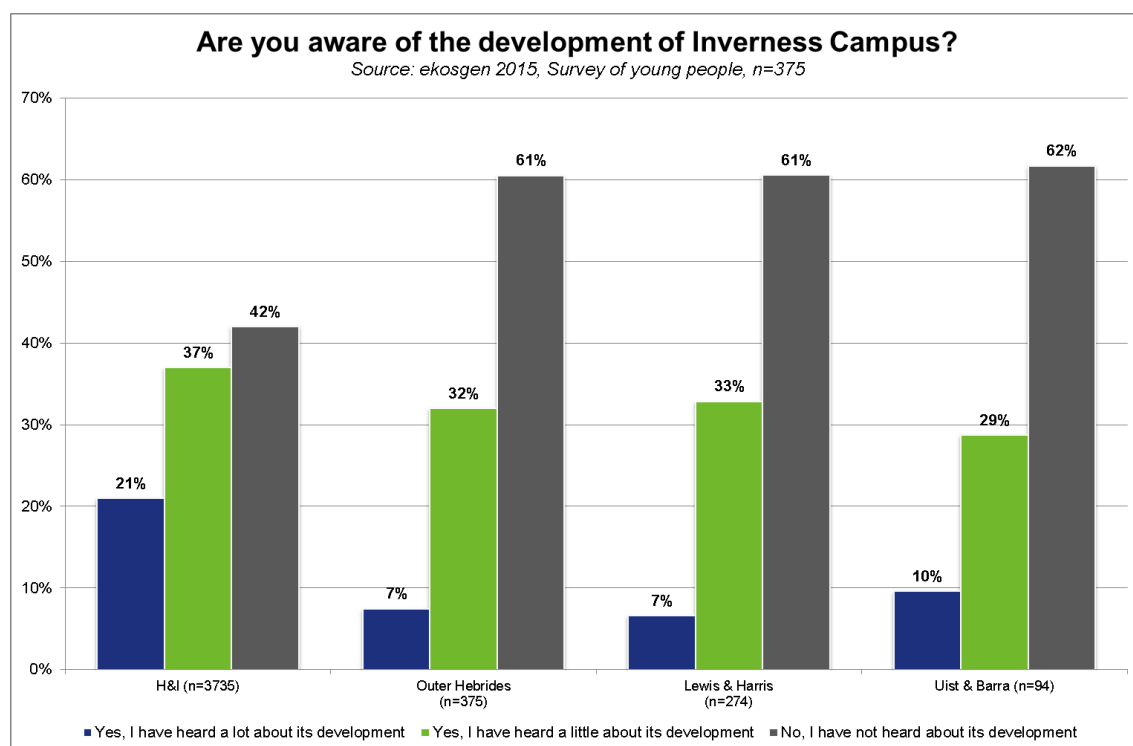


Inverness Campus

3.14 Inverness Campus, which will see Inverness College UHI co-located with centres for business and research, opened in May 2015. Whilst 40% in the Outer Hebrides are aware of the Inverness Campus development, 60% are not. This contrasts with the situation across the

H&I, where almost six in 10 know something of the Campus, although it is worth noting that this rises significantly the closer the young person lives to Inverness.

Figure 3.4

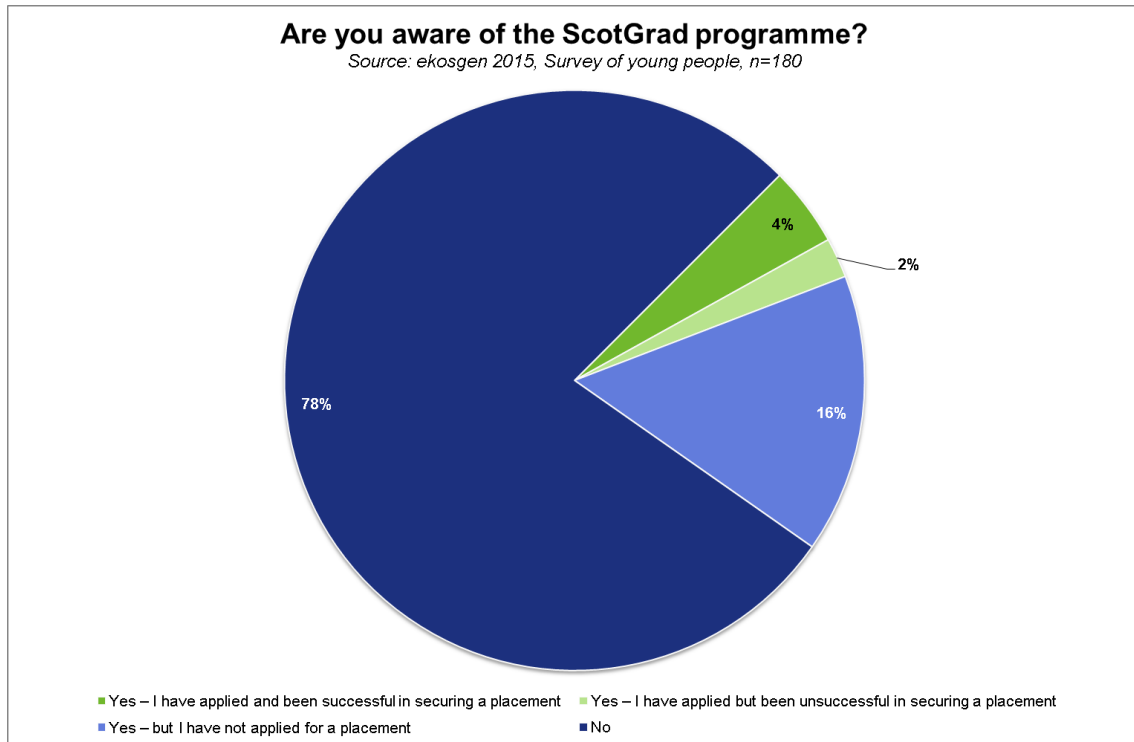


3.15 This relative lack of knowledge of Inverness Campus is reflected in views on the Campus. Whilst 63% think it offers a city university experience for the region, only 40% think it would help career aspirations (compared to 46% across the region). Further, nearly 45% neither agreed nor disagreed on whether they would recommend it to others – though 39% agreed that they would.

Graduate placements

3.16 Whilst just under half (47%) consider that undertaking a graduate placement would improve their chances of securing employment in the region (53% in the H&I), far fewer consider that there are a wide range of placement opportunities (21%), and fewer still that there are sufficient opportunities in the more rural areas (17%). These are considerably lower proportions than regionally (31% and 27% respectively), with more disagreeing that this is the case. However, it is worth noting that almost one quarter did not know whether there were sufficient opportunities available, and in addition more than one-fifth neither agreed nor disagreed.

Figure 3.5



3.17 Awareness of the ScotGrad programme is in line with the rest of the H&I, with 78% unaware of the ScotGrad programme (79% regionally). However, 22% are aware and, 20% of these have applied and been successful in securing a placement. Sub-area variations were apparent, with those in Lewis and Harris having greater awareness of ScotGrad than those in Uist and Barra (28% versus 16%).

4 Working in the Outer Hebrides

4.1 This section identifies what young people in the Outer Hebrides think about local employment and career progression opportunities, their ideal location to work, familiarity with and interest in H&I growth sectors, and characteristics valued most in employers. Again it seeks to draw out sub-area variations where these exist.

Employment-Related Factors in the Local Area

Opportunities for Apprenticeships

4.2 In all, 45% of young people in the Outer Hebrides rate opportunities for apprenticeships as good, slightly lower than the H&I proportion of 49%. Opportunities are viewed as particularly good by those in Lewis and Harris (52%), but markedly less so in Uist and Barra (26%) where almost half (48%) rate them as quite or very poor. Just over half of those aged 15-18 in the Outer Hebrides (53%) rate apprenticeship opportunities as quite or very good, compared to 43% aged 19-24 and 18% of those aged 25-30. While the figure for those aged 15-18 is the same as the H&I average, the figures for other age groups are lower.

Self-Employment Opportunities

4.3 Just under a third (31%) consider self-employment opportunities to be quite or very good, lower than for the H&I as a whole (39%). Those in Lewis and Harris are slightly more positive (33%) than in Uist and Barra (30%). As with the H&I overall, those aged 25-30 are most likely to rate opportunities for self-employment as quite or very good (39%), compared to 27% of 19-24 year olds and 32% of 15-18 year olds.

Opportunities for Personal Development

4.4 In all, 30% of young people in the Outer Hebrides consider local opportunities for personal development to be quite or very good, which is much lower than the 37% in the H&I. This is slightly higher and closer to the regional average in Lewis and Harris (33%), while just 24% in Uist and Barra rate these opportunities as quite or very good, and 49% rate them as quite or very poor.

Local Employment Opportunities

4.5 One in four (25%) rate local employment opportunities as quite or very good, compared to 35% across the H&I. Those in Lewis and Harris are slightly more positive (27%), compared to Uist and Barra, where 21% rate local employment opportunities as quite or very good, and 58% rate them as quite or very poor.

4.6 As with the H&I as a whole, young people in the Outer Hebrides become more pessimistic about employment opportunities in their local area as they get older. Just 17% of those aged 25-30 rate opportunities as quite or very good, compared to 22% aged 19-24 and 29% aged 15-18 years.

Opportunities for Career Progression Locally

4.7 There is less optimism about opportunities for local career progression, with fewer than one in four (23%) rating local options as quite or very good in the Outer Hebrides, compared to 29% across the H&I. Again, there are marked differences within the Outer Hebrides, with the perception of opportunities to progress close to the regional average in Lewis and Harris (28%) but far less so in Uist and Barra (10%).

Diversity of Employment Opportunities

4.8 The diversity of local employment opportunities is rated more poorly still, with 22% citing these as quite or very good (compared to the regional average of 29%), and 40% as quite or very poor). Again, while 26% of those Lewis and Harris rate the diversity of employment opportunities as good (closer to the regional average), just 13% in Uist and Barra do so.

Pay Levels

4.9 A lower proportion of young people in the Outer Hebrides cite pay levels as quite or very good (20%) than the H&I average (27%), and more say they are quite or very poor (34%). Those in Lewis and Harris (24%) are more likely to rate pay levels positively, while just 8% of young people in Uist and Barra do so - the lowest proportion of any sub area across the H&I.

Figure 4.1

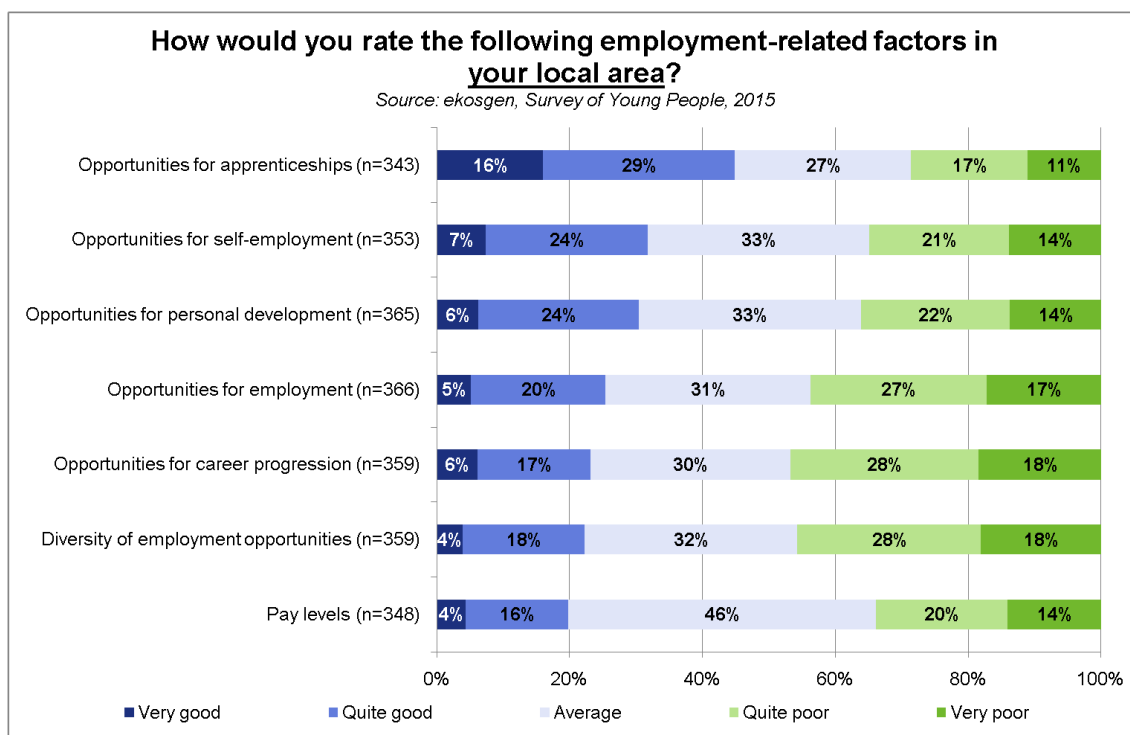
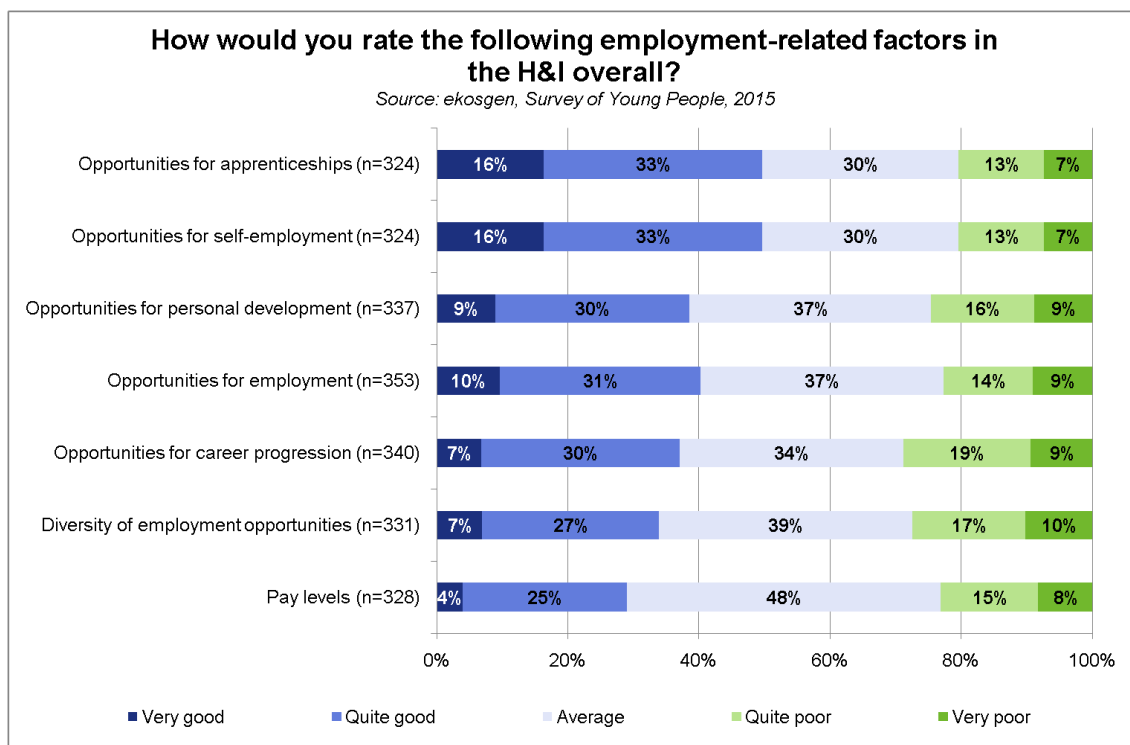


Figure 4.2



Employment-Related Factors in the H&I

4.10 Young people in the Outer Hebrides are more positive about all employment-related factors in the H&I overall than they are about those in their local area. This is particularly true for both self-employment opportunities (with a differential of 18 percentage points) and employment opportunities (a 16 percentage point difference). The smallest differences are in opportunities for apprenticeships (a four percentage point difference), opportunities for personal development and pay levels (both with a nine percentage point difference).

4.11 Nevertheless, the relative order for each factor is broadly similar, with apprenticeship and self-employment opportunities across the H&I being ranked joint first, followed by opportunities for employment (fourth in the Outer Hebrides) and opportunities for personal development (third in the Outer Hebrides). Opportunities for career progression, the diversity of employment opportunities and pay levels, are all ranked least positively in the local area, as they are in the H&I (albeit by higher proportions at regional level).

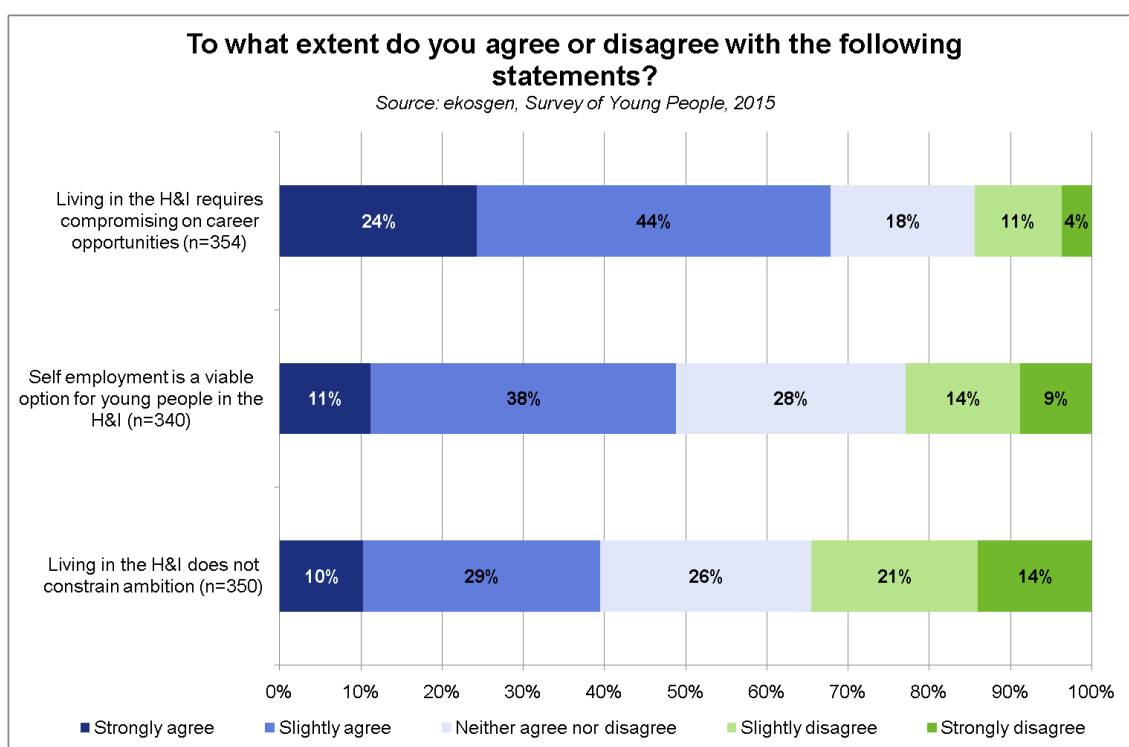
4.12 In all, 68% of young people in the Outer Hebrides either strongly (24%) or slightly agree (44%) that living in the H&I requires compromising on career opportunities (compared with 60% in the H&I). Those in employment/ self-employment (69%) responded similarly, rising to 80% for university/ college students, but falling to 64% for school pupils. Respondents also tend to get more negative with age, with 74% of 25-30 year olds agreeing that staying requires compromising on opportunities, compared to 71% of 19-24 year olds and 65% of those aged 15-18 years. Those in Lewis and Harris are more likely to agree with this (71%), compared with 60% in Uist and Barra. This is interesting given the generally more negative scores given to the employment related factors by young people in Uist and Barra.

4.13 Nearly half of young people in the Outer Hebrides consider self-employment to be a viable option for young people in the H&I, the same percentage that agree that self-employment opportunities in the H&I are quite or very good (see Figure 4.2). This suggests young people in

the Outer Hebrides are aware of regional opportunities. This is slightly higher for young people in Lewis and Harris (50%), compared to 45% in Uist and Barra. The proportion reduces slightly with age, with 51% of young people aged 15-18 agreeing, compared to 48% of 19-24 year olds and 44% of 25-30 year olds.

4.14 Just under one in four young people in the Outer Hebrides agree that living in the H&I does not constrain ambition, the same percentage as in the H&I overall. Again, young people in Lewis and Harris are more positive (with 43% slightly or strongly agreeing), compared to 30% in Uist and Barra. In all, 39% of young people aged 15-18 years agree, compared to 44% of 19-24 year olds and 34% of 25-30 year olds.

Figure 4.3



Ideal place to work

4.15 Overall, around half of young people in the Outer Hebrides would ideally like to work in the H&I, either locally (37% and 29% regionally) or somewhere else in the region (13% and 15% for the H&I). This indicates a stronger than average desire to work locally. Nearly a quarter would like to work elsewhere in Scotland (outwith the H&I), while 6% would like to work somewhere else in the UK and 18% elsewhere in the world.

4.16 The percentage wanting to work locally in the Outer Hebrides increases with age, with 78% of 25-30 year olds wanting to work either in their local area or somewhere else in the H&I, compared to 66% of 19-24 year olds and 37% of 15-18 year olds. This pattern is very similar to that for the different life stages (school pupils, university/ college students and those in employment/ self-employment). This applies in the Outer Hebrides in the same way as it does across the H&I; school pupils typically want to move away when they finish school – either temporarily or permanently.

4.17 Table 4.1 shows where young people would ideally like to work by sub-area. Those in Uist and Barra are more likely to want to work in their local area (42%), while those in Lewis and

Harris (36%) are slightly less likely to want to do so. In Lewis and Harris, just over a quarter (26%) would like to work in Scotland, but outwith the H&I, and a further quarter would like to work further afield (7% elsewhere in the UK and 18% elsewhere in the world). In Uist and Barra, respondents are less likely to want to work elsewhere in Scotland (20%), and are also less likely to want to work elsewhere in the UK (2%).

Table 4.1: Desired Place to Work by Sub-Area

	Outer Hebrides (n=385)	Lewis and Harris (n=289)	Uist and Barra (n=90)
Local area*	37%	36%	42%
Somewhere in the H&I	13%	12%	17%
Central Belt	9%	9%	11%
Aberdeen	1%	2%	0%
Elsewhere in Scotland	13%	15%	9%
Elsewhere in the UK	6%	7%	2%
Elsewhere in the world	18%	18%	18%
Other	2%	2%	1%

Source: *ekosgen, Survey of Young People, 2015*; * current home town/village

Please note, percentages may not sum due to rounding.

4.18 Table 4.2 places those wanting to work locally alongside the proportion thinking there are a good diversity of local employment opportunities to give an indication of perceived supply versus demand. While 42% in Uist and Barra wish to work locally, just 13% perceive the diversity of employment opportunities as quite or very good, suggesting that many young people may be forced to look elsewhere for a wider range/ greater diversity of employment opportunities, even when they want to work locally.

4.19 A lower proportion of young people from Lewis and Harris wish to work locally, although twice as many consider there to be good diversity of employment opportunities in their local area than in Uist and Barra. Nevertheless, there is still a ten percentage point difference between those wanting to work locally (36%) and those thinking there are a good range of local opportunities (26%).

Table 4.2

Outer Hebrides sub-area	Those ideally liking to work in their local area	Those rating diversity of employment opp's as quite or very good	Percentage point (pp) difference
Lewis and Harris	36%	26%	-10%
Uist and Barra	42%	13%	-29%
Overall Outer Hebrides average	37%	22%	-15%

Source: *ekosgen, Survey of Young People, 2015*.

Views on H&I Growth Sectors

4.20 HIE's Operating Plan recognises that the region's natural assets, ambition, skills base and cultural background provide a range of opportunities to develop a vibrant sectoral economy.²⁵ HIE's growth sectors - *Financial and business services*; *Creative industries (including digital)*; *Sustainable tourism (including hospitality)*; *Food and drink*; *Life sciences*; and *Energy (including renewable energy)* are aligned to the key sectors identified in the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy, but with key regional specialisms under each sector.

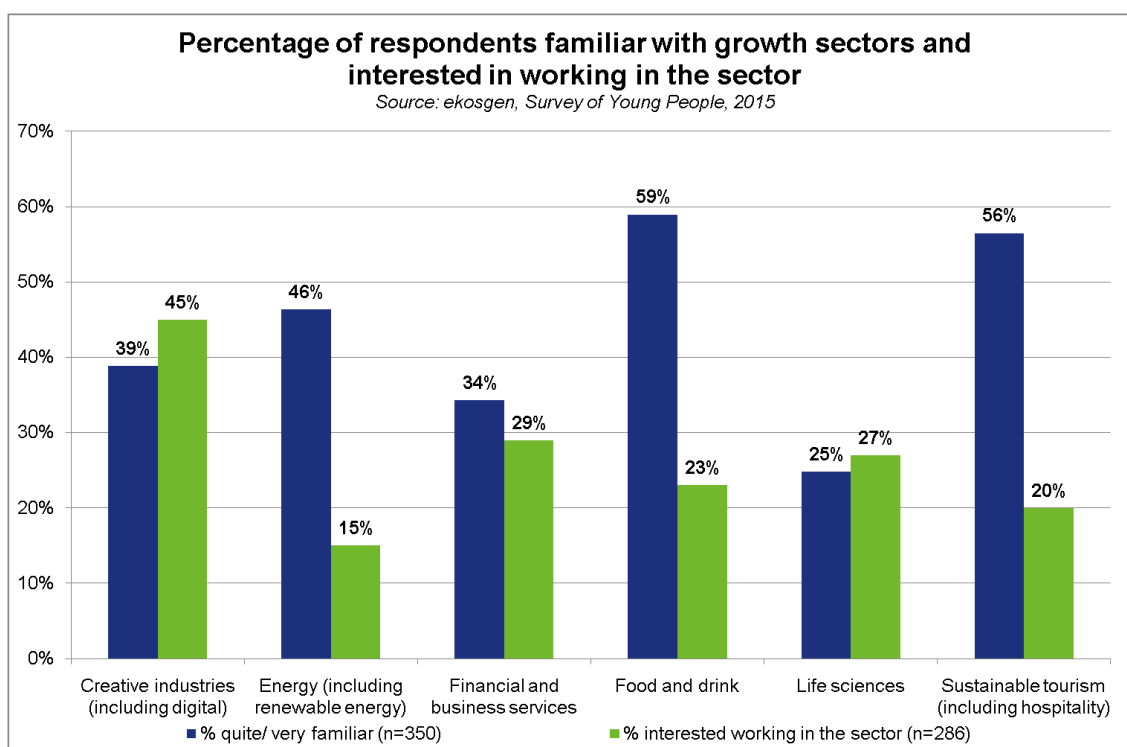
²⁵ HIE (2014) Building Our Future: Operating Plan 2014-2017

4.21 Among young people in the Outer Hebrides, Food and drink (59%) and Sustainable tourism (56%) are the most well known sectors, although awareness is slightly lower than it is across the region (at 62% and 60% respectively). Energy (including renewable energy) is the third most well known at 46%, one percentage point above the average for the H&I as a whole, likely to reflect the greater prevalence/ opportunity of this sector in the Outer Hebrides.

4.22 As with the H&I overall, Creative industries emerged as the most desirable sector for young people in the Outer Hebrides, with almost half (45%) interested in working in the sector, compared to 43% across the H&I. Other desirable sectors are Financial and business services (29%, equal to the H&I average) and Life sciences (27%, two percentage points lower than the regional average). Despite high levels of awareness, only 15% are interested in working in the Energy sector (10 percentage points lower than the H&I).

4.23 Figure 4.4 compares the percentage that is aware of each growth sector with the percentage that would be interested in working in the sector. The greatest disparities between awareness and interest are within Food and drink (59% versus 23%), Tourism (56% versus 20%) and Energy (46% versus 15%). Although Food and drink and Energy are two of the key sectors in the Outer Hebrides, and amongst the most well known, interest in working in these sectors is low.

Figure 4.4



4.24 The Creative industries are of more interest, comparatively, in Lewis and Harris (48%, compared to 37% in Uist and Barra), as are Financial and business services (29%, compared to 28%) and Life sciences (29%, compared to 24%). Young people in Uist and Barra are more interested than their counterparts in Lewis and Harris in working in Sustainable tourism (38% versus 13%), Food and drink (28% and 21%) and Energy (28% and 10%).

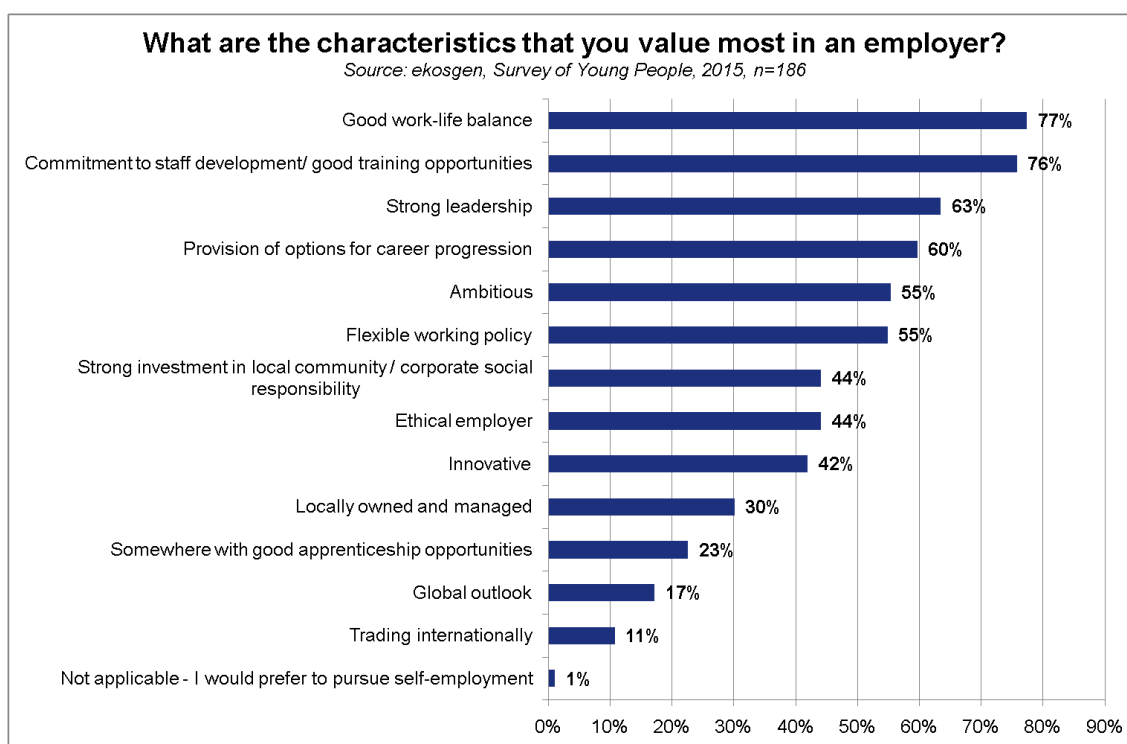
Desired Qualities in Employers

4.25 Views on employers in the Outer Hebrides are very similar to those across the H&I. The top four desired qualities are a good work-life balance (77% versus 74%), a commitment to staff development/ good training opportunities (76%, equal to the 76% across the H&I), strong leadership (63% versus 57%), and provision of options for career progression (60%, compared to 58%). Also in line with the H&I-wide results is the value given to employers who are ambitious (55% compared to 56%) and have flexible working policies (55% versus 56%).

4.26 In line with the H&I overall, 44% of young people in the Outer Hebrides value an employer who invests strongly in the local community/ corporate social responsibility and who is ethical; they also value a locally owned and managed business (30%, compared to 27% across the H&I).

4.27 A global outlook from employers (17%) and international activity (11%) are less important to young people in the Outer Hebrides than other factors, and these figures are lower than for the H&I overall (22% and 12% respectively). This suggests that young people in the Outer Hebrides do not recognise the benefits of employers who trade internationally.

Figure 4.5



4.28 There are some variations between sub-areas within the Outer Hebrides. In Lewis and Harris, the top four most valued characteristics are a commitment to staff development/ good training opportunities (77%), a good work-life balance (76%), the provision of options for career progression (66%) and strong leadership (61%). In Uist and Barra, the top ranked factor is a good work life balance (78%), followed by provision of options for staff development/ good training opportunities (73%), strong leadership (68%) and an ambitious employer (59%). The most notable variations between the two sub areas are the desire for an ethical employer (51% valuing this in Lewis and Harris, compared to just 25% in Uist and Barra), the provision of options for career progression (66% compared to 51%) and an innovative employer (48% versus 35%).

5 Life aspirations in the Outer Hebrides

5.1 There are a range of other factors, beyond education and employment, which affect a young person's decision on whether to stay or leave the Outer Hebrides. These include housing, transport, mobile and internet connectivity, arts, leisure and culture and the strength of the local community. This chapter explores these issues and their relative importance. Any significant variations by sub-region within the Outer Hebrides are outlined in the analysis.

Housing

5.2 As the overall H&I report shows, the lack of available and affordable housing is a significant issue for young people²⁶ and one that has risen in importance since 2009, relative to other factors. Whilst market conditions mean that housing has likely become an issue for young people more generally, housing availability and affordability are clear concerns for young people in the H&I. This is also true for young people in the Outer Hebrides.

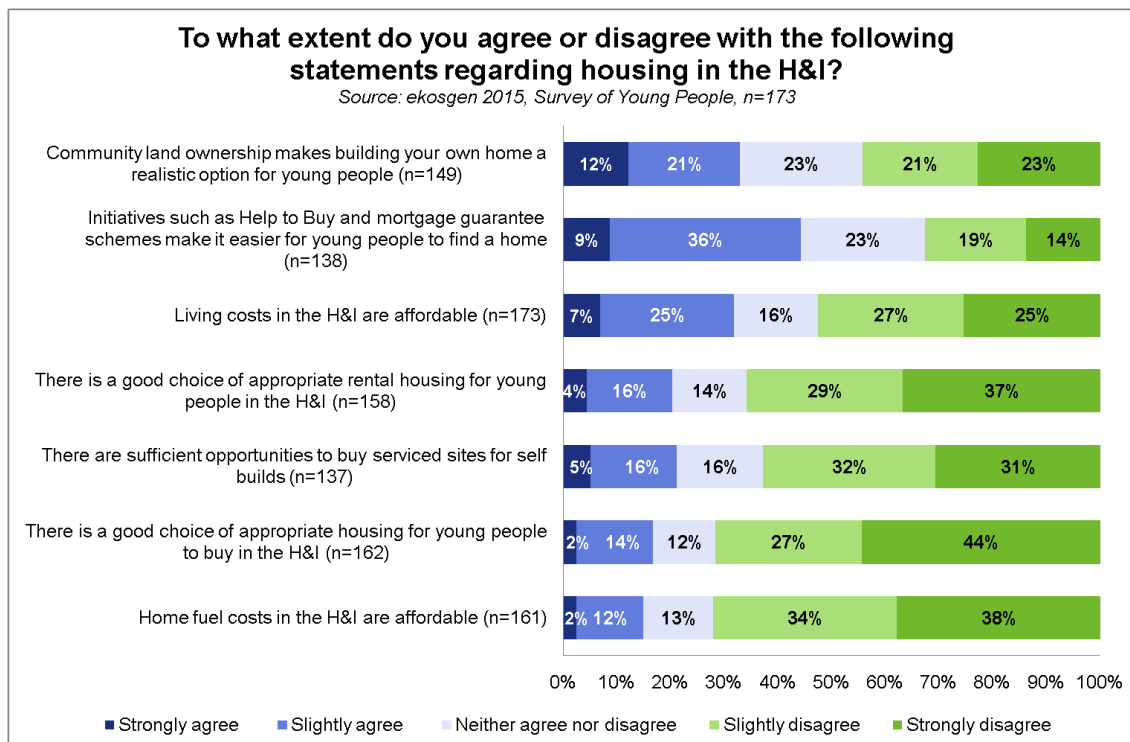
5.3 Housing issues appear to be more acute for young people in the Outer Hebrides than across the region generally. Less than a fifth (16%) consider there to be an appropriate choice of housing *to buy*, while over seven in 10 do not think so, compared to 26% and 57% in the H&I. Choice in Uist and Barra is perceived to be particularly poor - only 14% agree. Similarly, although 20% of those in the Outer Hebrides think there is a good choice of appropriate *rental* housing in the H&I (compared with 29% regionally), two thirds (66%) disagree, compared to 53% regionally.

5.4 The cost of living is also more of a problem for young people in the Outer Hebrides than in the H&I as a whole. Less than one third (32%) believe costs are affordable, compared to 41% across the H&I. This view is consistent amongst young people from Uist and Barra and Lewis and Harris.

5.5 One third (33%) of young people in the Outer Hebrides agree that community land ownership makes building your own home a more realistic option – and this proportion is higher than across the H&I (28%) and almost as high as in Shetland (34%) and Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross (36%). However, only a fifth (21%) agree that there are sufficient opportunities to buy serviced sites for self-build, lower than the 25% across the H&I, with little sub-area variation.

²⁶ The Housing questions were only asked to those respondents via the main online survey, i.e. they were not asked in the schools paper and online surveys.

Figure 5.1



Transport

5.6 As with the other island communities of the H&I, transport is a key issue for young people in the Outer Hebrides

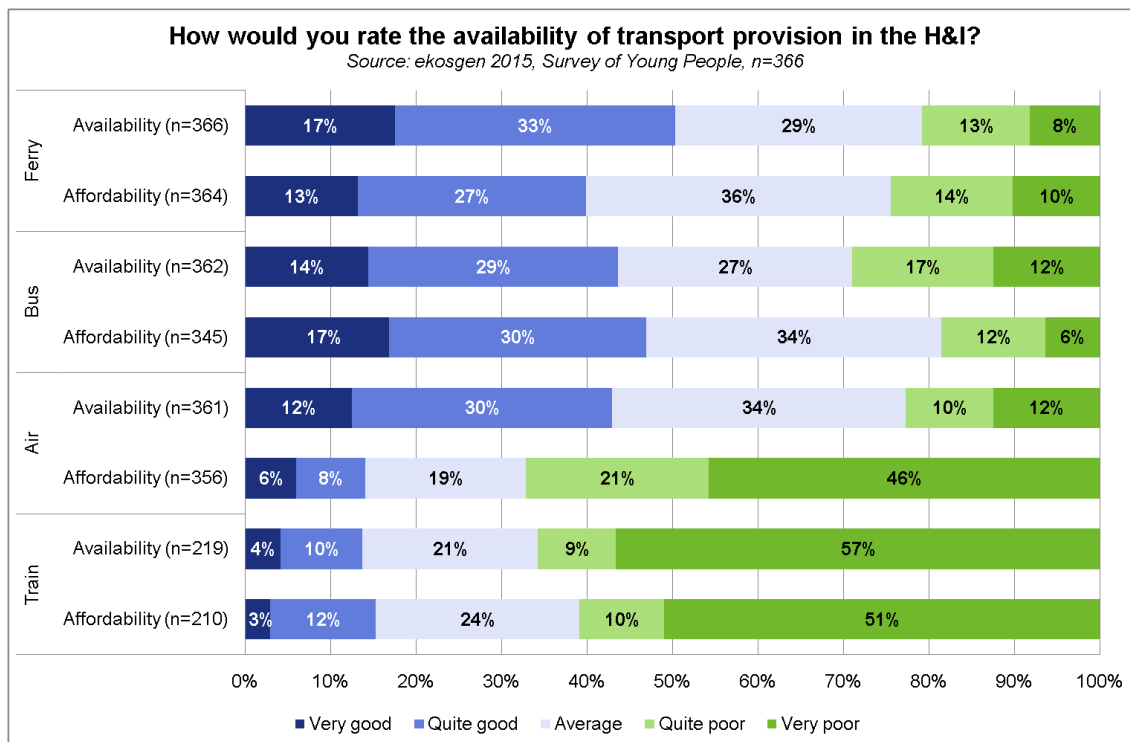
5.7 **Ferry and air travel** are the main transport modes connecting the Outer Hebrides to mainland Scotland. Availability of ferry services is rated as good by half (50%) of all respondents, above the regional average of 42%. Young people in Lewis and Harris rate availability of ferry services more positively than those in Uist and Barra (55% compared with 38%). Ferry affordability is rated as good by 40% of young people in the Outer Hebrides, compared to the regional average of 29%, although this view is felt significantly more in Lewis and Harris (45%) than in Uist and Barra (23%). The introduction of RET for the Outer Hebrides in 2008 is likely to be a factor in this.

5.8 **Air travel** availability within the Outer Hebrides is rated as at least 'quite good' by over four in 10 (42%) young people, with little variation between Lewis and Harris (43%) and Uist and Barra (44%), perhaps due to the existence of three airports within the Outer Hebrides: Stornoway, Benbecula and Barra. However, similarly to other island communities, air travel affordability ranks poorly, with almost half (46%) rating it 'very poor', similar to Orkney (46%) and Shetland (48%).

5.9 At least four in 10 (43%) rate availability of **bus services** within the Outer Hebrides as good, above the regional average of 40%, rising to 48% in Lewis and Harris but falling to 31% in Uist and Barra. Although there is an imbalance in bus availability between Lewis and Harris and Uist and Barra, affordability is uniformly ranked, by 46% and 49% of respondents in each respective sub-area.

5.10 **Train travel** ranks far behind as the least available and affordable transport method by respondents as the Outer Hebrides, along with Orkney and Shetland, has no railway line.

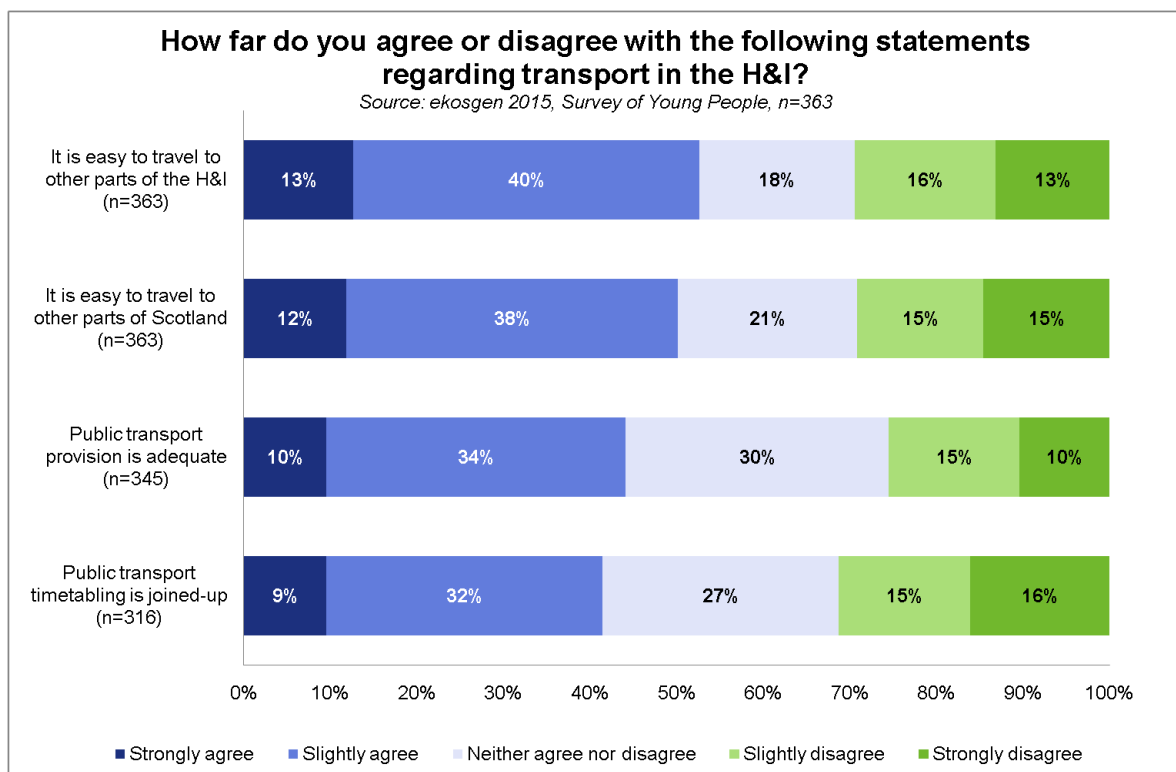
Figure 5.2



5.11 Half of the young people surveyed agree that it is easy to travel to other parts of Scotland from the Outer Hebrides (50%), lower than the average across the H&I (56%). A slightly higher proportion considers it easy to travel to other parts of the H&I (53%), and this is in line with the regional average. Young people from Uist and Barra feel more isolated from the rest of the region with 44% disagreeing that it is easy to access other parts of the H&I, or other parts of Scotland (42%), compared to 25% and 24% respectively in Lewis and Harris.

5.12 Over four in 10 (41%) agree that public transport timetabling is joined-up, the highest of all areas within the H&I, and well above the regional average (34%). However, this masks variations within the Outer Hebrides, as almost half (48%) of young people from Lewis and Harris agree that timetabling is joined-up compared to one quarter (26%) of those from Uist and Barra. Similarly, whilst less than half (44%) agree that public transport provision is adequate, which is still above the H&I average (40%), this is higher in Lewis and Harris than in Uist and Barra (49% compared to 31%).

Figure 5.3

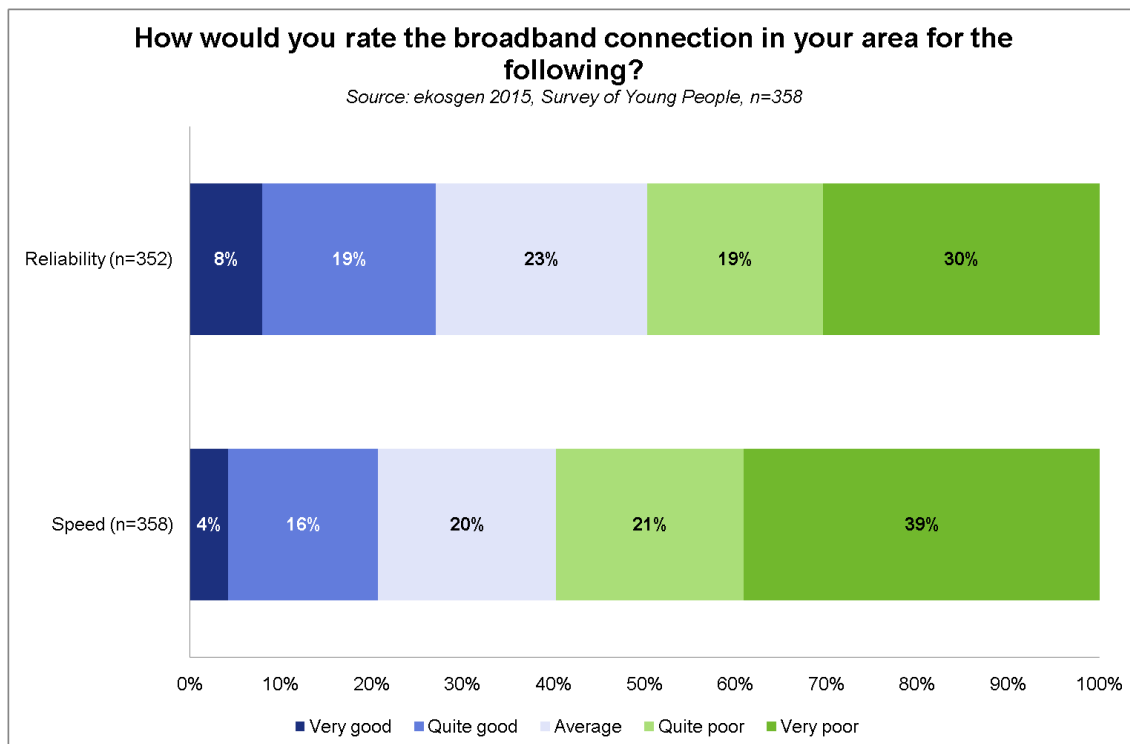


Digital Connectivity

5.13 In all, 91% of young people in the Outer Hebrides had access to broadband internet (standard broadband or NGA broadband) at the time of the survey (April 2015), lower than the H&I average of 96%, and the lowest of all areas within the region. The vast majority of this broadband access was standard broadband. Just 3% had access to NGA broadband, compared to 14% across the H&I, although this is set to change significantly in the next 12-18 months with the rollout of NGA. At 60%, awareness of the NGA roll-out is slightly above the H&I average of 56%.

5.14 Broadband reliability in the Outer Hebrides rates more poorly than elsewhere in the H&I, with only 27% of young people rating it positively (compared to the regional average of 43%), and around half rating it negatively. Broadband speeds are an even greater issue for young people in the Outer Hebrides, with just two in 10 considering speeds to be good, well below the regional average of 38%. Some six in 10 (60%) rate them as quite or very poor, greater than anywhere else in the region.

Figure 5.4

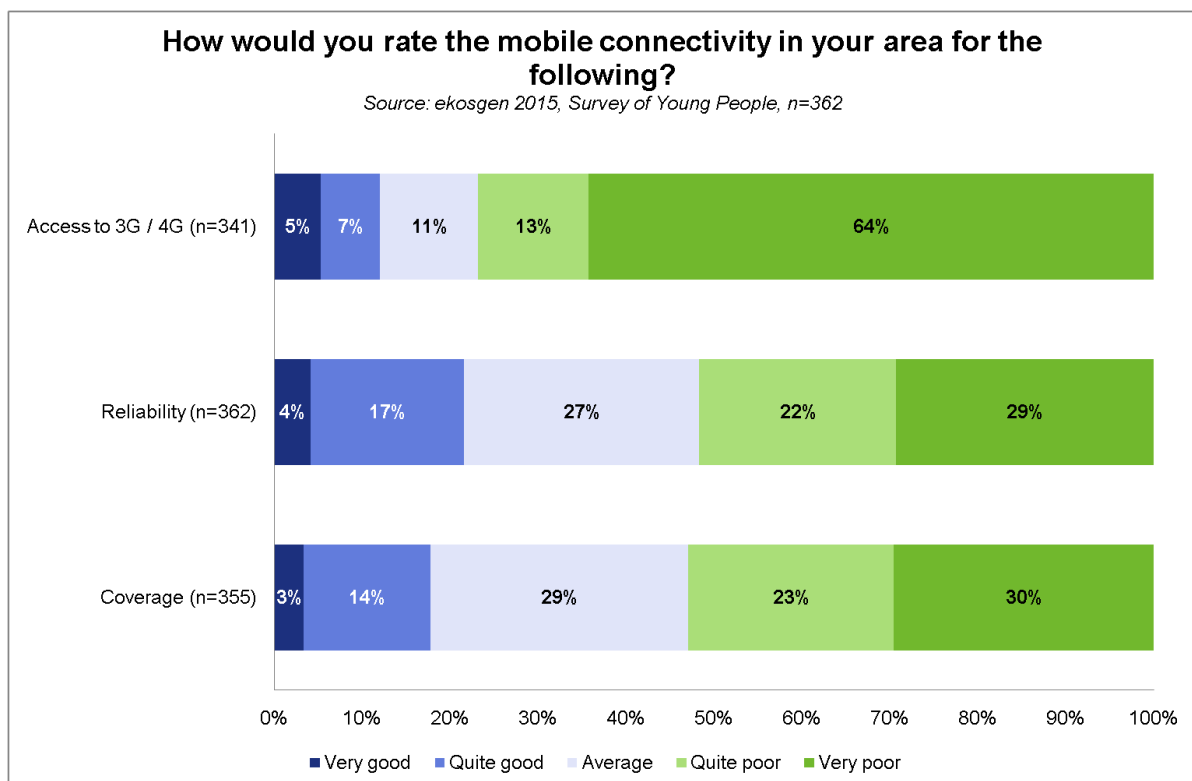


5.15 The top three key benefits of NGA broadband reported by young people in the Outer Hebrides were the same as for those across the H&I, namely: 1) better music, film and entertainment streaming 2) improved communication with family and friends and 3) better access to education and learning materials. This demonstrates that young people in the Outer Hebrides recognise the potential benefits that NGA could have in addressing issues associated with access to remote learning.

5.16 Mobile connectivity in the Outer Hebrides is rated even more poorly than broadband connectivity and also markedly lower than in the region overall. Just one fifth of young people rate mobile *reliability* positively (compared to 35% across the H&I) and fewer rate mobile *coverage* positively, 17% compared to 29% regionally. Additionally, mobile reliability and coverage are both rated more poorly in Uist and Barra (13% and 11% respectively) than in Lewis and Harris (24% and 20%).

5.17 Most notably, almost eight in 10 (77%) young people in the Outer Hebrides rate access to 3G/4G poorly, and 64% rate it 'very poor', significantly more so than for the region overall (47%), and poorest of all H&I areas bar Orkney (87%) and Shetland (67%). Nine in 10 (90%) young people from Uist and Barra rate 3G/4G access as 'very poor'.

Figure 5.5



Arts, Leisure and Culture

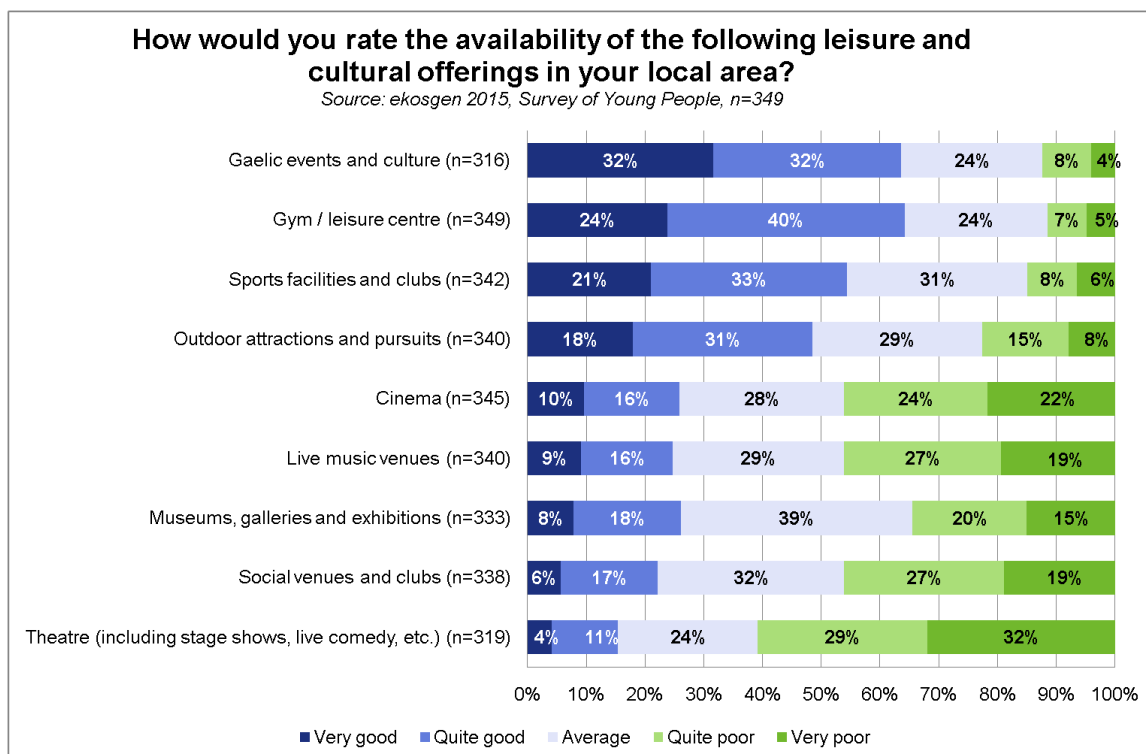
5.18 As with the H&I as a whole, there is a mixed picture on the perceived availability and strength of the arts, leisure and culture offer in the Outer Hebrides. In general terms, however, there is a more varied perception on the availability of the local offer, compared to other parts of the H&I region.

5.19 The top three most available offers in the Outer Hebrides are Gaelic events and culture (which does not rank highly in any other part of the H&I), and gyms/ leisure centres, both rated as quite or very good by 64% of young people, followed by sports facilities and clubs, 54%. All are rated as more available than the average across the H&I, and Gaelic events and culture are perceived to be more available in the Outer Hebrides than in any other part of the H&I.

5.20 Outdoor attractions and pursuits (49%) rate as slightly less available than the regional average (52%). The availability of museums and cinemas (both 26%), live music venues (25%) and social venues and clubs (23%) are all rated as broadly similarly available by young people, although all are below the regional averages. Theatres are rated as the least available offer to young people in the Outer Hebrides, and at 15% this offering is less than half the H&I-wide average (31%).

5.21 All arts, leisure and cultural offerings appear to be more available to those from Lewis and Harris than to young people in Uist and Barra.

Figure 5.6



5.22 Young people were asked about the importance of these cultural offerings, and there was, on the whole, a mismatch between availability and importance. Gyms/leisure clubs were most important to young people from Outer Hebrides - 83% rated them as important, whereas 64% rated this as available to them. Similarly, 50% deemed good access to the theatre to be important, yet it was the least available cultural offering (15%).

5.23 The biggest mismatches, however, between the availability and importance of offers were for social venues and clubs (important to 71% and available to 23%), live music venues (69% and 25%) and cinemas (66% and 26%).

5.24 Gaelic events and culture is the only offer that is more *available* to young people from the Outer Hebrides than it is *important* to them. In contrast to the H&I region as a whole, access to Gaelic events and culture is considered important by 46% of respondents, the highest in the region.

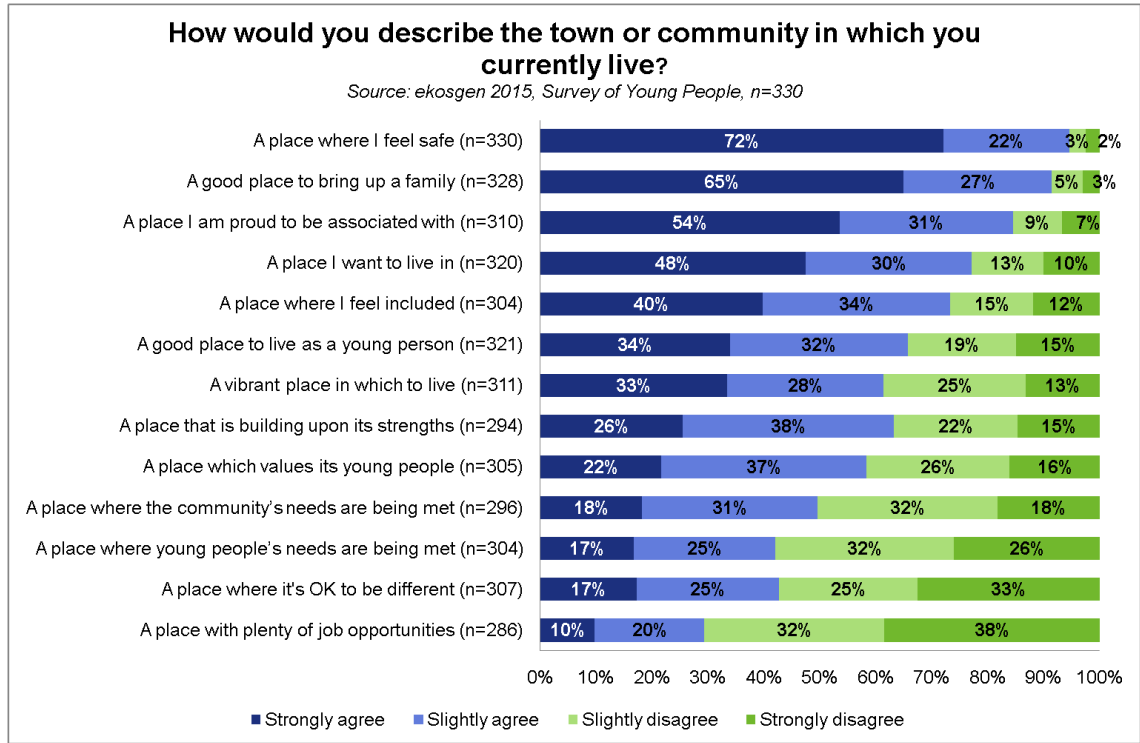
Community

5.25 There are some very strong and positive feelings amongst young people from the Outer Hebrides about the place in which they live. Some 85% agree that they are proud to be associated with their local community – the highest of all the H&I areas behind Orkney (93%), Shetland (92%) and just above Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross (83%). Pride in the local community is also higher than the regional average of 78%. This strong sense of pride is greater in Uist and Barra (88%) than in Lewis and Harris (84%).

5.26 Over nine in 10 young people in the Outer Hebrides feel safe in their local community and agree that it is a good place to bring up a family, again both above the regional average of 87% for each. Although almost three quarters feel included in their local community, just over four in 10 agree that it is a place where it's OK to be different, and this is lower than across the

H&I in general (51%). Further, one third (33%) strongly disagree that it is OK to be different in their local community, well above the regional average (23%), and higher in Lewis and Harris than in Uist and Barra.

Figure 5.7



5.27 Young people's community participation in the Outer Hebrides is comparable to that across the region overall. Four in 10 attend community events (41%), lower than for the H&I as a whole (45%), while around a third (34%) are members of local youth groups or clubs (32% for the H&I) and a third (33%) undertake volunteer work for the community (31% for the H&I). In all, 29% of young people do not engage with the community in any of these ways, matching the average for the H&I.

5.28 Against a number of other indicators on local community, the Outer Hebrides is perceived more favourably than is evident regionally. This includes being a good place to live as a young person (66% agree, compared to 59% for the H&I), being a place that is building upon its strengths (64% agree, compared to 63%), being a place which values its young people (59% agree, compared to 53%), and being a place where young people's needs are being met (42% agree, compared to 41% for the H&I). On the whole, there is little difference in these community perceptions between Lewis and Harris and Uist and Barra.

6 Future aspirations of Young People in the Outer Hebrides

6.1 The previous chapters have explored the education, employment, and other lifestyle factors that affect the decisions made by a young person as to whether they leave or stay in the Outer Hebrides. This chapter looks at the relative importance of these various factors, as well as examining the future aspirations of young people living in the Outer Hebrides.

Making the Highlands and Islands an Attractive Place to Live In

6.2 Although young people in the Outer Hebrides tend to have different priorities to those elsewhere in the H&I as to what makes the region a more attractive place to live, work and study, the *most important* theme - the availability of high quality jobs – is consistent with the region overall. This is cited as *very important* by almost two thirds (64%), which is slightly below the regional average of 68%. This is more significant in Uist and Barra (72%) than in Lewis and Harris (62%). Further, having high quality jobs is rated as at least quite important by nearly all (96%) young people in the Outer Hebrides.

6.3 Having good access to housing (63%) is ranked as the *second most important* theme by those from the Outer Hebrides, above its ranking of third regionally (62%). This is the *most important* issue for young people from Lewis and Harris (64%), and slightly more so than those from Uist and Barra (61%). Good access to FE/HE is another very important issue in the Outer Hebrides, ranked *third* (and above the ranking of 4th regionally) and reported by 62% of young people, slightly above the regional average of 61%. There is little variation within the Outer Hebrides on this.

6.4 Building on the evidence of poor broadband and mobile reliability and speeds in Chapter 5, digital and mobile connectivity emerged as more significant issues to young people in the Outer Hebrides than in any other area in the region. Some 61% report digital connectivity as *very important*, well above the H&I average of 48%, and above that for Orkney and Shetland (both 52%). Similarly, mobile connectivity as an issue in the Outer Hebrides (at 57%) is above the regional average (51%). Both of these themes are more important to young people from Uist and Barra.

6.5 Opportunities for career progression is another very important issue for young people in the Outer Hebrides in making the region an attractive place to live, as reported by 59%, although this is five percentage points lower than the regional average of 64%.

6.6 Having a lower cost of living (55%) and affordable transport links (54%) are also important to young people in the Outer Hebrides, although both are lower relative to the H&I-wide averages (56% and 61%). In relative terms, transport affordability is (now) much less of an issue than in other parts of the H&I. At the same time, having a lower cost of living is very important to almost two thirds (64%) of young people in Uist and Barra, and here it is the *second most important* theme.

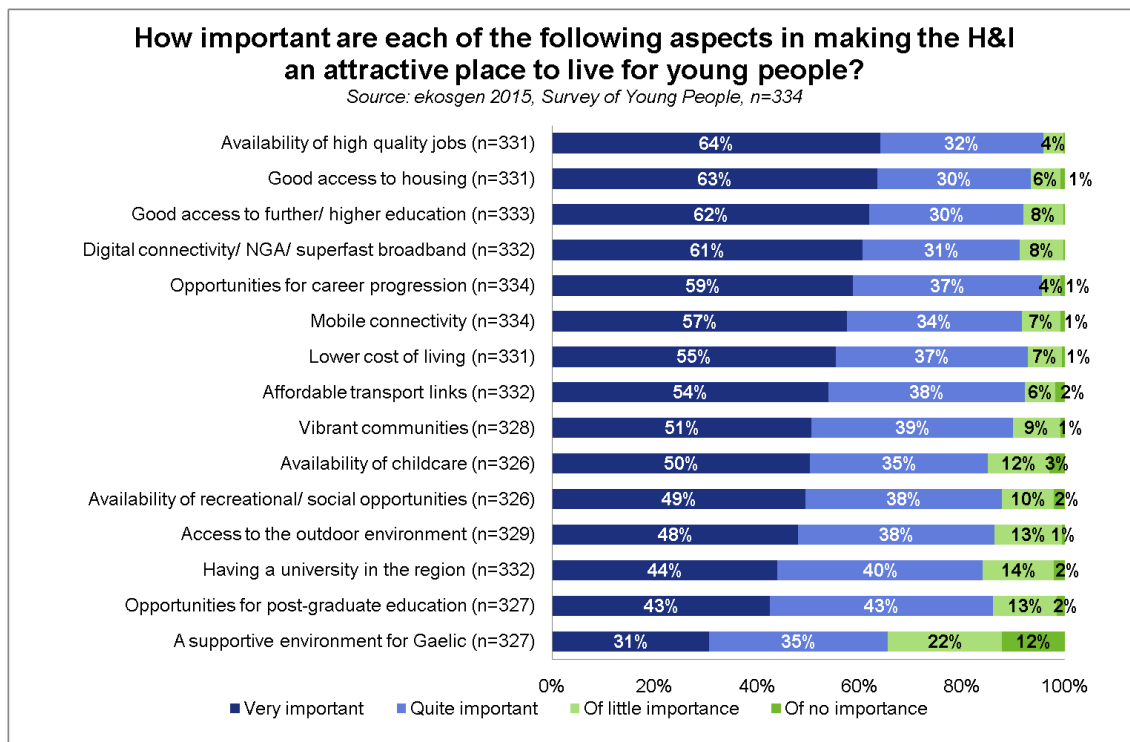
6.7 Having vibrant communities (51%) and available childcare (50%) are more important to young people in the Outer Hebrides than regionally (47% and 43%), whereas the importance of available recreational or social opportunities (49%), an accessible outdoor environment (48%) and post-graduate opportunities (43%) are more in line with the views across the H&I (50%, 48% and 45%).

6.8 These themes are important to at least 84% of young people and very important for at least 44%. A supportive Gaelic environment is important for around two thirds (66%, the highest in the H&I), and very important for almost a third (31%).

Table 6.1

Theme	% 'Very Important'	Outer Hebrides Ranking	H&I Ranking
Availability of high quality jobs	64	1	1
Good access to housing	63	2	3
Good access to FE/HE	62	3	4=
Digital connectivity	61	4	8=
Opportunities for career progression	59	5	2
Mobile connectivity	57	6	6
Lower cost of living	55	7	5
Affordable transport links	54	8	4=
Vibrant communities	51	9	9
Availability of childcare	50	10	11
Availability of recreational/ social opportunities	49	11	7
Access to the outdoor environment	48	12	8=
Having a university in the region	44	13	8=
Opportunities for post-graduate education	43	14	10
A supportive environment for Gaelic	31	15	12

Figure 6.1



Future Aspirations

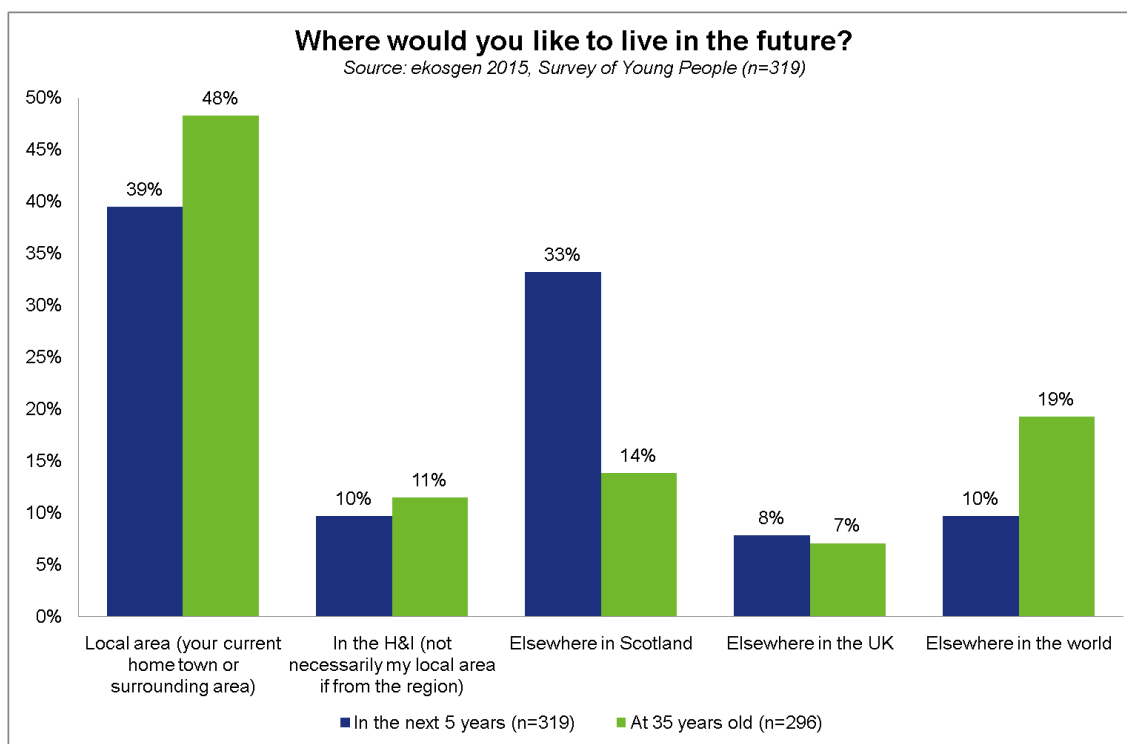
6.9 Young people in the Outer Hebrides have strong aspirations to stay in their local area in the future. Nearly four in 10 (39%) want to live in their local area in five years' time, above the regional average (36%), and exceeded only by Shetland and Orkney. Almost half (48%) would like to be doing so at 35 years old, which is significantly higher than the H&I figure of 33%, meaning that of those who leave the local area in the short term, many aspire to return in later life.

6.10 The desire to stay reflects the positive perceptions of the Outer Hebrides as a place to live, work and study. Within the Outer Hebrides, the desire to stay in the local area in the short term is highest in Uist and Barra (45%, compared to 39% for Lewis and Harris), as is the desire to return to the area in later life (65%, compared to 44%); for both areas this is higher than elsewhere in the H&I. Thus, even though many from Uist and Barra expect to leave the local area for HE or other reasons, many hope to return some time later.

6.11 For those who wish to leave, the desire to be living elsewhere in five years' time is highest amongst 15-18 year olds, where over seven in 10 (72%) want to leave their local area. This group is also more likely to want to live elsewhere in later life, and almost two thirds (65%) want to live outside their local area at 35 years old.

6.12 This age group is the one most likely to be considering FE/HE provisions in the Central Belt of Scotland, as one third (33%) wish to live elsewhere in Scotland in five years' time, and this is most prevalent for the 15-18 year age band (44%). However, this figure falls to 15% at 35 years old for this age group, meaning that of those who leave in the short term for educational purposes, many want to return to their local area in later life.

Figure 6.2



6.13 Some nine in 10 young people from the Outer Hebrides either want to be in employment (45%) or studying/furthering their education (45%) in the next five years. The desire to be in employment by the age of 35 rises to three quarters (75%) of young people, the largest aspiration for employment in the H&I, and well above the regional average of 66%. Those living in Uist and Barra (52%) have a higher desire to be in employment in the next five years than those from Lewis and Harris (43%), although this trend reverses in later life (78% for Lewis and Harris and 67% for Uist and Barra).

6.14 A small but significant proportion of young people (6%) want to be running their own business in five years' time, rising to almost a fifth (17%) by the age of 35, although this is below the regional averages of 8% and 24%. This shows a certain appetite for self-employment within the Outer Hebrides, although it is less prevalent than throughout the H&I in general.

How the H&I has changed

6.15 There is evidence that positive change has been felt in the area over the last five years. Almost half of young people in the Outer Hebrides (48%) think that the H&I is a better place to live now than it was five years ago, although this is marginally lower than the 51% across the H&I. This positive change has been felt more in Lewis and Harris (52%) than in Uist and Barra (43%). A further 30% of respondents were unsure. However, a significant proportion, some 22%, perceive that the H&I is not a better place to live now than it was five years ago, the highest proportion in the H&I region, largely influenced by those from Uist and Barra (27%).

6.16 Young people from the Outer Hebrides have a more pessimistic outlook on life in the H&I in the future, with just 33% believing the region will be a better place to live in five years' time – the lowest of all areas within the H&I and much lower than the H&I average of 46%. However, almost half (49%) were unsure. Just under one in five (18%) do not think that the region will be a better place to live in five years time (higher than the 14% for the H&I). Despite being less positive about improvements in the last five years, young people in Uist and Barra are more optimistic about the future, with 40% anticipating positive change, compared to 31% from Lewis and Harris.

7 Conclusions

7.1 In all, 457 young people across the Outer Hebrides have given their views on their local area and the H&I. This is a good evidence base of what young people are thinking in relation to a whole range of issues. Young people in the Outer Hebrides are generally very positive about their islands and there is a strong commitment to their local community. Young people want to stay or return if they can. There are, however, significant constraints to young people doing so, or feeling able to do so, that apply across the Outer Hebrides, but particularly so in Uist and Barra.

Key Summary Findings

Staying and Leaving

- Just over four in 10 young people in the Outer Hebrides describe themselves as committed stayers, in line with the H&I average. There are, however, a slightly higher proportion of reluctant leavers, and this is linked to limitations in terms of local opportunities.
- Those in Lewis and Harris are slightly more likely to see themselves as committed leavers, and those from Uist and Barra are more likely to be committed stayers. However, this masks differences by age and status: younger people aged 15-18 in Uist and Barra are far less likely to be committed stayers – although many aspire to return later in life;
- Those aged 25-30 are much more likely to be committed stayers than the regional average for this age group. Some will have returned from being away temporarily, and when they do, they want to stay. Young people aged 15-18 in Uist and Barra are more likely to be reluctant leavers.
- More than six in 10 think that those who stay value the good quality of life in the H&I, although almost half think they are unlikely to fulfil their potential, higher than the third that say this regionally.
- Almost nine in 10 think leavers do so to broaden their world view, and 84% think they do so to access training and employment, eight percentage points above the regional average. More also think they leave to get on in life, especially young people from Uist and Barra.
- Two thirds of school leavers wish to go to HE or FE, slightly below the regional average. Those in Uist and Barra, however, are more likely to want to go to University, more so than in Lewis and Harris, and regionally. The Central Belt is their destination of choice.

Education

- Just over half think there is a good educational offer in the H&I, slightly below the regional average, and less than half think the range of FE/ College courses is good (also below the regional average). Availability of both FE and HE is lower for those from Uist and Barra.
- A greater proportion than the regional average thinks studying in the H&I is affordable. More in Lewis and Harris are also able to study locally, again higher than the regional average, while those in Uist and Barra are less able to do so. Across the Outer Hebrides, 45% think they have the ability to study remotely, below the regional average, and lower still in Lewis and Harris.

- More than eight in 10 know something of UHI, and awareness is particularly high in Lewis and Harris. Perceptions are also positive: UHI is seen as credible academically by almost half of young people, higher than the regional average. In all, 56% would be happy to attend, highest for those in Lewis and Harris, although fewer aged 19-24 than the regional average would be happy to do so.
- Perceptions of graduate placement availability are much lower than the regional average. Just one in five thinks these opportunities are available in the region, even though almost half think they would improve their chances of employment.

Employment

- Just a quarter think there are good local employment opportunities, compared to 35% for the H&I overall. This is lowest in Uist and Barra (21%) but also below average in Lewis and Harris (27%). Diversity of employment is rated lower still, at 22%, falling to just 13% in Uist and Barra.
- Local career progression opportunities are also perceived to be weak, and less than one in four thinks these are good, compared to 29% regionally. This is very low in Uist and Barra (just 10%) although close to the regional average in Lewis and Harris. Less than a third (30%) think there are good local opportunities for personal development, lower than the 37% regionally, and once again, weaker in Uist and Barra.
- More than half of those in Lewis and Harris view apprenticeship availability as good (above the regional average), although just one in four in Uist and Barra think so.
- Fewer in the Outer Hebrides perceive there to be good local self-employment opportunities, 31% compared to 39% for the H&I. At the same time, some 49% think there are good opportunities across the region. Although 17% see themselves running their own business in the future (by the age of 35), this is lower than the regional average of 24%.
- Just 8% in Uist and Barra think pay levels are good locally, rising to 24% in Lewis and Harris, close to the regional average of 27%. In all, 68% think staying in the Outer Hebrides requires compromising on career opportunities, higher than the 60% regionally.
- Just over a third would like to work locally (37%) compared to 29% on average across the H&I. This is higher in Uist and Barra, at 42%. Yet there is a 29 percentage point differential between those wanting to work locally in Uist and Barra and those thinking there is a good diversity of employment; the differential is much lower – at 10 percentage points – in Lewis and Harris.
- As with many parts of the H&I, there is good awareness of the Food and drink, Sustainable tourism and Energy sectors, yet these are the sectors where interest is lowest. Just 15% are interested in working in Energy. Only in the Creative industries does interest outweigh awareness.
- Young people from the Outer Hebrides value employers who offer a good work-life balance, a commitment to staff development/training, strong leadership and opportunities for career progression. These are in line with H&I-wide views. Fewer than regionally rate international activities/outlook as important in employers.

Housing

- Housing is an even greater concern to young people in the Outer Hebrides than it is regionally. Just 16% think there is a good choice of housing to buy and 20% a good choice to rent, and this is lower still in Uist and Barra. Less than a third rate the cost of living favourably, lower than the region's average of 41%.
- Housing is the second most important issue for young people in the Outer Hebrides in making the H&I a more attractive place to live (higher than its ranking of 3rd across the H&I. For those in Lewis and Harris, it is *the* most important issue.

Transport

- Availability of bus and ferry travel is rated more positively by those in Lewis and Harris (above the regional average), than in Uist and Barra (where it is below average). Bus travel is considered more affordable than average, as is ferry affordability in Lewis and Harris, although far less so in Uist and Barra.
- Availability of air travel is rated as good by more than four in 10, yet affordability less so where 46% regard it as very poor. Overall, those in Uist and Barra feel considerably more isolated from other parts of the H&I and Scotland than those from Lewis and Harris.
- Timetabling in Lewis and Harris is relatively well regarded (by 48%, above the regional average of 34%). This falls to 26% in Uist and Barra.

Digital Connectivity

- Almost one in 10 (9%) do not have access to broadband, the highest proportion in the H&I. At the time of the survey, just 3% had NGA as opposed to 14% across the region, although this is set to change with rollout of NGA in the H&I. Just two in 10 think broadband speeds are good, almost half the regional average.
- Mobile connectivity is rated even more poorly with coverage rated as good by 17%, versus 29% regionally. Access to 3G/4G is poor, and 'very poor' for nine in 10 in Uist and Barra.
- There is recognition of the benefits NGA can bring for remote learning. Overall, digital connectivity is regarded as a more important issue than average across the H&I.

Arts, Culture and Leisure

- There is a mixed offer in the Outer Hebrides, where Gaelic events and culture are regarded as the most available offer, the only part of the H&I where this is the case. Almost two thirds rate availability as good, and almost half think the Gaelic offer is important.
- The biggest mismatches between the availability and importance of offers are for social venues and clubs (important to 71% and available to 22%), live music venues (69% and 25%) and cinemas (66% and 26%).

Community

- In all, 85% of young people are proud to be associated with their community, the highest proportion behind Orkney and Shetland. Young people feel safe and see it as a good place to raise a family. At the same time, fewer think it OK to be different – around four in 10 compared to around half regionally.

- Around seven in 10 are engaged in the community (and just 29% are not engaged at all), which is in line with the regional average. The Outer Hebrides is seen as a good place to live as a young person by two thirds of those from there.

Future Aspirations

- Nearly four in 10 young people in the Outer Hebrides want to be living in their local area in five years' time (the third highest behind Orkney and Shetland), and this rises to 48% at the age of 35.
- This desire to live locally is particularly high amongst those from Uist and Barra, where two thirds want to be living there at the age of 35. Here in particular, there is a desire to return to the local area in the future, even amongst those seeking to leave for HE.
- As is the case across the H&I, the availability of high quality jobs is the most important factor in making the H&I an attractive place to live, work and study – and particularly so for those from Uist and Barra.
- Almost half think the H&I is a better place to live now than five years ago, higher in Lewis and Harris. However, just a third think it will be better in the next five years, the lowest of all parts of the H&I.

Concluding Remarks

7.2 Young people in the Outer Hebrides have very strong levels of attachment to their local areas, and high proportions want to live in their local area in the future. This applies to those from both Lewis and Harris and Uist and Barra, even where, in the case of the latter, there is a stronger expectation that they will leave for HE purposes.

7.3 Whilst there is an aspiration to live locally, there are considerable barriers to young people doing so. This relates to a lack of local employment opportunities, a lack of career progression opportunities and particularly acute issues relating to housing and digital connectivity. For those in Uist and Barra, lack of opportunity is especially severe, and the cost and availability of housing is a big issue for those in Lewis and Harris. So while there is a strong desire to live and work locally, this is not always possible, or at least not possible without certain levels of compromise.

A. Annex 1: survey response profile

This chapter provides an overview of survey respondents by age, gender, geography and status.

Number of Respondents

In all, 457 young people from the Outer Hebrides responded to the survey (either online or through a paper version). This represents just over 10% of the total survey sample and a strong confidence level of 95% with a +/-5% margin of error, based on an estimated 15-30 year old Outer Hebrides population of 4,308.²⁷ This provides a robust survey sample and high reliability in the findings.²⁸

Age

Overall, 262 (57%) of those responding were aged 15-18 years, 117 (26%) were aged 19-24 years and 78 (17%) were aged 25-30 years at the time of completing the survey. Again, this provides a robust confidence level of at least 95% with a margin of error between +/-6% and +/-11%.

Survey responses have a slightly higher level of representation for those aged 15-18 years as a result of the high response rate amongst school pupils. These additional school responses were the product of a targeted approach to gathering data from this age group, a crucial age at which young people make decisions about their future. As a consequence, the survey sample is slightly less representative of those aged 19-30 years.

Table 4.1: Outer Hebrides Survey Response by Age and Representativeness

Age group	Total (survey)		Outer Hebrides		Difference +/-
	Number	%	Number	(%)	
15-18	262	57%	1314	30%	+28%
19-24	117	26%	1500	35%	-8%
25-30	78	17%	1494	35%	-20%
Total	457	100%	4308	100%	N/A

Source: *ekosgen, 2015, Survey of Young People; Census 2011*. Percentages may not sum due to rounding.

Gender

In all, 60% of respondents from the Outer Hebrides (271) were female, compared to 48.5% across the region. Nearly four in 10 (39%) were male (177) (compared to 51.5% across the region), while just 1% (3) preferred not to say.²⁹

²⁷ Census (2011) – area office breakdown provided by Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

²⁸ Please note that a small proportion of young people did not provide answers to all socio-demographic questions; thus, not all of the categories sum to the full 457 responses received.

²⁹ ONS Mid Year Population Estimates (2014). Please note, census data is based on percentage of males and females in the population as a whole, as a breakdown by age and gender was not available.

For both males and females, this again provides a high level of confidence at 95%, with a +/-8 % margin of error for females, and a +/-6% margin of error for males.^{30,31}

Geography

Respondents were asked to choose the area in which they live – the location of their current family home rather than a temporary residence used for study or short-term contracts. Within the Outer Hebrides, respondents were most commonly from Lewis and Harris (326 – 73%), and just over one quarter of respondents (122 – 27%) were from Uist and Barra.³²

Status

More than half (55%) of respondents were school pupils at the time of responding (249). Just over a quarter were in employment or self-employment (27% - 121). A further 14% (63) were university or college students.

Small numbers responding to the survey were undertaking an apprenticeship (2% - 8), unemployed (2% - 7) or had finished education, but were not currently in employment nor unemployed (1% - 4). None were carers or home makers.

In comparison to the wider sample, respondents from the Outer Hebrides are more commonly school pupils, and are less likely to fall within the employment, self-employment or university/ college student and carer or home maker categories. The same percentage are undertaking an apprenticeship or currently finished education, not currently in employment but not currently unemployed.

Summary

In all, a good number of responses were received from young people in the Outer Hebrides and its sub-areas. These responses provide good confidence in the results by age, geography and gender, providing a robust data-set for analysis.

³⁰ ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates (2014)

³¹ ONS Mid-Year Population Estimates (2014)

³² Please note, this is based on the respondents' postcode. There were nine individuals for whom that it was not possible to determine the sub-area for.

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