

ENABLING THE NEXT GENERATION

Young People and the Highlands and Islands
Maximising Opportunities:
OUTER HEBRIDES



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HEADLINE FINDINGS

Staying and leaving

- A lower proportion of young people in the Outer Hebrides than regionally identify as committed stayers (40% compared to 45%). However, more see themselves as reluctant leavers (20% versus 12% regionally), suggesting that while many would like to stay, fewer feel able to.
- Young people in the Outer Hebrides are more positive than average about those that stay in their local area post-school, although many still feel that people need to leave to access training or employment, or to get on in life. They are also markedly more likely to feel those who leave will return when the time is right.

Education

- Young people in the Outer Hebrides have mixed views on the region's educational provision although they have improved since 2015. Most do feel there is a good educational offering, particularly in relation to FE, and study affordability and remote learning opportunities are highly regarded. Those in Lewis and Harris are markedly more positive than those from Uist and Barra about all aspects of FE and HE in the region.
- Views are less favourable in terms of HE and post-graduate opportunities and only two-fifths feel the course they want to study is available in the region. This, along with subject specialisation and strong industry links are key determinants of study locations, and fewer than regionally feel this is available to them locally.
- Good levels of awareness of different types of apprenticeships were evident among young people in the Outer Hebrides, although markedly fewer saw them as being accessible to them.

Employment

- As with regionally, most young people in the Outer Hebrides aspire to full-time employment. Despite higher than average levels of interest in and ideas for self-employment, the aspiration for realising this is much lower with lack of confidence, knowledge and access to finance being key barriers. Interest in self-employment is markedly higher among those from Uist and Barra.
- More young people than elsewhere in the region perceived barriers to achieving their employment goals, with lack of local opportunities being identified most frequently, followed by lack of affordable housing. These barriers were more pronounced for young people in Uist and Barra.
- As with elsewhere in the region, young people from the Outer Hebrides see a steady job, a good work-life balance and opportunities to progress as the most essential qualities in any job. They are less likely than average to think these factors are available locally.

Community and culture

- Community participation is higher amongst young people in the Outer Hebrides than regionally, with those in Uist and Barra most likely to be engaged in their community.
- Young people in the Outer Hebrides have strong and positive views of their local town and community. Levels of pride are extremely high, particularly amongst those in Uist and Barra. Almost all see their local community as a place where they feel safe and somewhere with a good quality of life. However, as with regionally, more needs to be done to ensure the needs of young people are being met and that diversity is embraced.

Maximising opportunities

- Compromises are perceived as a necessary part of life for young people in the Outer Hebrides, particularly in relation to employment, career progression and mobile and digital connectivity. Those in Uist and Barra are more likely than those in Lewis and Harris to feel compromises are required.
- Reflecting the regional trend, a low cost of living and employment factors were rated as the most important economic aspects for attracting young people to the region, although those in the Outer Hebrides placed higher importance on cost of living and less on good pay levels.
- Quality of life, affordable housing and access to good healthcare were ranked as the most important social factors to making the Highlands and Islands attractive to young people. More in the Outer Hebrides than regionally cited a sense of community and good broadband and mobile connectivity as essential factors.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In 2018, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) commissioned ekosgen to undertake a major research study focused on the changing attitudes and aspirations of young people aged between 15 and 30, in relation to living in the Highlands and Islands. The study builds on similar research undertaken by HIE in 2015 and explores how opportunities in the region can be maximised for all young people to live, work and study in the Highlands and Islands¹.

1.2 This report presents the findings of young people from the Outer Hebrides who participated in the research. It provides comparisons with the results for the Highlands and Islands overall and findings from the 2015 study. Where possible, analysis is provided on the differences between the views of young people living in Lewis and Harris and those living in Uist and Barra.

RESEARCH STUDY APPROACH

1.3 The research consisted of an in-depth survey of young people both living in and outwith the Highlands and Islands, coupled with a programme of online focus groups with young people. These were supported by a social media engagement campaign to foster interest and engagement in the research. A broad programme of consultation with stakeholders across the region was also undertaken to explore the perspectives of employers, policy-makers and key groups in relation to the study. Additionally, desk research around regional and national policy aimed at population growth and talent attraction was carried out alongside socio-economic profiling and data analysis of young people in the Highlands and Islands and its sub-regions.

1.4 In total 232 young people from the Outer Hebrides participated in the research, of which 64% (149) live in Lewis and Harris and 36% (83) live in Uist and Barra. In terms of age, 25% of the respondents from the Outer Hebrides are 15-18 years old, 41% are 19-24 and 34% are aged 25-30. Most respondents from the Outer Hebrides are female (68%), whilst 32% are male.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.5 The study has two principal aims. The first is to provide an overview of the evolving attitudes and aspirations of young people in the Highlands and Islands and how these have changed since 2015. The second is to identify gaps within the current provision of education, training and employment opportunities and points to consider so that opportunities can be maximised for all young people. The research was designed to address the following objectives:

- Provide a socio-economic profile of young people in the Highlands and Islands overall, and of its sub-regions;
- Provide a brief overview of key regional and national policy initiatives designed to support population growth and talent attraction strategies;
- Track how the attitudes and aspirations of young people have changed, if at all, since the previous study was undertaken in 2015;
- Explore provision of and attitudes to education, training and employment opportunities across the region, identifying gaps, areas of inequality, and good practice examples; and
- Identify areas and specific points for consideration in terms of how to better position the Highlands and Islands as a place where young people want to live, work and study. Further policy interventions may be required to support this.

¹ The 2015 research is available at www.hie.co.uk/young-people-research and 2018 findings at www.hie.co.uk/yp-research

2 THE OUTER HEBRIDES CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

2.1 This chapter provides an overview of the social and economic context in the Outer Hebrides. It includes a general overview of the area and its main centres, population and migration trends, the educational offer and employment trends.

OVERVIEW OF THE OUTER HEBRIDES

2.2 The Outer Hebrides is an island archipelago stretching 130 miles from the Butt of Lewis in the north to Barrahead in the south. It covers a large geographic area of approximately 3,000 km² and has a population of around 26,830, resulting in a very low population density (approximately nine inhabitants per km²). Although typically categorised as Lewis, Harris, the Uists and Barra, the island chain actually contains around 15 inhabited and many more uninhabited islands. Lewis and Harris form a single landmass, with almost 80% of the total population of the Outer Hebrides (19,072 on Lewis and 1,836 on Harris). Stornoway is the largest population centre with almost 8,000 residents. The Uists and Barra have a combined population of around 5,922.

2.3 The Western Isles Spinal Route connects all the islands via a series of causeways and inter-island ferries, making it possible to drive the length of the archipelago in a day. Ferry ports at Stornoway, Tarbert, Lochmaddy, Lochboisdale and Castlebay offer regular services to mainland ports (Ullapool, Oban and Mallaig) and Uig on Skye. Airports in Stornoway, Benbecula and Barra offer daily flights to mainland cities.

2.4 Despite natural advantages in sectors utilising natural resources (notably renewable energy and food and drink), the Outer Hebrides' peripheral location and low population density give rise to a number of economic challenges. These include service delivery and lack of economic diversification (including relatively large public-sector employment). Some parts of the Outer Hebrides are reliant on a small number of sectors or specific employers, for example fisheries in Barra and the QinetiQ range in Uist.

2.5 The Outer Hebrides remain a stronghold for Gaelic culture and language, and efforts supporting language regeneration have contributed to the development and growth of the Gaelic media sector within the last decade. Tourism activity has grown significantly although this has led to pressure on ferry capacity, limiting both visitor and resident travel. Despite Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) ferry fares and the Air Discount Scheme, the cost of off-island travel remains a significant issue. It is hoped that the proposed Islands Deal will support employment growth in a number of sectors as well as improving the Outer Hebrides' infrastructure.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

Population and migration trends²

2.6 An estimated 3,839 people aged 15-30 were living in the Outer Hebrides in 2018. This amounts to 14% of the total population, lower than the proportion across the Highlands and Islands (16%) and nationally (20%). Between 2011 and 2018 the number of 15-30-year olds in the Outer Hebrides is estimated to have fallen significantly by 11%, while the total population fell by 3%. This is the highest rate of decline across the Highlands and Islands and is likely to have been even higher in some parts of the islands.

2.7 In 2017-18, there was a total net in-migration to the Outer Hebrides. However, there was net out-migration of 15-29-year olds. The number of 15-30-year olds in the Outer Hebrides is projected to

² Data in this section is from the following National Records of Scotland (NRS) publications: Small Area Mid-Year Population Estimates 2011 and 2018, Migration to and from Scotland 2017-18 and Sub-National Population Projections (2016 based).

fall by a much higher rate (-23%) between 2018 and 2041 than is projected regionally (-13%) or nationally (-6%). This is the second highest projected rate of decline after Argyll and Bute (-26%).

Education

2.8 School leaver attainment in the Outer Hebrides is above the Highlands and Islands and Scottish averages. In 2017-18, 63% of school leavers achieved SCQF Level 6 (Higher) or above, compared to 61% across the region and 62% nationally³. The vast majority (96%) of 2017-18 school leavers in the Outer Hebrides went on to positive destinations, in line with the average for the Highlands and Islands (95%) and higher than the Scottish rate (94%).

2.9 Almost two-fifths (39%) of the islands' school leavers went on to employment, higher than the regional average (34%) and markedly higher than the proportion doing so across Scotland overall (23%). Fewer went in to higher education (HE) (30% compared to 36% regionally and 41% nationally) and 23% into further education (FE) (21% regionally and 27% nationally).

2.10 FE and HE provision is primarily delivered through Lews Castle College. In addition, there is a UHI campus in North Uist offering a Fine Arts course as well as learning centres in Benbecula and Barra. UHI also delivers nursing training in the Outer Hebrides.

2.11 In 2017-18 there were around 1,000 HE and 2,300 FE students from the Outer Hebrides studying at universities or colleges in Scotland⁴. The majority (81%) of FE students were studying within the Highlands and Islands, broadly in line with the average for the region overall (80%). Most (74%) are studying locally within the Outer Hebrides and the remainder (7%) elsewhere in the Highlands and Islands. Just under a fifth (19%) are enrolled at institutions elsewhere in Scotland (20% regionally). FE students aged 16-19 and those aged 20-24 were more likely to be studying outside of the Highlands and Islands than those aged 25 and over (44%, 44% and 11% respectively).

2.12 HE students from the Outer Hebrides are less likely than their counterparts across the region overall to be studying outwith the Highlands and Islands (48% compared to 54% regionally) and more likely to be enrolled at institutions within the region (42% versus 34% respectively). A further 10% are studying through the Open University (versus 12% regionally) and thus likely to be based at home in the Outer Hebrides. Those aged 16-19 and 20-24 are more likely to be enrolled at institutions outside the region than those aged 25 and over (68% and 65% compared to 26% respectively).

Employment⁵

2.13 In 2018, the employment rate in the Outer Hebrides (79.0%) was broadly in line with the Highlands and Islands average (78.9%), but higher than the Scottish average (74.1%). The economic activity rate (80.4%) was slightly lower than the regional rate (81.3%) but above the national level (77.4%). Reflecting the higher proportion of school leavers going directly into employment, the employment (72.9%) and economic activity (76.6%) rates of 16-24-year olds were above both the regional (67.1% and 71.6% respectively) and national (57.2% and 63.3%) averages.

2.14 Conversely, a lower proportion of 16-24-year olds in the Outer Hebrides were economically inactive in 2018 (23.4% compared to 28.4% regionally and 36.7% nationally). The overall economic inactivity rate for the Outer Hebrides is slightly higher than the regional average (19.6% compared to 18.7% respectively) but below that for Scotland (22.6%). Data on unemployment in the Outer Hebrides is not available but regionally, the Highlands and Islands had lower rates of unemployment (2.9%) and youth (16-24) unemployment (6.3%) than Scotland (4.3% and 9.6% respectively) in 2018.

³ Scottish Government School leaver attainment and initial destinations: statistics, 2017-18

⁴ Analysis is based on data from the Scottish Funding Council for 2017-18

⁵ Data in this section is from the Annual Population Survey January to December 2018

3 KEY FINDINGS FOR THE OUTER HEBRIDES

INTRODUCTION

3.1 This chapter provides the key findings from the survey of young people from the Outer Hebrides. As with the region-wide report it looks at attitudes around staying and leaving, education, employment, community and culture and maximising opportunities. It focuses mainly on where there are differences in the views of young people from the Outer Hebrides compared to the regional average, and variations between those living in different parts of the Outer Hebrides.

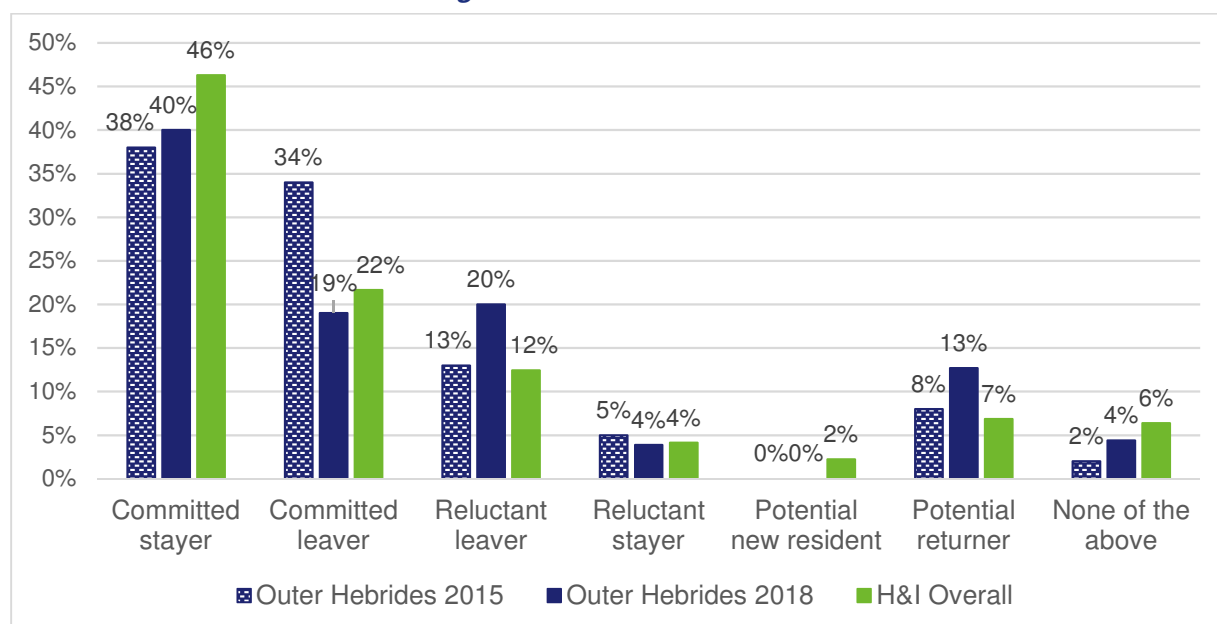
STAYING AND LEAVING

3.2 Two-fifths (40%) of young people from the Outer Hebrides are committed stayers, lower than the regional average of 46%. However, there is a higher proportion of reluctant leavers (20%) than regionally (12%) suggesting that while a similar proportion (60% versus 58% overall) would like to stay, fewer feel able to. More also identify as potential returners (13% compared to 7% regionally), highlighting the strong ties young people in the Outer Hebrides have to their home communities.

3.3 The proportion of committed leavers in the Outer Hebrides has declined substantially since 2015 from 34% to 19%, reflecting the pattern seen across the region overall (down from 34% to 22%).

3.4 Views of young people from Lewis and Harris and Uist and Barra are similar, although the latter are more likely to identify themselves as potential returners (17% versus 10%).

Figure 3.1: Self Identification

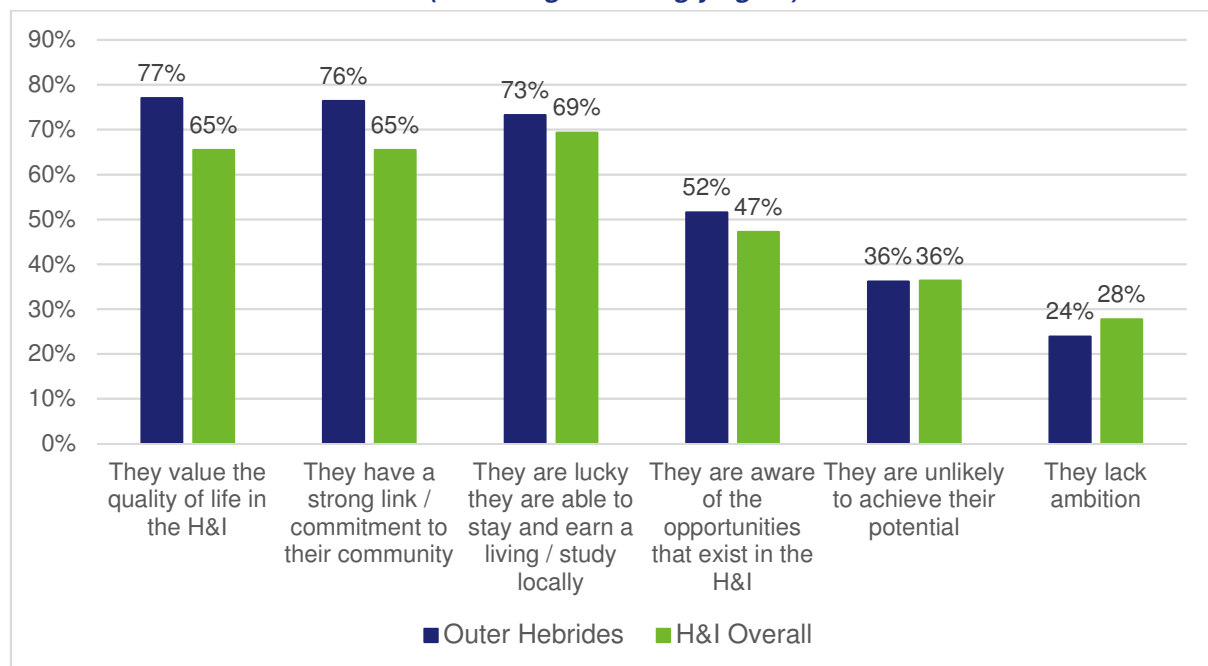


Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Overall n=2,539, Outer Hebrides n=205)

3.5 Most young people in the Outer Hebrides (60%) see themselves living somewhere in the Highlands and Islands in 10 years' time – 36% in their local area and 23% elsewhere in the region (compared to 32% and 23% regionally).

3.6 Young people in the Outer Hebrides are more positive about those who stay in their local area than their counterparts across the region overall. They are more likely to feel that those who stay value the quality of life in the Highlands and Islands (77% compared to 65% regionally) and have strong links to their local communities (76% versus 65% overall), and less likely to agree that they lack ambition (24% compared to 28% regionally) (Figure 3.2).

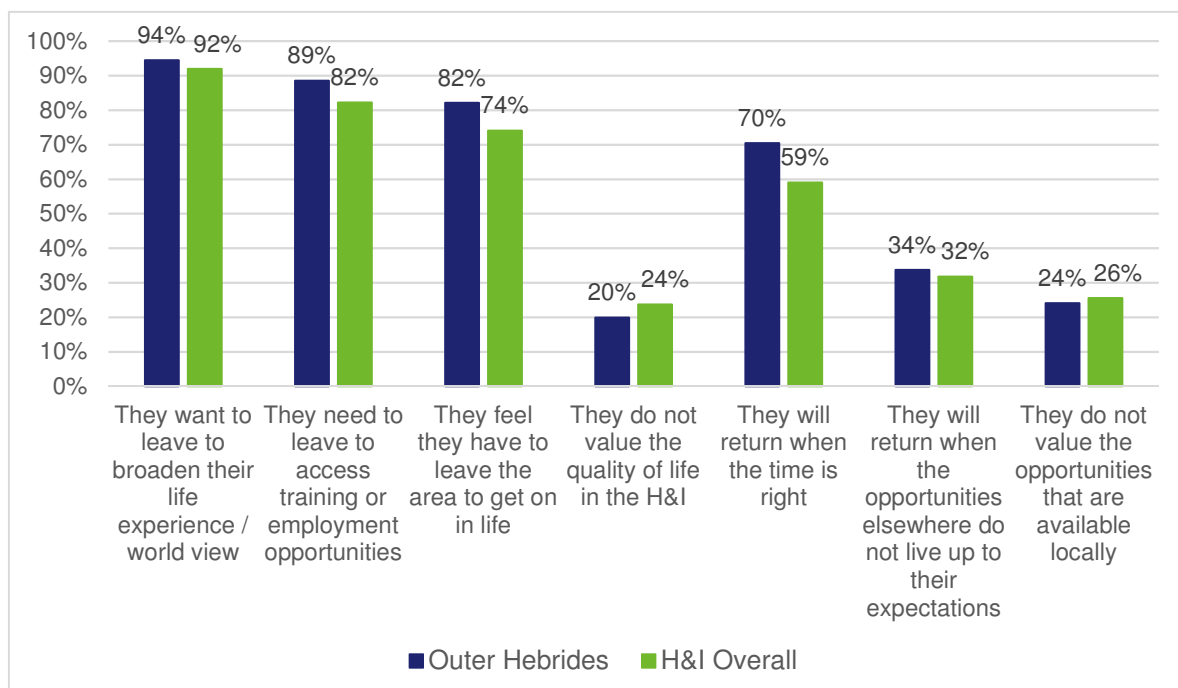
**Figure 3.2: Perceptions about young people who stay in the local area
(% who agree/strongly agree)**



Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Overall n=2,527, Outer Hebrides n=204)

3.7 There is still a perception that young people who leave need to do so to access training or employment opportunities or to get on in life, and this is more marked amongst those living in the Outer Hebrides (89% and 82% agree respectively) than across the region overall (82% and 74%). Most also feel that young people need to leave to broaden their life experience (94% compared to 92% overall). However, reflecting the relatively high proportion of potential returners, young people in the Outer Hebrides are more likely to agree that those who leave will return when the time is right (70% versus 59% regionally) (Figure 3.3).

**Figure 3.3: Perceptions about young people who stay in the local area
(% who agree/strongly agree)**



Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Overall n=2,523, Outer Hebrides n=203)

Views of school pupils

3.8 Only a small number of school pupils in the Outer Hebrides took part in the survey (31) so care needs to be taken in interpretation of findings. These school pupils have similar post-school ambitions as those elsewhere in the region – most (73%) want to continue their education either at university (60%) or college (13%), and around a fifth (20%) want to go into employment related activities (a job, apprenticeship, work placement or self-employment).

3.9 Experiences outside of school and advice from family and friends have the greatest influence on the post-school decisions of young people in the Outer Hebrides. These school pupils were more likely than average to cite their experience of part-time jobs as an influence (59% did so compared to 44% overall). Fewer than regionally felt that they had a good understanding of the jobs that industries in the Highlands and Islands need (30% versus 38%) although a similar proportion are aware of the types of jobs available in their local area (60% compared to 61%).

3.10 The choice of subjects available at school are rated more poorly by participating school pupils from the Outer Hebrides than across the region overall. Around a fifth (19%) felt their choice is poor/very poor compared to 12% regionally, and only 10% rated their choice as very good, compared to 19% overall. Reflecting this, more think that the range of subjects available at school will limit their post-school options (53% do compared to 46% regionally).

3.11 School pupils in the Outer Hebrides were more likely than average to have access to digital delivery in school and outside school (e.g. learning centres) and access to other online learning (e.g. webinars). Some of this may be due to the e-Sgoil project run by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. However, they were less positive about the role of additional learning in helping to improve their post-school options - 55% agree it does help compared to 68% regionally.

3.12 Despite being more likely to feel that they have had limited careers advice (47% versus 41% regionally), more agreed that they have all the information they need to help them decide what to do post-school (50% versus 44%).

EDUCATION

3.13 Young people in the Outer Hebrides have mixed views on the educational provision in the Highlands and Islands. Around three-quarters agree that studying in the region is affordable for them, and they are more likely than average to strongly agree with this (45% compared to 36%). At least six in ten feel there are good opportunities to learn remotely (65% agree versus 62% regionally) and a good educational offering overall (62% compared to 59% regionally) (Figure 3.4).

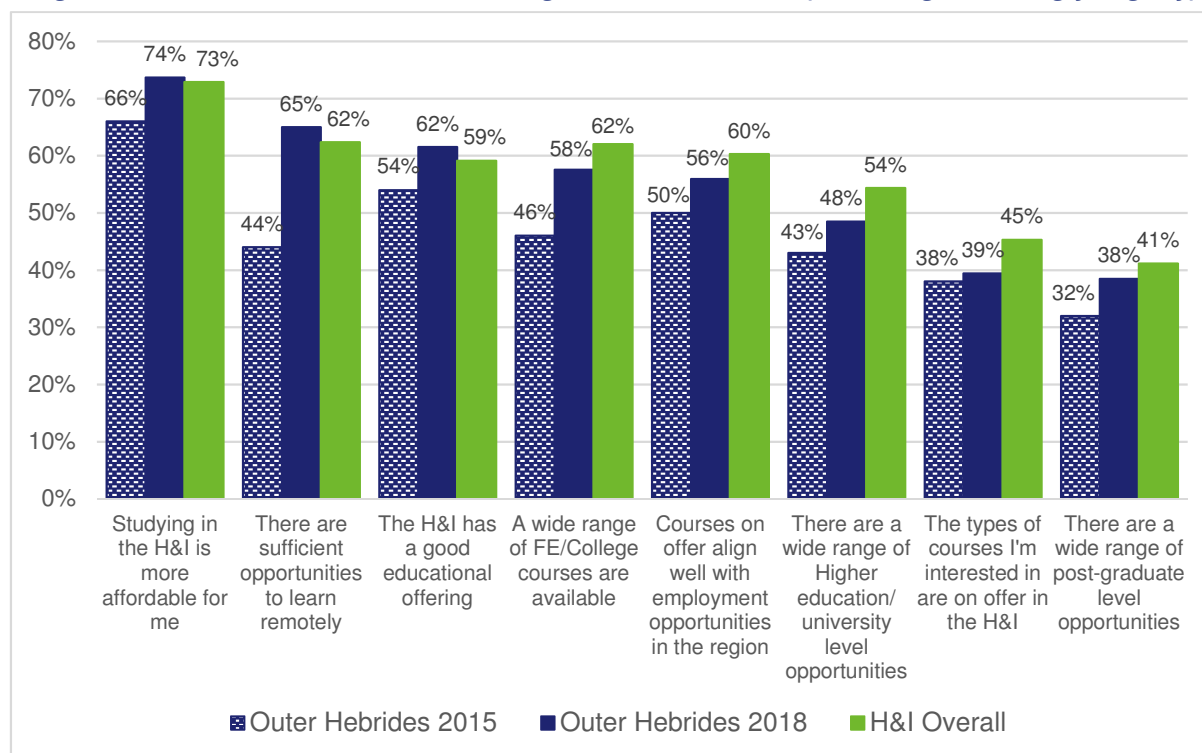
3.14 Most feel that there is a good range of FE opportunities (58%) and that courses align well with the employment opportunities in the region (56%), although they are slightly less likely than their peers across the region overall to do so (62% and 60% respectively).

3.15 Only 39% agree (and 50% disagree) that the type of course they want to study is available in the region (compared with 45% and 42% overall). These young people are also less positive than average about the range of HE opportunities (48% think there is a good range versus 54% regionally) and post-graduate level opportunities (38% versus 41%).

3.16 Views on the FE and HE provision in the Highlands and Islands have improved since 2015 on all factors explored, particularly in relation to opportunities to learn remotely (65% agree compared to 44% in 2015) and the range of FE courses (58%, up from 46%) (Figure 3.3). This reflects the regional trend where perceptions have also improved on all aspects tested.

3.17 Young people in Lewis and Harris are more positive than those from Uist and Barra about all aspects of FE and HE in the region explored. Around two-thirds (69%) of those from Lewis and Harris agree that the region has a good educational offering overall versus 45% of those from Uist and Barra.

Figure 3.4: Views on FE and HE in the Highlands and Islands (% who agree strongly/slightly)



Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Overall n=2,262, Outer Hebrides n=170)

3.18 Offering their course of choice, subject specialisation and strong links to industry have the greatest influence on young peoples' choice of where to study. Those in the Outer Hebrides are less likely than average to feel that colleges and universities in the region offer the course they want to study (51% compared to 57% regionally), specialise in their chosen subject (46% versus 52%) or have strong links to industry (68% compared to 73% overall). Despite this, most feel they can study locally, although this is lower than reported regionally (80% compared to 86%).

3.19 Young people in the Outer Hebrides are more likely than their peers across the region to say they are aware of Modern Apprenticeships (88% are compared to 84% regionally), think they are effective routes into employment (82% versus 77%) and agree that they are accessible to them (55% versus 48% overall) (Table 3.1).

3.20 Awareness of Graduate and Foundation Apprenticeships and student placements is lower than that for Modern Apprenticeships, and they are less likely to be perceived as accessible. Views on these programmes amongst young people in the Outer Hebrides are in line with the regional picture and indicate that more needs to be done to improve awareness and encourage participation.

Table 3.1: Views on Apprenticeships and placements - young people in the Outer Hebrides

| | % who are aware | % who agree it is an effective route into employment | % agreeing the are very/quite accessible |
|----------------------------|-----------------|--|--|
| Modern Apprenticeships | 88% | 82% | 55% |
| Graduate Apprenticeships | 60% | 63% | 24% |
| Foundation Apprenticeships | 63% | 57% | 34% |
| Student placements | * | 77% | 46% |
| Graduate placements | * | * | 27% |

Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Outer Hebrides n=183)

Note: * question not asked for this type of placement

EMPLOYMENT

3.21 In terms of long-term employment aspirations, most young people in the Outer Hebrides want to work full-time (75%), higher than reported regionally (71%). Fewer than average aspire to self-employment (16% versus 19% overall), although this masks a greater appetite for self-employment amongst those in Uist and Barra than in Lewis and Harris (25% versus 11%).

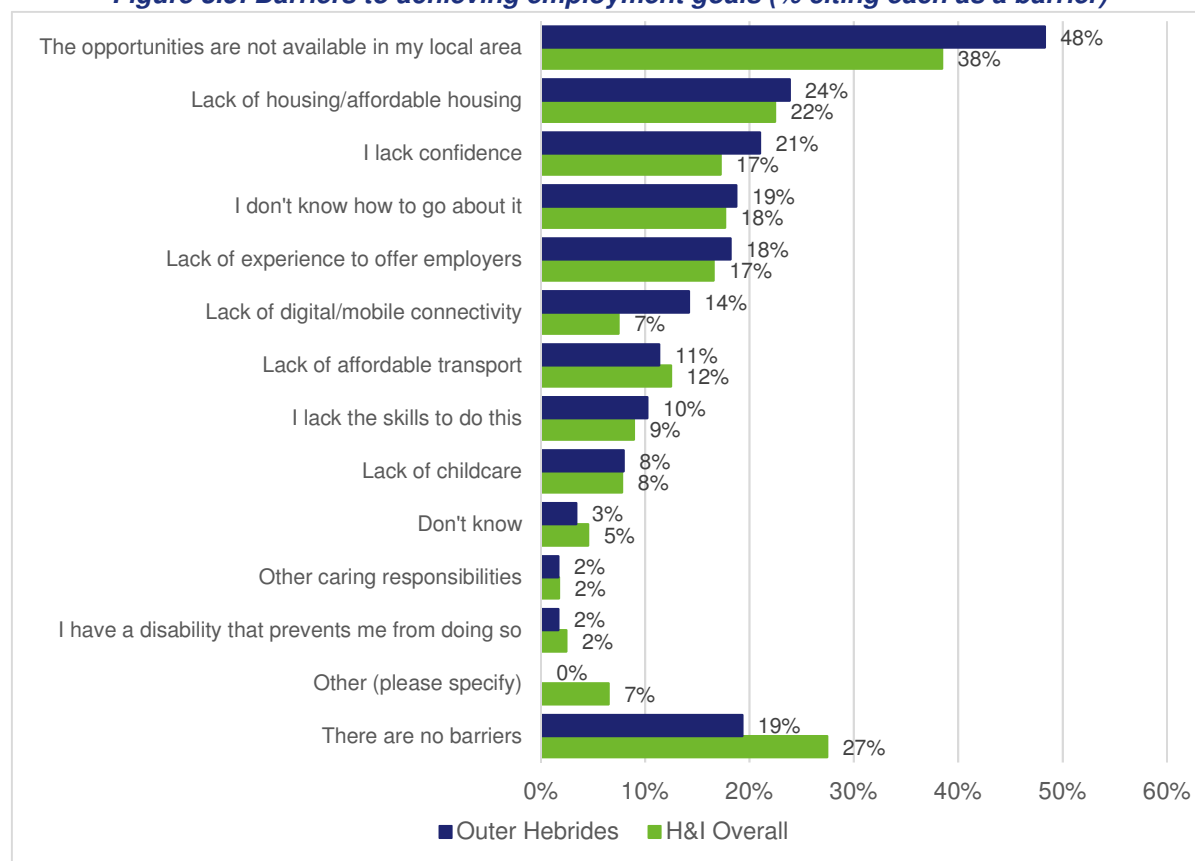
3.22 More young people in the Outer Hebrides than regionally stated an interest in starting up a business (57% compared to 53% overall) and felt that they have the ideas to do so (49% versus 44% regionally). However, reflecting the regional perspective, fewer feel they have the confidence (34% and 36% regionally), know-how (34% and 37%) and access to finance (18% and 17%) to do so.

3.23 Young people in the Outer Hebrides are the most likely in the Highlands and Islands to perceive barriers to achieving their employment goals – 81% do compared to 73% regionally. A lack of local opportunities was the main barrier cited, and this was more significant for those in the Outer Hebrides (48% agreed compared to 38% regionally), Caithness and Sutherland (48%) and Argyll and the Islands (47%) (Figure 3.5).

3.24 Other barriers cited reflected those reported elsewhere in the Highlands and Islands. A quarter (24%) highlighted a lack of affordable housing, and around a fifth mentioned lack of confidence, know-how or experience as barriers to employment. Twice as many young people in the Outer Hebrides than regionally cite digital/mobile connectivity as a barrier (14% versus 7%).

3.25 While there was little sub-area variation in terms of the existence of barriers in achieving employment goals (82% in Uist and Barra and 80% in Lewis and Harris), and while the types of challenges faced are the same, higher proportions in Uist and Barra highlighted a lack of local opportunities (52% compared to 47%) and a lack of affordable housing (33% compared to 19%).

Figure 3.5: Barriers to achieving employment goals (% citing each as a barrier)

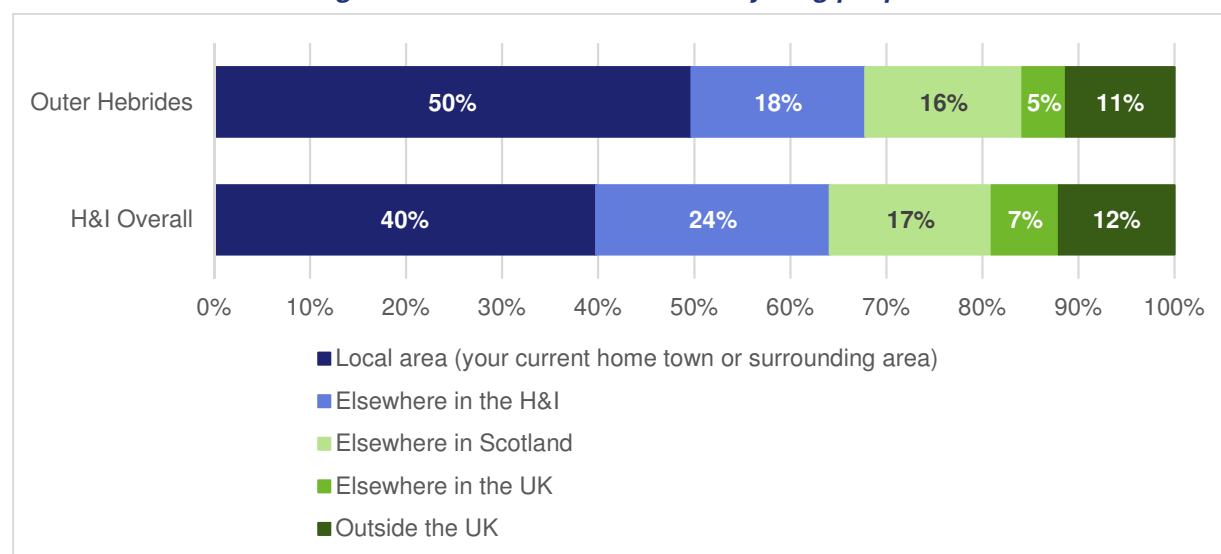


Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Overall n=2,106, Outer Hebrides n=176)*

3.26 While 60% of young people in the Outer Hebrides see themselves as living in the region in the next 10 years, more still (68%) expressed a desire to work somewhere in the Highlands and Islands in future – a marked increase from 50% in 2015. Within this, they are more likely than their peers regionally to want to work in their local area (50% compared to 40%), and less likely to aspire to work elsewhere in the region (18% compared to 40%), and less likely to aspire to work elsewhere in the region (18% compared to 24%) (Figure 3.6).

3.27 Though both were very high, a greater proportion of young people from Uist and Barra than from Lewis and Harris want to work somewhere in the Highlands and Islands in future (72% and 66%). For both, there is a much stronger desire to work in their local area (51% from Lewis and Harris and 47% from Uist and Barra) than elsewhere in the region (15% and 25% respectively).

Figure 3.6: Ideal work locations of young people



Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Overall n=2,129, Outer Hebrides n=177)

3.28 In terms of what young people look for in a job, the views of those living in the Outer Hebrides are broadly consistent with elsewhere in the region. They are most concerned about having a steady job (79% cited this as essential compared to 71% regionally) and a good work-life balance (72% versus 70%). This was followed by having opportunities to progress (60% and 61%), an understanding employer (58% and 59%), and good terms, conditions and benefits (56% and 55%).

3.29 Young people in the Outer Hebrides are less likely than their peers across the region overall to cite a good salary as an essential factor in a job, although it is important to around half (51% compared to 56% regionally).

3.30 While a steady job and good work-life balance were the most important factors sought by those both in Lewis and Harris and in Uist and Barra, the latter were less likely to cite opportunities to progress (52% compared to 65%), good learning/training opportunities (37% compared to 52%) and flexible hours (15% versus 33%) as essential. However, they placed greater importance on a good salary (55% versus 49%) and good terms, conditions and benefits (60% versus 54%).

3.31 Young people in the Outer Hebrides are less likely to feel that what they are looking for in a job (at least to some extent) is available locally - 49% agree while 44% disagree compared with 58% and 33% respectively for the Highlands and Islands overall. A higher proportion than average feel that the employment factors they seek are available in the Highlands and Islands (55% compared to 59%).

COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

3.32 Community participation is higher amongst young people in the Outer Hebrides than across the Highlands and Islands overall (70% versus 62%). While the participation rate fell by nine percentage points regionally between 2015 and 2018, it remained steady in the Outer Hebrides (71% in 2015).

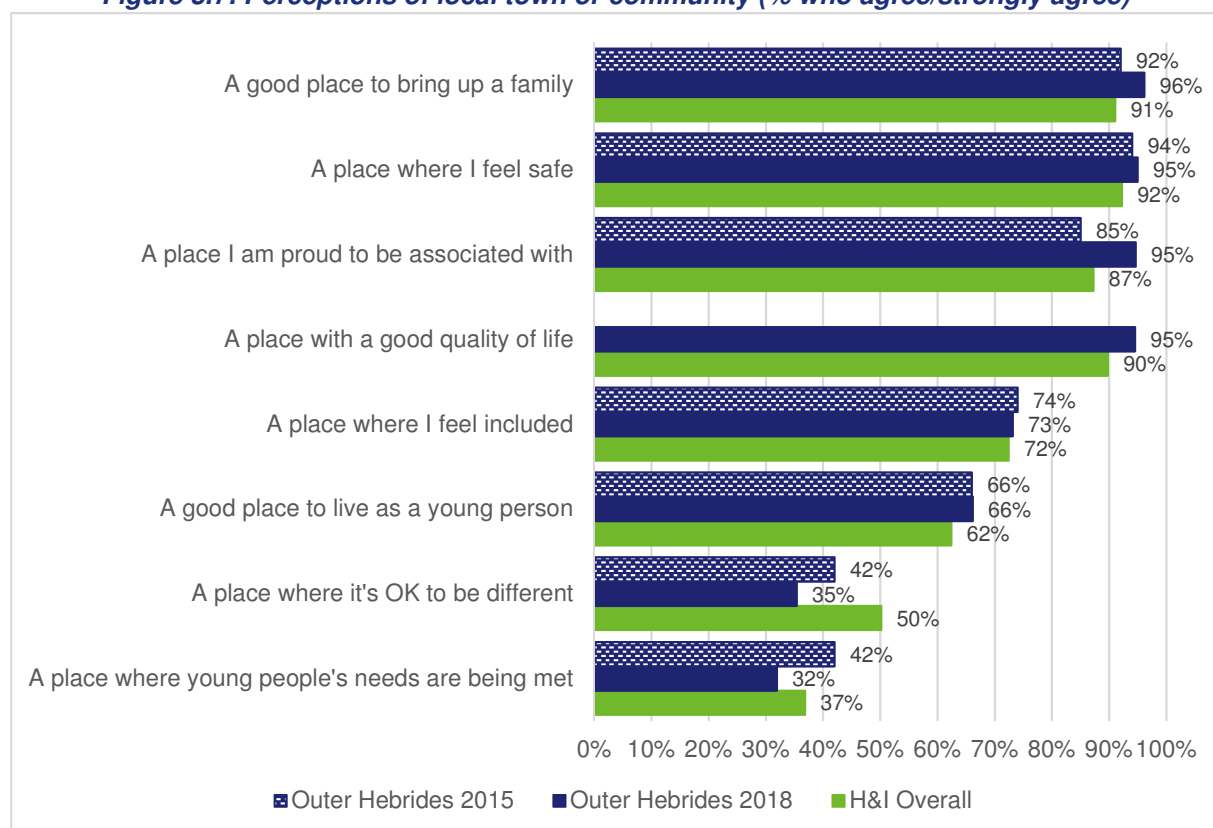
3.33 Community participation is higher among young people from Uist and Barra (73% compared with 69% in Lewis and Harris), although the breadth of participation is broader in Lewis and Harris. They are more likely to state that they volunteer for a charity/social enterprise/community group (42% compared to 27% in Uist and Barra and 29% regionally), are a board member of a local community/charitable organisation (17% versus 5% and 7%) and participate in local politics (14% versus 11% and 8% overall).

3.34 As in 2015, young people in the Outer Hebrides have some very strong and positive views of their local town/community (Figure 3.7). Levels of pride are particularly high and have increased markedly since 2015 - 95% are proud to be associated with their community, up from 85% in 2015 and above the average of 87% regionally.

3.35 Almost all feel it is a good place to bring up a family (96%), a place where they feel safe (95%) and a place with a good quality of life (95%). Reflecting the high levels of participation, around three-quarters (73%) feel included in their local community (72% regionally).

3.36 However, there has been a fall in the proportion agreeing that their local area is a place where their needs are being met (from 42% to 32% in the Outer Hebrides and 41% to 37% regionally). Additionally, only 35% of young people in the Outer Hebrides feel it is a place where it is OK to be different, lower than the 50% regionally and a decline from 42% in 2015.

Figure 3.7: Perceptions of local town or community (% who agree/strongly agree)



Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Overall n=1,965, Outer Hebrides=165)*

Note: 'a place with a good quality of life' was not asked in 2015

3.37 Levels of pride are particularly high amongst young people in Uist and Barra – 98% are proud to be associated with their community compared to 93% of those in Lewis and Harris. They are also more likely to see their community as a place where they feel included (84% versus 68% in Lewis and Harris), and to feel that it is OK to be different (46% versus 31%).

3.38 Young people in the Outer Hebrides have similar levels of engagement to their peers across the region with most of the arts, leisure and cultural activities explored. However, more participate in outdoor activities (51% use frequently/very frequently versus 45% regionally), outdoor attractions (48% versus 39%), local events/festivals (43% versus 36%) and evening classes (14% versus 8%).

3.39 Most young people in the Outer Hebrides perceive barriers to accessing arts, leisure and cultural activities, and this reflects the experiences of young people across the region overall. They are least likely to cite barriers to participating in outdoor attractions (42% do, 49% regionally) and outdoor activities (48% and 49%), and most likely to perceive barriers to accessing the theatre (76% versus 73%), evening classes (74% versus 73%), social venues and clubs (72% versus 64%) and live music events (71% compared to 70%).

3.40 For young people in the Outer Hebrides, a lack of availability and variety are perceived as greater barriers to participation in arts, leisure and cultural activities than cost and transport. However, cost is cited as the greatest barrier to attending gyms/leisure centres and local events and festivals.

3.41 Barriers to accessing leisure/cultural facilities are more prevalent for those in Uist and Barra than in Lewis and Harris. The numbers reporting barriers were more than 10 percentage points higher for each of gym/leisure centre, theatre, sports facilities and clubs, and social venues and clubs.

3.42 Lack of availability and quality are the main barriers young people in Uist and Barra face. Lack of variety in terms of live music venues and social venues and clubs was more of an issue for those in Lewis and Harris.

MAXIMISING OPPORTUNITIES

Compromises

3.43 Along with young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, those living in the Outer Hebrides are the most likely across the region to think that compromises are a necessary part of life in the Highlands and Islands – 92% do compared to the regional average of 87%. This is higher amongst young people in Uist and Barra (96%) than Lewis and Harris (90%).

3.44 A greater proportion of young people in the Outer Hebrides than regionally feel compromises are required on all factors explored, except for quality of life and transport (where views are in line with the overall findings). Fewer job opportunities is cited most frequently as an area of compromise (by 84% compared to 76% overall), with transport also being a critical theme (identified by 78% compared with 79% regionally). Other significant variations include mobile connectivity (59% versus 44% overall), working below their qualification/skills level (50% versus 40%) and digital connectivity (46% versus 37%).

3.45 Quality of life is valued by young people in the Outer Hebrides and most do not see this as an area of compromise (9% do so compared with 12% regionally).

3.46 More young people in Uist and Barra than in Lewis and Harris feel that people have to compromise on all factors explored (except for quality of life, cited by 9% in each area). Most notably, they are more likely to feel that people have to compromise on working below their qualification and skills level (61% versus 45%), digital connectivity (57% versus 40%), the choice of courses at college/university (76% compared to 61%), transport (87% compared to 73%) and access to events, services and leisure facilities (78% versus 64%).

3.47 Respondents were asked about the types of compromises they have made or would be prepared to make to live, work or study in the region (Table 3.2). As with regionally, young people in the Outer Hebrides are most likely to say they have already compromised on transport (65% versus 61% overall).

3.48 Reflecting views on general compromises required, higher proportions of young people in the Outer Hebrides report having already compromised on mobile connectivity (60% compared to 45% overall), digital connectivity (48% versus 37%), career progression opportunities (38% versus 31%) and salary (34% compared to 29%).

3.49 As with regionally, employment factors are important to young people in the Outer Hebrides. Around a third would not be prepared to compromise on career progression opportunities (34% compared to 39% regionally), job opportunities (32% versus 33%), working below their qualifications/skills level (31% versus 37%) or salary (29% compared to 36%) to work in the region.

Table 3.2: Making compromises to live, work or study in the Highlands and Islands

| | I have already made | I would be prepared to make | I would not be prepared to make | I do not think this compromise exists |
|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Accepting that transport and travel is more difficult and expensive | 65% | 19% | 11% | 4% |
| Having limited mobile connectivity | 60% | 14% | 11% | 14% |
| Having limited access to amenities, events, services and leisure facilities | 50% | 27% | 10% | 13% |
| Having limited digital connectivity | 48% | 18% | 18% | 16% |
| Having fewer job opportunities and choices | 40% | 20% | 32% | 8% |
| Having fewer opportunities for career progression | 38% | 20% | 34% | 7% |
| Settling for a lower salary | 34% | 25% | 29% | 12% |
| Having fewer courses on offer at college/university | 30% | 22% | 38% | 10% |
| Working below my qualification and skills level | 24% | 30% | 31% | 15% |
| Living in accommodation that doesn't fully meet my needs | 19% | 19% | 25% | 37% |
| Having a lower quality of life | 10% | 10% | 28% | 51% |

Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Outer Hebrides n=135)

Enabling Opportunities

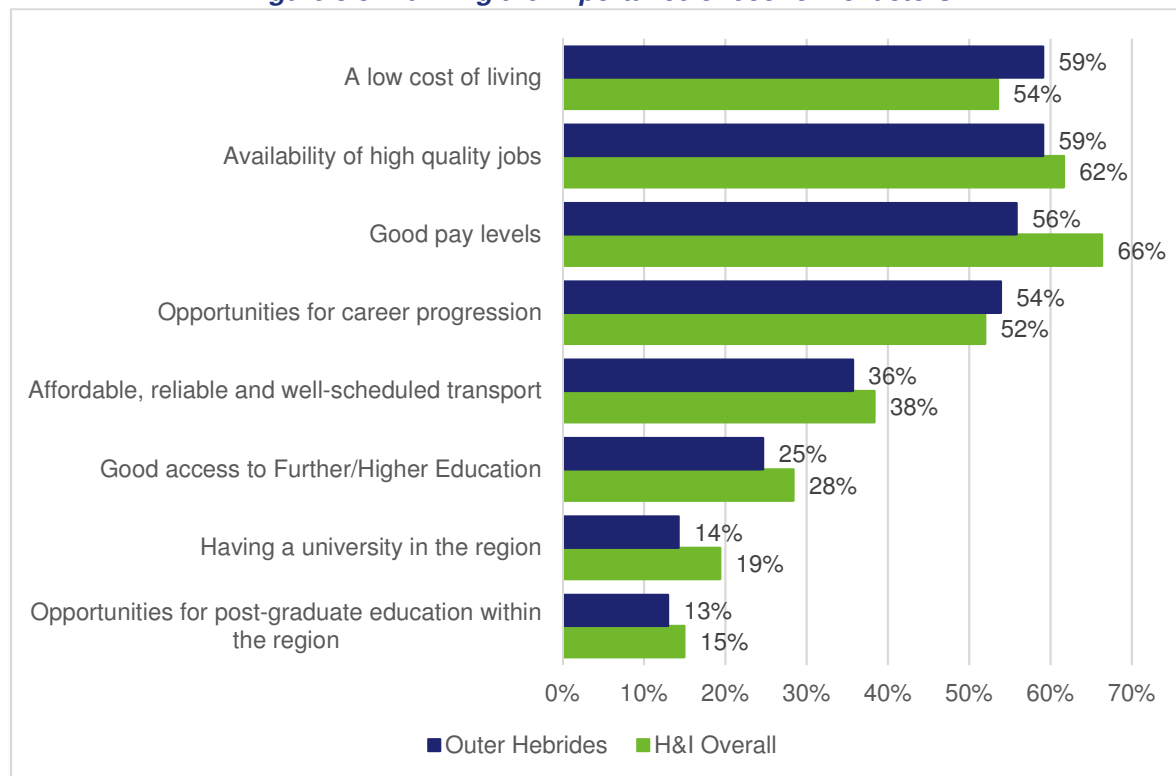
3.50 Young people in the Outer Hebrides have similar views to those across the region overall on the economic and social factors required to make the Highlands and Islands an attractive place to live, work and study. High quality jobs were seen as most important (cited as essential by 68% and 66% regionally). This was followed by career progression opportunities (61%), good access to FE/HE (61%), good pay levels (59%) and affordable, reliable and well-scheduled transport (59%).

3.51 Young people in the Outer Hebrides were less likely to see having a university as essential in making the Highlands and Islands a more attractive place for young people to live in - 37% thought so compared to 46% overall.

3.52 Reflecting views on the essential economic factors, a low cost of living, high quality jobs, good pay levels and opportunities for career progression were ranked as the most important economic factors in making the Highlands and Islands a more attractive place to live for young people in the Outer Hebrides (Figure 3.8).

3.53 While these were also the top four factors regionally, fewer young people in the Outer Hebrides than across the region overall cited good pay levels as important (56% compared to 66% overall), while more valued a low cost of living (59% versus 54%).

Figure 3.8: Ranking the importance of economic factors



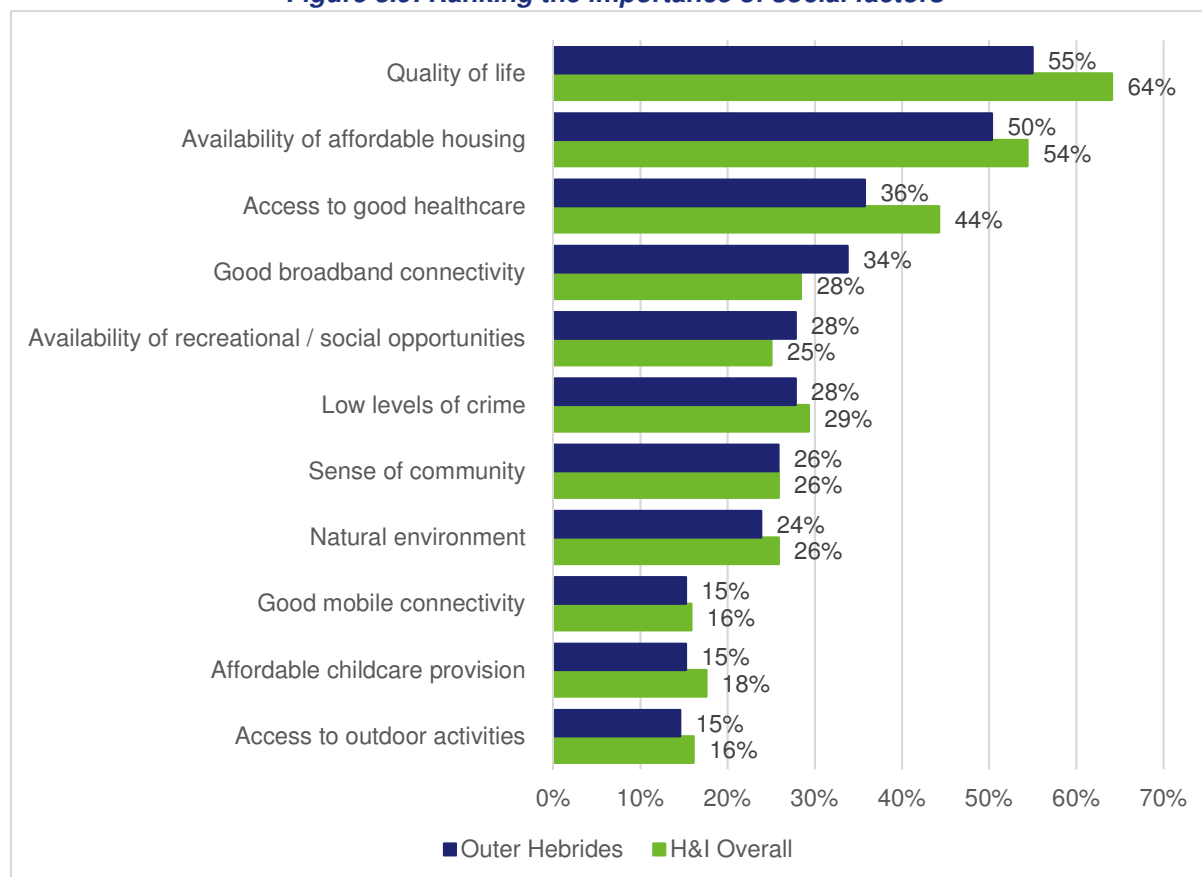
Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (H&I Overall n=1,828, Outer Hebrides n=154)

3.54 While young people in the Outer Hebrides identified the same types of social factors as essential components of regional attractiveness as elsewhere, the proportions doing so were higher. Most cited access to good healthcare (79%), availability of affordable housing (77%) and quality of life (76%) as essential (72%, 70% and 75% did so regionally).

3.55 Young people in the Outer Hebrides were notably more likely than average to view good broadband connectivity (61% compared to 52% regionally), availability of recreational/social opportunities (54% versus 45%), a sense of community (50% versus 38%) and good mobile connectivity (49% compared to 42%) as essential for making the region an attractive place to live.

3.56 When ranking the importance of social factors, quality of life, affordable housing and good healthcare were the top three aspects cited, albeit by a lower proportion of young people in the Outer Hebrides (55%, 50% and 36% respectively) than regionally (64%, 54% and 44%). A greater proportion than regionally ranked broadband as a key factor in enhancing regional attractiveness (34% versus 28%).

Figure 3.9: Ranking the importance of social factors



Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (H&I Overall n=1,805, Outer Hebrides n=151)*

3.57 Around half of young people in the Outer Hebrides (52%) think that the Highlands and Islands is a better place to live now than it was five years ago (54% regionally). Around a third (34%) were unsure and 14% did not think the region had improved. More young people in Lewis and Harris (56%) than Uist and Barra (44%) feel the region is now a better place to live.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

3.58 Reflecting findings from 2015, young people in the Outer Hebrides have very strong levels of attachment to their local area. Levels of pride and community engagement are high, particularly amongst those from Uist and Barra. Almost all feel their local area is safe, a good place to bring up a family and offers a good quality of life. Most want to stay or return if they can. But, as with regionally, more needs to be done to ensure the needs of young people can be met.

3.59 As in 2015, the desire to work in their local area is high. However, a lack of local opportunities is a significant barrier and one that is felt most acutely by young people in the Outer Hebrides (along with those in Caithness and Sutherland), and by those in Uist and Barra in particular. While views on the educational offering in the region have improved since 2015, young people in the Outer Hebrides tend to be less positive about the range of HE and post-graduate level opportunities than elsewhere in the region and many feel the course they want to study is not available in the region.

3.60 Compromises are considered a necessary part of life in the Highlands and Islands. For those in the Outer Hebrides, compromises are particularly marked in relation to employment and digital and mobile connectivity. Cost of living, high quality jobs, good pay levels and opportunities for career progression are viewed as the most important economic factors in making the region attractive, and quality of life, affordable housing and access to good healthcare the most important social factors. A sense of community is also important to those in the Outer Hebrides.

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