

ENABLING THE NEXT GENERATION

Young People and the Highlands and Islands
Maximising Opportunities:
LOCHABER, SKYE AND WESTER ROSS



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HEADLINE FINDINGS

Staying and leaving

- Since 2015 the proportion of young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross identifying as committed stayers has risen markedly from 31% to 45% (50% in Skye and Lochalsh). The proportion of committed leavers fell from 39% to 22%.
- The proportion of committed stayers is significantly lower in Wester Ross (33%). However, the proportion of potential returners is markedly higher (20% compared with 2% for Skye and Lochalsh and 8% of Lochaber).
- Views on those who stay in the local area are general positive, with most feeling they are lucky to be able to do so. However, there is still a perception that young people need to leave to access training or employment opportunities or to get on in life.

Education

- Views on the regional educational offer are generally favourable among young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross (less so for the latter), and they have improved considerably since 2015. Notable improvements relate to the range of HE opportunities on offer, opportunities to learn remotely, alignment of courses with employment opportunities and affordability of study. However, views still lag those of their regional counterparts in terms of availability of FE courses and remote learning opportunities.
- Awareness of apprenticeships (particularly Graduate and Foundation) is lower among young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross and they are less likely to perceive them as effective routes into employment.

Employment

- Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross has the highest proportion of young people in the region that aspire to self-employment, although access to finance is a key barrier. Full-time employment is the main goal for most.
- Young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are more likely than regionally to perceive barriers to achieving their employment goals, particularly in relation to a lack of employment opportunities and a lack of housing/affordable housing with the latter being a particular challenge for those from Skye and Lochalsh.
- Young people from Lochaber and Skye and Lochalsh are more likely than average to want to work in their local area, although those from Wester Ross are less likely to want to do so.
- The employment factors young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross seek reflect those sought elsewhere (good work-life balance and a steady job). However, fewer than regionally think they are available locally, with this being most marked among those from Wester Ross.

Community and culture

- Community participation is higher than average amongst young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, and is particularly high amongst those from Skye and Lochalsh and Wester Ross.
- Views on their local community are generally positive and have improved on most factors since 2015. Levels of pride and inclusion are higher than average, although as with regionally, there has been a decline in the proportion of young people who feel their needs are being met locally.
- Despite broadly similar levels of usage, a higher proportion of young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross report barriers to accessing amenities and services than is the case across the Highlands and Islands. Lack of availability is the most common barrier cited.

Maximising opportunities

- Young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are amongst the most likely in the region to feel that compromises are a necessary part of life. Key compromises relate to transport and job opportunities. They are also more likely than regionally to cite housing and availability of FE/HE.
- The factors required to make the Highlands and Islands attractive to young people reflect those identified regionally. Employment-related aspects and cost of living are the most important economic factors and quality of life, availability of affordable housing and healthcare the top three social factors. A sense of community is also important to those from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross.

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 Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross 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 those living in Lochaber, those in Skye and Lochalsh and those in Wester Ross.

RESEARCH STUDY APPROACH

1.3 The research study consisted of an in-depth survey of young people both within 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 268 young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross participated in the research, of which 43% (114) are from Lochaber, 35% (95) are from Skye and Lochalsh and 23% (62) are from Wester Ross. In terms of age, there is a fairly even split, as 33% of the respondents are 15-18 years old, 37% are 19-24 and 30% are aged 25-30. Just under 70% of respondents are female, whilst 31% 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 in 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 LOCHABER, SKYE AND WESTER ROSS CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

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

OVERVIEW OF LOCHABER, SKYE AND WESTER ROSS

2.2 Covering much of the western Highlands, Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross is a large geographic area of approximately 10,000km² and, with a total population of 39,339 in 2018, has a very low population density of approximately four inhabitants per km². The population is very sparse in some areas, with a number of extremely remote communities. In some areas, population density is amongst the lowest in Scotland.

2.3 Lochaber covers the most southern part of the western Highlands, bordering Argyll to the south and Wester Ross to the north. Lochaber holds around half the population of the area with 19,856 residents. Its main population centre is Fort William, which has a population of just over 10,000.

2.4 Skye and Lochalsh is home to a third (34%) of the population (13,223 residents), its largest settlements (Portree and Broadford) having populations of approximately 2,500 and 1,000 respectively.

2.5 Wester Ross is a geographically large, sparsely populated area bordering Lochaber to the south and Sutherland to the north. With around 6,260 residents, it holds 16% of the total population of Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross. Ullapool, its largest town, has a population of approximately 1,500.

2.6 Transport connectivity within Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross is variable with some parts better served than others. Trains offering connection with Glasgow and Edinburgh via the West Highland line are available as far north as Mallaig in Lochaber (from which a ferry service is available to Skye). Kyle of Lochalsh is served by trains running to and from Inverness, from which further connections north and south are available. Ferries to the Outer Hebrides are available from Ullapool, Mallaig and Uig in Skye, and to Mull from Kilchoan and Lochaline in Lochaber.

2.7 With some of the Scotland's most stunning scenery, the local economy of Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross is dominated by tourism. Ben Nevis in Lochaber holds the acclaim of the UK's highest mountain. Lochaber also hosts two of Scotland's five ski resorts and a range of other adventure tourism opportunities, hence its title as the outdoor capital of the UK. Skye, the largest island in the Inner Hebrides, boasts the Cuillin mountain range, a world class destination for walkers and climbers, along with a plethora of historical and other attractions. The iconic NC500 traverses much of Wester Ross. As well as the growth opportunities afforded by the outdoor activity sector, higher-end food and accommodation markets, high quality natural produce, and creative industries all contribute significantly to the area's economy.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE²

Population and migration trends³

2.8 In 2018 Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross had a population of 39,339, amounting to eight per cent of the total population of the Highlands and Islands. Of this 15% (6,063) were estimated to be young

² In this section, data for the Highlands and Islands and/or Highland has been used where it is not available at sub-regional level (i.e. for Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross).

³ 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).

people aged 15-30, lower than across the region (16%) and nationally (20%). From 2011 to 2018 the proportion of 15-30-year olds increased by 2%, whilst the total population remained stable (up 0.5%).

2.9 Across the Highland Council area (Highland) there was a total net in-migration in 2017-18. However, there was a net out-migration of young people aged 15-19. Population projections also show that the number of 15-30-year olds living in Highland is expected to fall by 10% between 2018 and 2041. This is below the decline projected regionally (-13%) but higher than that expected nationally (-6%).

Education

2.10 School leaver attainment in the Highland Council area tends to be below the national average. The majority (96%) of school leavers in 2017-18 went on to positive destinations (94% nationally). School leavers in Highland were less likely than nationally to go on to Further or Higher Education (20% and 35% respectively compared to 27% and 41% across Scotland). However, as with elsewhere in the region they are more likely to go into employment (37% versus 23% nationally)⁴.

2.11 FE and HE provision in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross is delivered through West Highland College and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig. West Highland College has ten college centres across the West Highlands and provides a variety of courses across a range of subjects. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, based on the Isle of Skye, is a specialist Gaelic college providing a range of courses around various elements of Gaelic language and culture. All course delivery is through the medium of Gaelic.

2.12 In 2017-18 there were approximately 8,000 HE and 11,000 FE students from Highland studying at universities or colleges in Scotland. The majority (83%) of FE students from Highland are studying within the Highlands and Islands, with most enrolled at institutions within the Highland Council area (81%). This mirrors the regional trend, with 80% of FE students from the Highlands and Islands studying within the region. FE students from Highland aged 20-24 were more likely to be studying outside the region than those aged 16-24 or 25+ (24% compared to 16% and 20% respectively).

2.13 Around half (51%) of HE students from Highland were enrolled at institutions outside of the Highlands and Islands, slightly lower than the regional average (54%). Just under two-fifths (38% versus 34% overall) were studying in the region, most (36%) within the Highland Council area. Around one in ten (11%) were undertaking Open University learning (12% across the Highlands and Islands overall)⁵.

2.14 Younger HE students from Highland were more likely to be studying outside of the region than older students - 62% of those aged 16-19 and 66% of those aged 20-24 are doing so compared to 28% of those aged 25+. The latter were more likely to be studying locally (46% compared to 32% of 16-19-year olds and 28% of those aged 20-24) or through the Open University (22%, 4% and 5% respectively).

Employment and economic activity⁶

2.15 In 2018, the employment rate (79.1%) in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross was above both the regional (78.9%) and national (74.1%) rates. The economic activity rate was also higher at 82.9% compared to 81.3% regionally and 77.4% nationally. Comparative data for 16-24-year olds in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross is not available. However, across the Highlands and Islands, the employment and economic activity rates for 16-24-year olds (67.1% and 71.6% respectively) were both above the national rates (57.2% and 63.3%).

2.16 In 2018, Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross had a lower rate of economic inactivity (17.1%) than regionally (18.7%) and nationally (22.6%). While data is not available for young people aged 16-24 in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, the unemployment and economic inactivity rates for those aged 16-24 in the Highlands and Islands (6.3% and 28.4% respectively) are lower than the national averages (9.6% and 36.7%).

⁴ Scottish Government School leaver attainment and initial destinations: statistics, 2017-18

⁵ Analysis is based on data from the Scottish Funding Council for 2017-18

⁶ Data in this section is from the Annual Population Survey January to December 2018.

3 KEY FINDINGS - LOCHABER, SKYE & WESTER ROSS

INTRODUCTION

3.1 This chapter provides the key findings from the survey of young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross. 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 area relative to the regional average and variations between those living in the three constituent areas of *Lochaber, Skye and Lochalsh*, and *Wester Ross*.

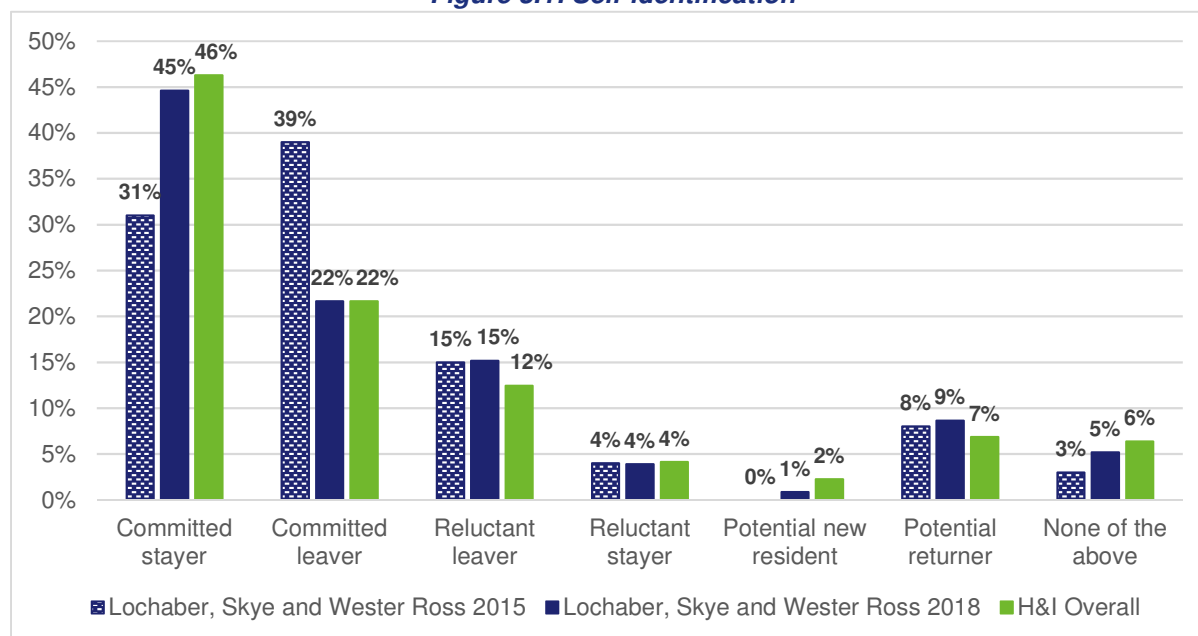
STAYING AND LEAVING

3.2 Young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross have similar plans for staying and leaving the Highlands and Islands to those living elsewhere in the region. Forty-five percent identify as committed stayers and 22% as committed leavers, compared with 46% and 22% overall.

3.3 In line with the regional trend, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of committed stayers since 2015, (up 14 percentage points) and an even larger decrease in the proportion of committed leavers (down 17 percentage points). Regionally, the proportion of committed stayers increased by 10 percentage points and the share of committed leavers fell by 12 percentage points.

3.4 There are some differences within the area. Wester Ross has a significantly lower proportion of committed stayers at 33% compared to 50% for Skye and Lochalsh and 46% for Lochaber. This is in part explained by the higher proportion of potential returners from Wester Ross, which is 20% compared to 2% for Skye and Lochalsh and 8% for Lochaber.

Figure 3.1: Self-identification



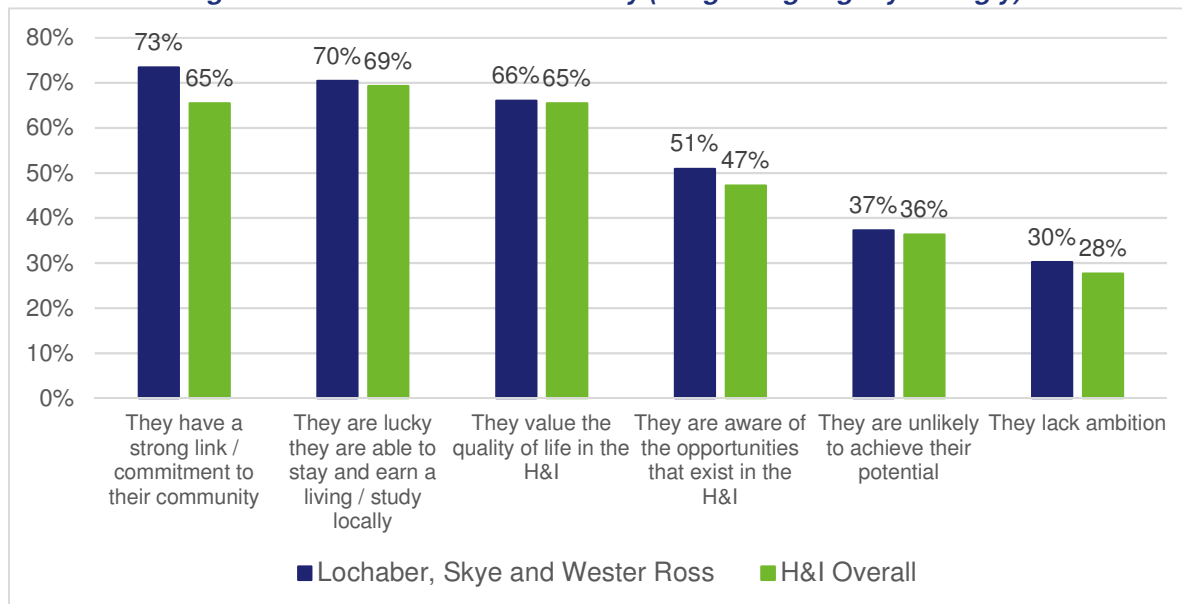
Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018* (LSWR n=231, H&I Overall n=2,539)

3.5 Young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are slightly more likely than average to plan to live in the Highlands and Islands in ten years' time - just over a third (34%) in their local area and a further quarter (25%) elsewhere in the region compared to 32% and 23% overall.

3.6 Those in Skye and Lochalsh are more likely to see themselves living in their local area (37%) or the wider region (31%) than those from Lochaber (34% and 23%) or Wester Ross (30% and 20%).

3.7 Views on those who stay in their local area are generally positive with most agreeing that they are lucky to be able to do so (70% compared to 69% regionally). Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are more likely than average to feel that those who stay have a strong link/commitment to their local area (73% versus 65%) and are aware of the opportunities in the Highlands and Islands (51% versus 47%). Less than a third (30%) feel that those who stay lack ambition, although this is slightly higher than the proportion agreeing this across the region overall (28%) (Figure 3.2).

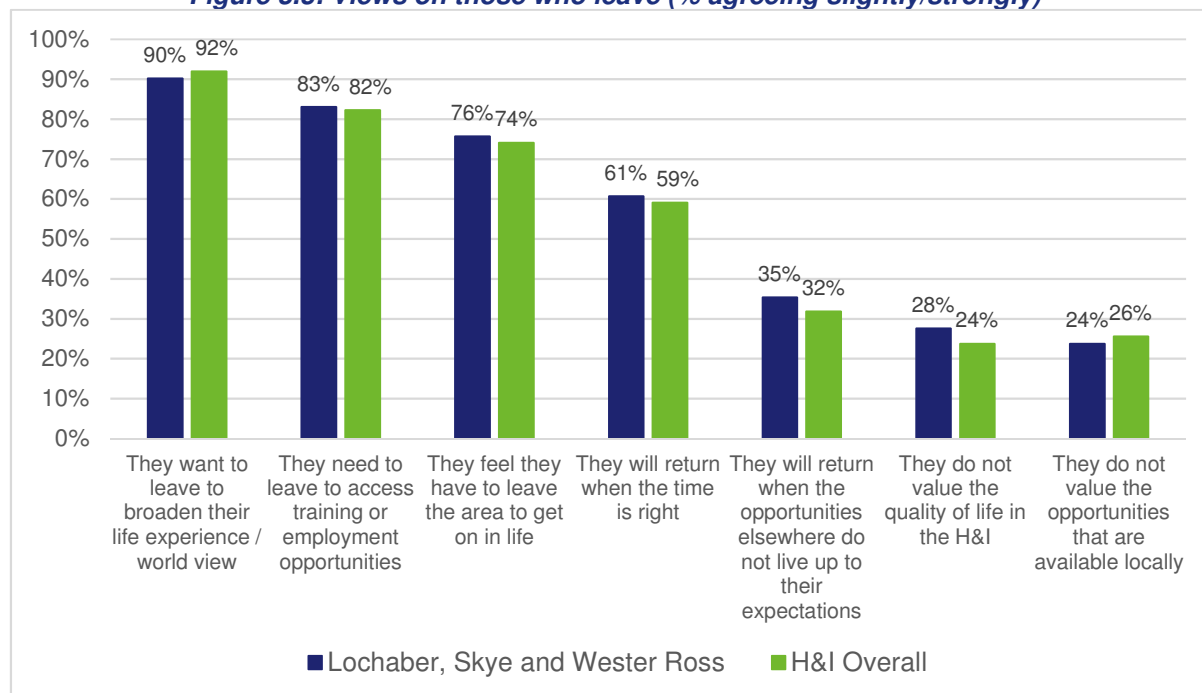
Figure 3.2: Views on those who stay (% agreeing slightly/strongly)



Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018* (LSWR n=229, H&I Overall n=2,527)

3.8 Views on those who leave are broadly in line with the perceptions of young people across the region. Most think that those who leave do so to broaden their life experience (90% and 92% regionally) rather than through lack of appreciation of the area - around half disagree that those who leave do not value the quality of life in the region (50% versus 51% regionally) or local opportunities (53% and 49%), and most feel that they will return when the time is right (61% versus 59% regionally). However, there is still a perception that young people need to leave to access training or employment opportunities (83% and 82% overall) or to get on in life (76% versus 74% regionally) (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Views on those who leave (% agreeing slightly/strongly)



Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (LSWR n=228, H&I Overall n=2,523)

Views of school pupils

3.9 In total, 59 out of 520 school pupils participating in the survey were from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross. They have similar post school ambitions to those participating across the region overall. Most want to further their education (77% compared to 74% regionally), although within this they are slightly less likely to want to go to university (54% compared to 59% regionally) and more likely to aspire to college (23% versus 15% overall). Around a fifth (20% and 19% regionally) want to go into job related activities (either employment, an apprenticeship, a work placement or self-employment).

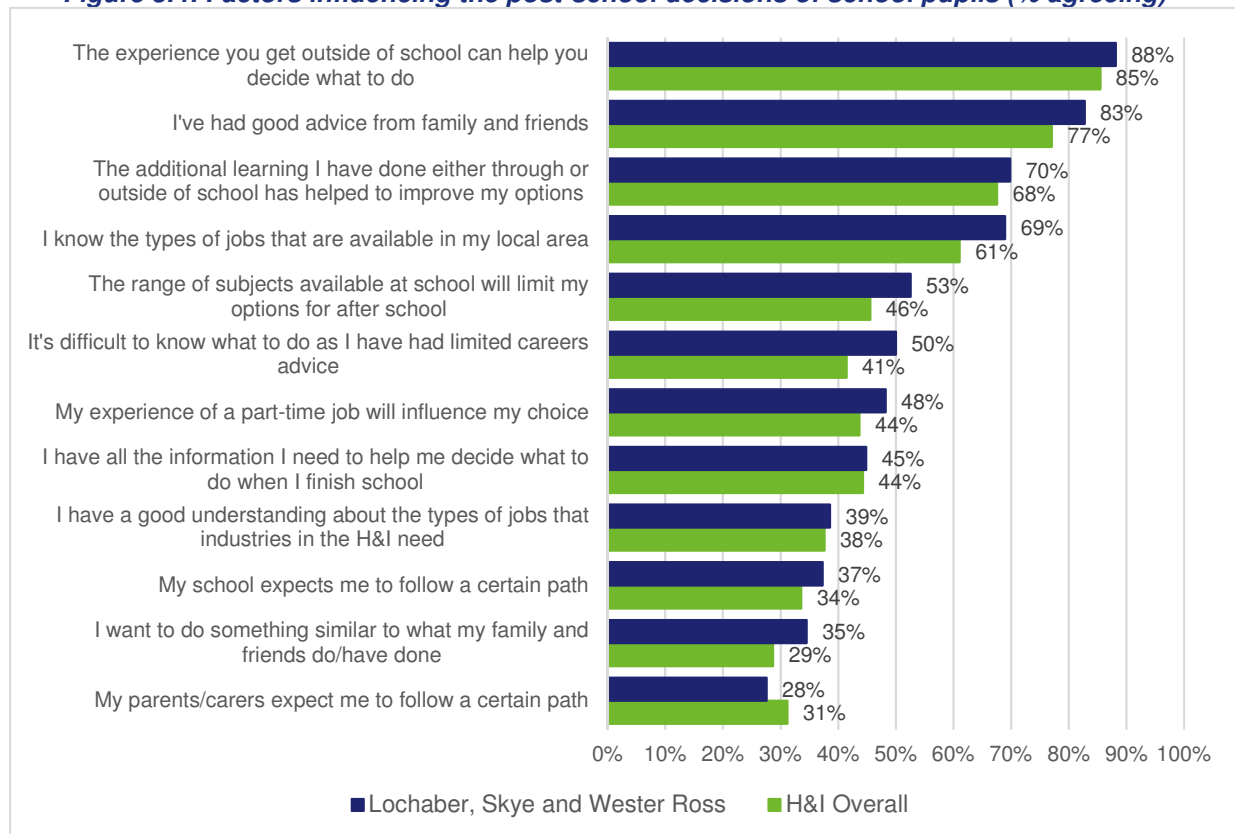
3.10 School pupils from Lochaber Skye and Wester Ross are less likely than average to agree that there is a good range of subjects available at their school (59% agree compared to 71% overall), even with greater access to digital delivery of subjects to supplement their choice. More than half (53%) feel that their subject choice will impact on their post-school options, compared to 46% regionally.

3.11 As for school pupils across the region overall, experiences outside of school (88% versus 85% regionally) and advice from family and friends (83% versus 77%) have the most influence on post-school decisions. Reflecting this, they are more likely than average to want to pursue similar options as family and friends (35% versus 29% regionally) (Figure 3.4).

3.12 Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross have a greater awareness of the types of jobs available in their local area (69% do so compared to 61% regionally), despite being more likely to feel that they have had limited careers advice (50% compared to 41% overall). They are also more likely to feel that their school expects them to follow a certain path (37% versus 34% regionally).

3.13 Around four-fifths (81%) of school pupils responding to the survey from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross have had a part-time job while at school, substantially higher than the regional average of 62%, and the highest of all areas of the Highlands and Islands.

Figure 3.4: Factors influencing the post-school decisions of school pupils (% agreeing)



Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (LSWR n=228, H&I Overall n=2,523)*

EDUCATION

3.14 Views on the regional educational offering amongst young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are generally positive, and reflecting the regional trend, have improved since 2015 (Figure 3.5). The most notable increases were in relation to the range of HE opportunities (up 17 percentage points), opportunities to learn remotely (up 14 percentage points), the alignment of courses with employment opportunities (up 12 percentage points) and the affordability of study (up 11 percentage points).

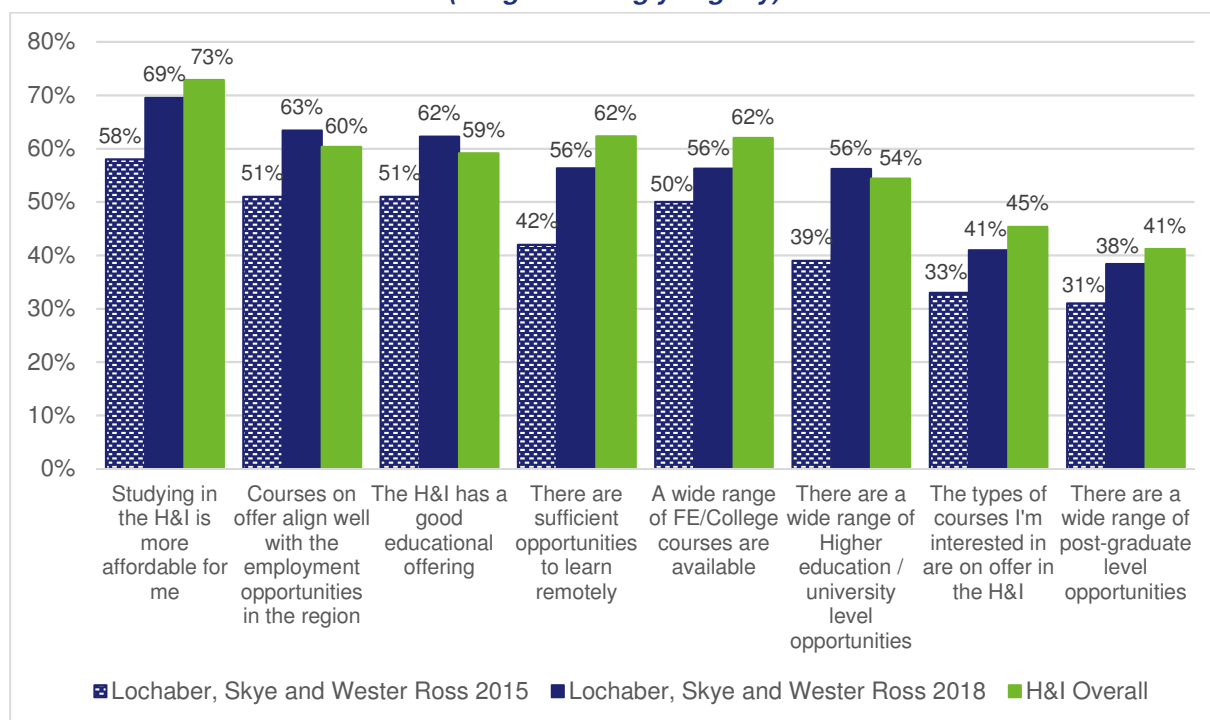
3.15 However, young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are less positive than their counterparts across the region overall about some aspects of the FE and HE offer in the Highlands and Islands (Figure 3.5). The most marked differences are in terms of the range of FE courses available (56% agree there is a wide range compared to 62% regionally) and opportunities to learn remotely (56% feel they are sufficient compared to 62% overall).

3.16 However, they are more positive than average about the overall educational offering (62% agree this is good versus 59% regionally), the range of HE opportunities (56% versus 54%) and the alignment of courses with employment opportunities (63% compared to 60%).

3.17 Only two-fifths (41%) feel that the courses they want to study are on offer in the region, and this was also low regionally (45% agreed overall). Offering their course of choice is the main factor driving young peoples' choice of where to study, indicating that more needs to be done to expand the regional offer.

3.18 Young people from Wester Ross are least positive about the FE and HE offer in region. Less than half (45%) agree that the Highlands and Islands has a good educational offering overall, compared to 64% in Lochaber and 56% in Skye and Lochalsh. Fewer still feel there is a wide-ranging FE (39%) or HE (38%) offer. This compares to 52% for both FE and HE amongst those in Skye and Lochalsh, and 56% and 58% respectively for those in Lochaber.

**Figure 3.5: Qualities/characteristics of FE and HE in the Highlands and Islands
(% agree strongly/slightly)**



Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (LSWR n=204, H&I Overall n=2,255)*

3.19 Most young people feel that they can study in their local area (88% and 86 regionally), although those in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are less likely than average to be influenced by this when deciding where to study (40% compared to 52% regionally). They are, however, more likely than average to value a good social offer (77% look for this when choosing where to study compared to 73% overall), and most feel that colleges and universities in the region offer this (60% versus 51% overall).

3.20 Awareness of Modern, Graduate and Foundation Apprenticeships is lower amongst young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross than across the region overall. As a result, they are also less likely to view each as an effective route into employment (Table 3.1).

3.21 Views on accessibility are in line with the regional trend - less than half feel that Modern Apprenticeships are accessible, a third Foundation Apprenticeships and a quarter Graduate Apprenticeships. This indicates that more needs to be done to enhance understanding and encourage participation across the Highlands and Islands.

Table 3.1: Awareness and effectiveness of Apprenticeships

	% who are aware of each		% who agree each is an effective route into employment	
	Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross	H&I Overall	Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross	H&I Overall
Modern Apprenticeships	79%	84%	72%	77%
Graduate Apprenticeships	57%	64%	58%	64%
Foundation Apprenticeships	58%	62%	52%	57%

Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (LSWR n=204, H&I Overall n=2,258)*

EMPLOYMENT

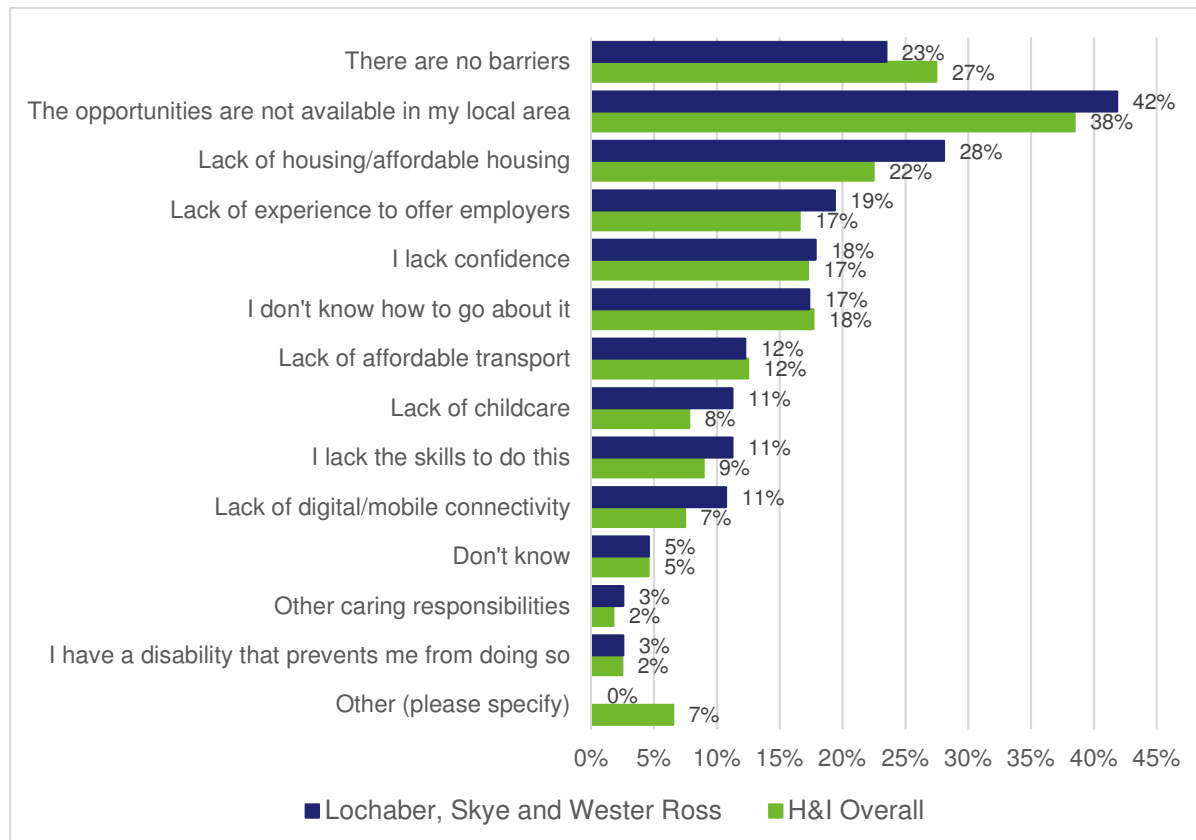
3.22 Full-time employment is the long-term goal for most young people, although those in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are less likely than average to aspire to this (66% do compared to 71% regionally). Conversely, they are the most likely of young people in all eight sub-areas of the Highlands and Islands to want to start their own business (24% do compared to the regional average of 19%).

3.23 Despite a greater desire for self-employment, a similar proportion to regionally feel that they have the ideas (43% compared to 44% overall), confidence (37% versus 36%) and knowledge (both 37%) to do so. Access to finance is a key barrier – less than a fifth (18% and 17% regionally) agreed that they have the access to the necessary finance to start their own business.

3.24 Young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are more likely than average to feel there are barriers to achieving employment goals (77% compared to 73% overall). They are more likely than regionally to cite a lack of opportunities in their local area (42% compared to 38% overall) and a lack of housing/affordable housing (28% compared to 22% overall). Childcare (11% versus 8% regionally) and digital and mobile connectivity (11% versus 7%) were also perceived as greater barriers to those in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross (Figure 3.6).

3.25 Within the area, young people in Lochaber are slightly less likely to perceive barriers to achieving their employment goals than those in Wester Ross or Skye and Lochalsh (70% feel that there are barriers compared to 79% and 83% respectively). Housing is a particular concern for those in Skye and Lochalsh reported by 35% of young people, compared with 26% in Wester Ross and 23% Lochaber. Experience, know-how and skills were cited as a barrier more frequently by those in Skye and Lochalsh. Childcare and transport were identified less frequently by young people in Lochaber than by those elsewhere in Skye and Wester Ross.

Figure 3.6: Barriers to achieving employment goals (% citing each as a barrier)



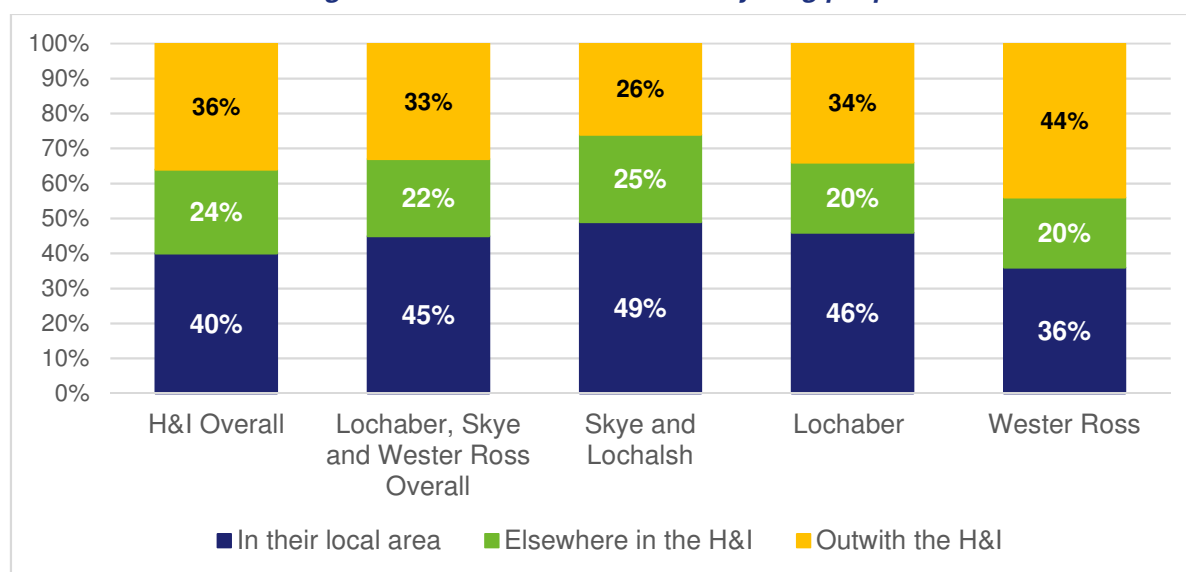
Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross n=196, H&I Overall n=2,106)

3.26 Young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are more likely to want to work in their local area than their counterparts across the region overall (45% do compared to 40% regionally) (Figure 3.7). This has increased significantly since 2015, when just 26% of young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross and 29% regionally wanted to work in their local area. A further 22% want to work elsewhere in the region (24% do regionally).

3.27 There are significant differences between young people from different parts of the area. Reflecting the lower proportion of committed stayers, those from Wester Ross are the least likely to want to work somewhere in the Highlands and Islands and particularly in their local area (36%) (Figure 3.7).

3.28 In contrast, those from Skye and Lochalsh are most likely to want to work in the region, driven by a strong desire to stay locally (49% compared to the regional average of 40%). Young people from Lochaber are also more likely than regionally to want to work in their local area (46%).

Figure 3.7: Ideal work locations of young people



Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Lochaber n=83, Skye and Lochalsh n=73, Wester Ross n=44)
 Note: 'Outwith the H&I' includes elsewhere in Scotland, elsewhere in the UK and outside of the UK

3.29 A good work-life balance and a steady job are the factors seen as most essential in a job for young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross (70% and 67% respectively) and regionally (70% and 71% respectively). More than half also value opportunities to progress (57% compared to 61% regionally), a good salary (both 56%), an understanding employer (56% versus 59%) and good terms, conditions and benefits (53% compared to 55%). Only 30% cited using their qualifications as essential, lower than the regional average of 35%. A similar proportion (28%) feel this is not important.

3.30 Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are less likely than average to feel that the employment factors they are looking for are available in their local area (52% feel they are at least to some extent compared to 58% overall). However, they are more optimistic about the availability of these factors in the region overall (66% agree compared to 59% regionally).

3.31 Young people from Wester Ross tend to be more negative about availability of the employment factors they are looking for: 36% feel they are available locally compared with 55% in Skye and Lochalsh and 57% in Lochaber. Similarly, 57% report that what they are looking for is available to some extent in the rest of the Highlands and Islands, compared with around 70% for Skye and Lochalsh and Lochaber.

COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

3.32 As in 2015, young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are more likely than average to participate in their community – 68% do compared to 62% regionally. However, levels of participation have fallen over the last three years (from 74% in 2015 for those in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross in 2015 and 71% regionally).

3.33 Young people from Lochaber are less likely than those from Skye and Lochalsh and Wester Ross to participate in their community (62% do compared to 73% and 71% respectively), although participation is still in line with the regional average.

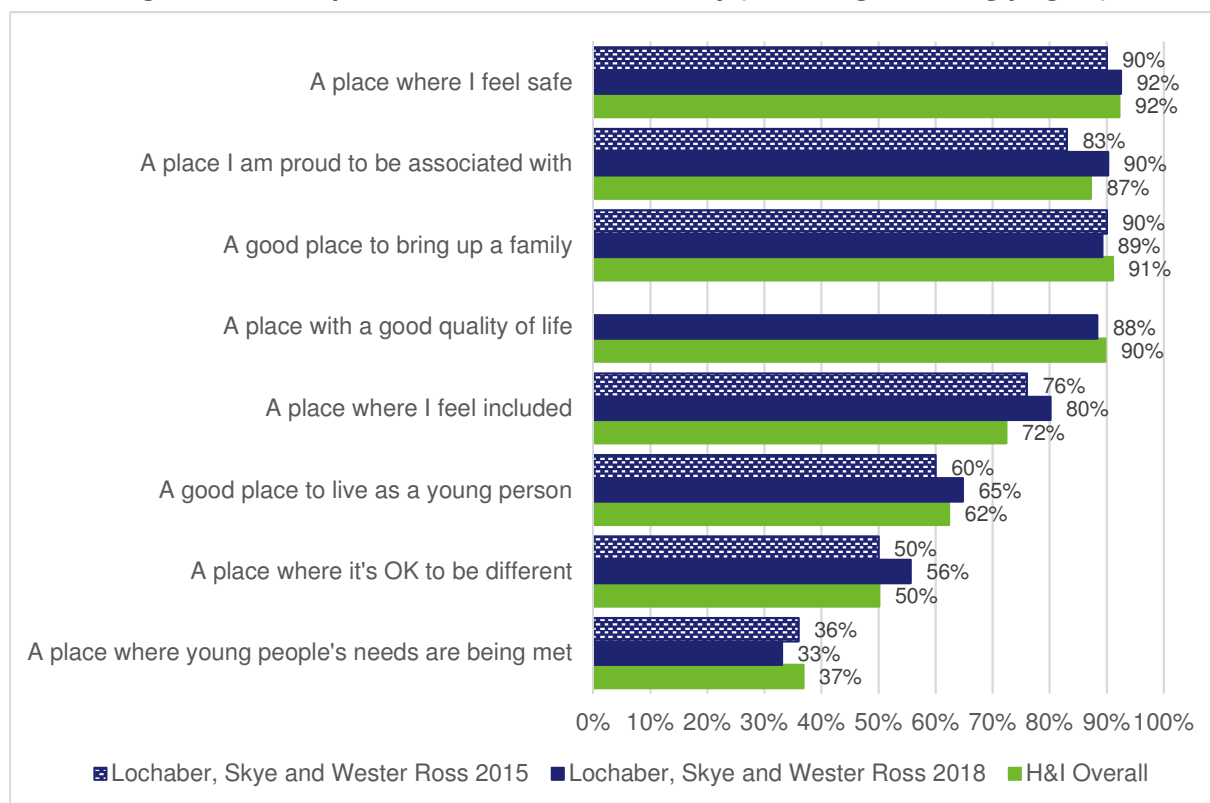
3.34 Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross have positive views on their local town/community (Figure 3.8). Most feel it is a place where they feel safe (92%, in line with the regional average), a good place to bring up a family (89% agree compared to 91% regionally), and somewhere with a good quality of life (88% versus 90%).

3.35 Levels of pride are higher than average (90% compared to 87% regionally) and have increased since 2015 (by seven percentage points).

3.36 Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are more likely than their counterparts across the region overall to feel included in their local community (80% compared to 72%), think it is a good place to live as a young person (65% versus 62%) and that it is OK to be different (56% versus 50%). The proportion of young people agreeing with each of these factors has increased since 2015 (up seven, five and six percentage points respectively).

3.37 There has been a decline in the proportion of young people who feel their needs are being met (from 36% in 2015 to 33% in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross and from 41% to 37% regionally).

Figure 3.8: Perception of the town or community (% who agree/strongly agree)



Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Lochaber, Skye & Wester Ross n=183, H&I Overall n=1,965)

Note: 'A good quality of life' was not asked in 2015

3.38 Differing perceptions of their town or community were evident across Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross. Those in Skye and Lochalsh are least likely to regard their local community as a good place to live as a young person (54% agree compared to 70% in Lochaber and 73% in Wester Ross) or feel that it is OK to be different (37% versus 68% and 63% – with the latter two substantially higher than the regional average of 50%) (Table 3.2). They are also least likely to agree that their needs are being met (30% agree), although this is also low amongst those from Wester Ross (32% versus 36% in Lochaber).

3.39 Levels of pride and inclusion are higher than the regional average in all areas, particularly so amongst young people in Lochaber (93% and 84% respectively compared to 89% and 80% in Skye and Lochalsh, 88% and 74% in Wester Ross and 87% and 72% regionally).

Table 3.2: Perception of the town or community (% who agree/strongly agree)

	Lochaber	Skye and Lochalsh	Wester Ross
A place where I feel safe	94%	91%	92%
A place I'm proud to be associated with	93%	89%	88%
A good place to bring up a family	88%	90%	90%
A place with a good quality of life	86%	90%	89%
A place where I feel included	84%	80%	74%
A good place to live as a young person	70%	54%	73%
A place where it's OK to be different	68%	37%	63%
A place where young people's needs are being met	36%	30%	32%

Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Lochaber n=70, Skye and Lochalsh n=64, Wester Ross n=40)

3.40 Young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross have a similar level of engagement with most arts, leisure and culture facilities to those living elsewhere in the region. However, they are less likely to use the cinema (15% use frequently/very frequently compared to 28% regionally) and theatre (5% compared to 13%) and more likely to use live music venues (30% versus 25%). Outdoor activities are used most frequently (by 45% of those in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross and regionally).

3.41 Despite broadly similar levels of usage, young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are more likely than average to identify barriers to all arts, leisure and culture facilities listed except for outdoor attractions and activities. Lack of availability is the most common barrier cited, reported by around half of young people in relation to the theatre (51%) and cinema (48%).

MAXIMISING OPPORTUNITIES

Compromises

3.42 Young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are amongst the most likely in the Highlands and Islands to feel that people must make compromises to live, work and study in the region. Around 92% report this, compared to 87% across the region.

3.43 The main compromises that young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross and regionally feel that people generally must make to live in the region are more difficult and expensive transport (81% versus 79% respectively) and fewer job opportunities (73% versus 76%). Housing emerged as a particular barrier for those from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross (39% reported this compared with 27% regionally), and they are also more likely than average to see the availability of HE or FE courses as a necessary compromise (67% compared with 61% regionally).

3.44 Young people from Skye and Lochalsh are markedly more likely to report necessary compromises around accommodation – 47% do so compared with 35% in Lochaber, 31% in Wester Ross and 27% regionally. Those from both Lochaber and Wester Ross are far more likely to say there are limited job opportunities, at 78% and 77% respectively, compared to 64% in Skye and Lochalsh.

3.45 The compromises young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross feel they have made, or would be prepared to make (Table 3.3) are similar to those identified by respondents across the region as a whole. However, they are more likely than average to feel they have already compromised on transport (70% compared to 61% regionally) and mobile connectivity (50% versus 45%).

3.46 They are also more likely than average to have already compromised on accommodation (25% versus 19% regionally) or say that they would be prepared to do so (27% versus 19% overall).

3.47 Employment-related factors are important to these young people. Around two-fifths would not compromise on career progression opportunities (41% in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross compared to 39% regionally), and around a third on salary (36% both in the area and regionally) or job opportunities (31% versus 33% overall). While 32% in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross would not work below their qualifications or skills level, this is slightly lower than the regional average of 37%.

3.48 The course offering at university/college is also perceived as important with around two-fifths stating that they would not be prepared to compromise on this (38% versus 37% overall).

Table 3.3: Making compromises

	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	70%	19%	10%	1%
Having limited mobile connectivity	50%	25%	12%	12%
Having limited access to amenities, events, services and leisure facilities	49%	30%	13%	8%
Having fewer job opportunities and choices	43%	24%	31%	2%
Having limited digital connectivity	40%	25%	17%	18%
Settling for a lower salary	31%	26%	36%	7%
Having fewer opportunities for career progression	28%	23%	41%	8%
Having fewer courses on offer at college/university	27%	27%	38%	7%
Living in accommodation that doesn't fully meet my needs	25%	27%	27%	22%
Working below my qualification and skills level	20%	35%	32%	13%
Having a lower quality of life	13%	8%	33%	47%

Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross n=147)

3.49 Sub-area differences are apparent. Young people from Skye and Lochalsh are most likely to feel that they have already made compromises, particularly in relation to accommodation (35% cite this compared with 25% in Wester Ross and 17% in Lochaber. Similarly, 50% say they have made compromises around digital connectivity, compared to 34% from Wester Ross and 35% from Lochaber. Respondents from Lochaber are most likely to have compromised on work-related issues – 42% have settled for a lower salary and 26% report working below their qualification or skills level.

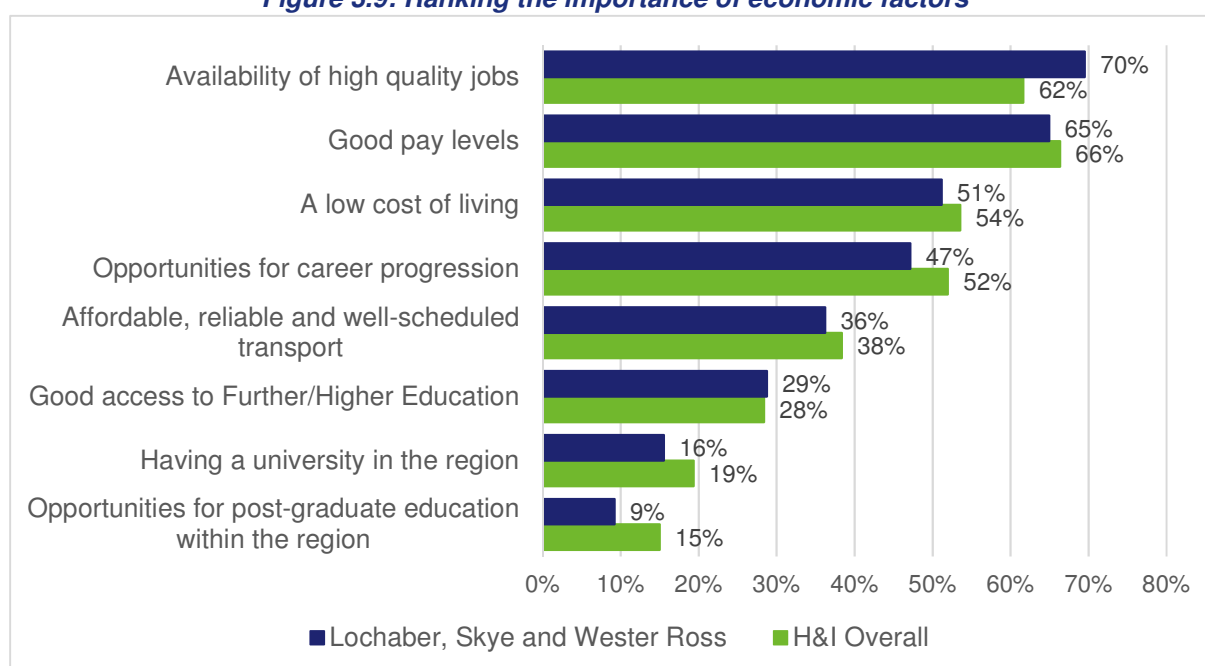
Enabling opportunities

3.50 Young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross have similar economic and social priorities for making the Highlands and Islands attractive to young people as those living elsewhere in the region, although the proportion rating each factor as important does vary.

3.51 High quality jobs (70%), good pay levels (65%), a low cost of living (51%) and career progression opportunities (47%) were ranked as the most important economic factors to young people regionally and in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross. However, high quality jobs were ranked more highly than good pay levels by those in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross than regionally, and a lower proportion than average cited career progression opportunities as important (47% versus 52%) (Figure 3.9).

3.52 They are also less likely than average to place importance on educational factors – having a university in the region (16% versus 19% regionally) and post-graduate opportunities (9% versus 15%).

Figure 3.9: Ranking the importance of economic factors

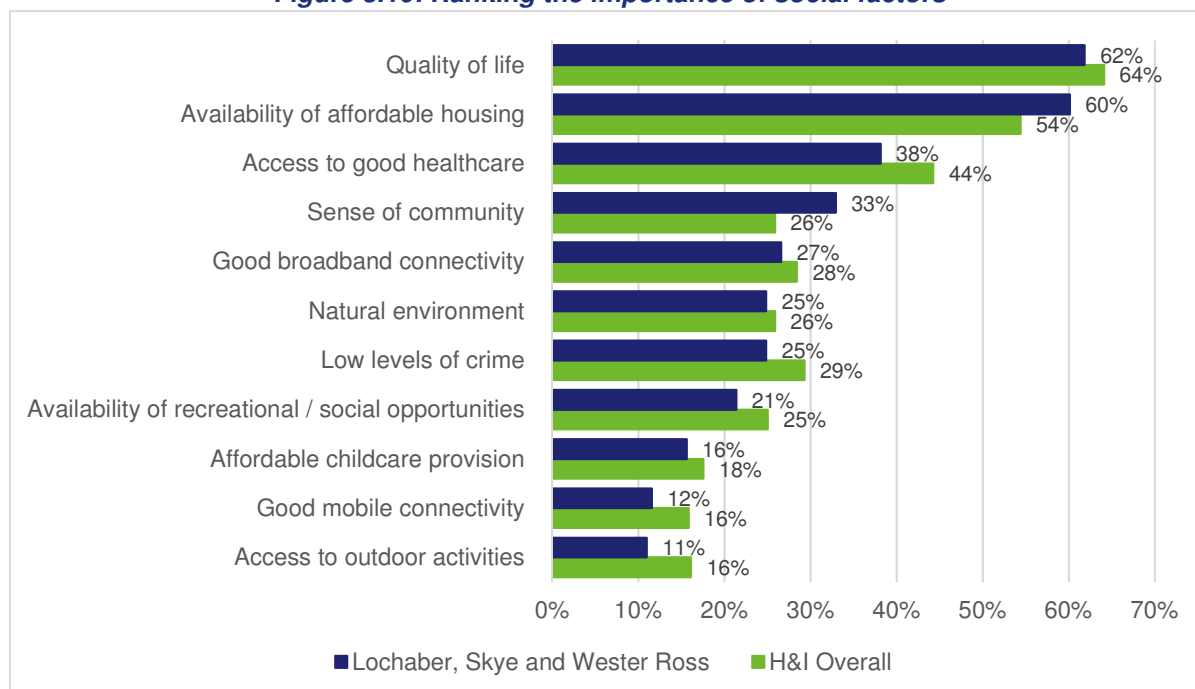


Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross n=174, H&I Overall n= 1,828)

3.53 For social factors, as with respondents overall, quality of life, availability of affordable housing and access to good healthcare are ranked as the top three factors important in making the region more attractive to young people (Figure 3.10). Within this however, a higher proportion of young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross cited affordable housing as important (60% versus 54% regionally) and a lower proportion access to good healthcare (38% versus 44% overall).

3.54 They are also more likely than average to cite a sense of community as important (33% do compared to 26% overall) and less likely to place importance on low levels of crime, recreational/social opportunities, good mobile connectivity and access to outdoor activities.

Figure 3.10: Ranking the importance of social factors



Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018* (Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross n=173, H&I Overall n= 1,805)

3.55 Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are less likely than their counterparts across the region to feel that the Highlands and Islands is a better place to live now than it was five years ago – 48% agree and 21% disagree compared to 54% and 14% respectively. Just under a third are unsure (30% compared to 32% regionally).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

3.56 A positive shift in attitude is apparent among young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross in relation to the region. There has been a marked increase in the proportions identifying as committed stayers and aspiring to work in the local area in the future. Though slightly less positive than regionally about educational and employment opportunities, perceptions have improved over the past three years.

3.57 Young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are more likely than their counterparts across the region overall to feel they are facing barriers to achieving employment goals – particularly in relation to accommodation and lack of local opportunities. Reflecting this, employment-related aspects and cost of living are regarded as the most important economic factors in making the region more attractive to young people. Quality of life, housing and healthcare are the most valued social factors.

3.58 There are some differences in views across the area. Young people in Wester Ross are less likely to want to stay and work in their local area, with the region's FE and HE offer and availability of employment opportunities of particular concern. While those in Skye and Lochalsh have strong ties to their local community, the availability of housing is a key issue. Young people in Lochaber are less likely to perceive barriers to employment than those in Wester Ross or Skye and Lochalsh, however they are most likely to feel they have had to compromise on work-related issues to live in the region. Despite these factors, views on their local communities are generally positive and levels of pride and inclusion are extremely high in all three areas.

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