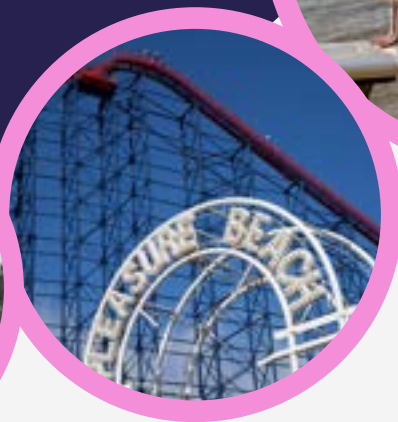


OUR Home
Story
BLACKPOOL



Empowerment
Charity



Blackpool Together

Pride • Belonging • Community



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About Empowerment Charity

Empowerment is a Blackpool based charity with a long-term commitment to supporting our local communities and improving lives. At its heart, Empowerment is about making sure that people feel listened to, respected, and supported no matter who they are or where they come from.

We don't deliver services to people, we work alongside them. Our belief is simple: you empower yourself, with encouragement and support from us. Whether it's through advocacy, co-production, or tackling social challenges such as domestic abuse, isolation, or mental ill health, our mission is to stand with people so they can bring about real and positive change in their own lives and in their community.



Empowerment is more than an organisation, it's a community of people who believe that change is possible when we are united. We are local, rooted in Blackpool and the Fylde Coast, and proud of it. We welcome everyone, celebrate diversity, and believe in collaboration over competition. We take risks when needed, admit when we get things wrong, and always strive to do better.

Empowerment is about voices being heard, lives being changed, and communities being strengthened. We are small and local, but our impact is big because together, with the people of Blackpool and the Fylde Coast, we are creating a kinder, fairer, and more hopeful future.

Our values



Working with
Kindness



Working for
Justice



Working towards
Equality for everyone



We are
Human

Introduction

Our Home, Our Story, Our Blackpool is a town-wide listening event, with a focus on community cohesion, secured by Blackpool Council through the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government's Community Recovery Fund.

Community cohesion is central to the vision of a stronger, fairer Blackpool. It is rooted in the ability of communities to live, grow, and thrive together in harmony.

Cohesion exists when:

- People from different backgrounds share a common vision and sense of belonging.
- Diversity is recognised, appreciated, and positively valued.
- Individuals from different backgrounds enjoy similar life opportunities.
- Strong and positive relationships are built in neighbourhoods, schools, workplaces, and public spaces.

This project has placed residents' voices at its heart, ensuring that people across the town have an opportunity to share their experiences, challenges, and hopes for Blackpool's future. While the work focused primarily on adult residents, youth voices have also been included.

Our goals and objectives

- To capture residents' experiences, challenges, and hopes for Blackpool.
- To understand the current situation of community cohesion across the town.
- To give residents, including youth, a platform to share their perspectives.
- To identify strengths, gaps, and opportunities in regards to community cohesion.
- To provide evidence to inform future local initiatives.



Methodology

The Our Home, Our Story, Our Blackpool project used a community-centred, multi-method approach to gather residents' voices and explore community cohesion across the town. The methodology prioritised inclusivity, engaging diverse and under-heard groups, including youth, whilst embedding accessibility, trust, and long-term impact.

The project engaged over 500 residents, prioritising diversity and lived experience. These voices were found through community networks, local VCFSE organisations, social media, and in-person outreach. Youth perspectives were captured via youth groups, schools and social media.

Engagement Methods

- Online Survey: Distributed via social media and community networks to capture feedback from a range of perspectives.
- Drop-in Events: Various drop-in sessions within the community provided informal spaces for residents to share their views.
- Focus Groups: Conducted with local VCFSE partners to reach underrepresented communities, including youth.
- Anonymised Feedback Boxes: Placed in libraries, schools, places of worship, and health settings to allow safe, low-barrier contributions.
- Ward-based Door Knocking: Outreach across six wards ensured geographic representation and allowed short-term signposting support.
- Workplace Engagement: Confidential sessions enabled employees to share perspectives on community cohesion.
- Walk and Talk Sessions: Sessions in green and blue spaces combined discussion with physical activity.



Limitations

Despite efforts to ensure broad participation, several limitations affected the project. **Digital exclusion** meant that some residents without internet access or digital skills were unable to engage with the online survey, potentially limiting representation from certain demographic groups. Whilst the project aimed to engage a minimum of 500 residents, the **sample size** may not fully reflect the diversity of Blackpool's population, and some voices may have been underrepresented.

The door-knocking programme, although extensive, was restricted to six wards and could not reach every household, limiting geographic coverage and access to residents in more isolated areas. Additionally, the rate in which people answered the door was particularly low for this project, potentially due to the nature of the topic or the time of day. This further reduced opportunities for engagement and feedback.

Distrust in the local authority also presented a challenge, with some residents hesitant to share their experiences or opinions due to past negative experiences or concerns about if action would be taken.

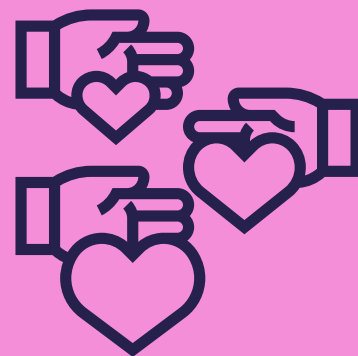
Finally, the **sensitive** nature of the topic, exploring community cohesion, social division, and personal experiences, meant that some residents chose not to engage, potentially omitting important perspectives. These limitations highlight areas for improvement in future engagement projects, particularly in reaching digitally excluded residents, extending geographic coverage, and building trust with sceptical communities.

Thank you!

Our Home, Our Story, Our Blackpool is built on the voices, experiences and priorities of the community and has been developed through direct engagement with residents. It reflects the real challenges people face and the solutions they believe will create meaningful change. Every recommendation is shaped by lived experiences, ensuring that residents voices are heard and actions are progressed in the best interest of the community.

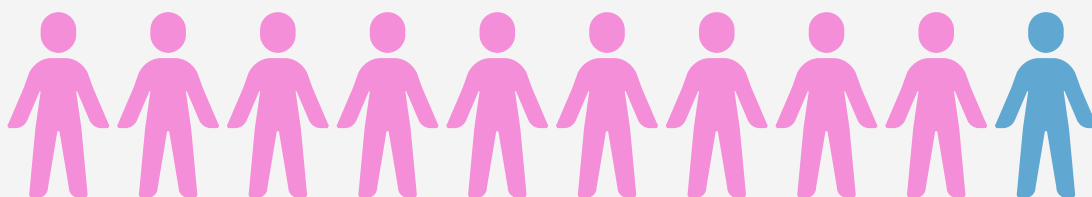
Empowerment Charity are extremely grateful to all of the local residents who have shared their views with our team. Without your openness and honesty, sharing of stories and generously giving up your time, we would not have a vision for the future.

620 Individuals
contributed
to the project



Survey respondents

277



238 Adult: 18 years+

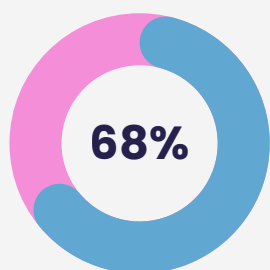
60 Young people: Under 18



145 Individuals
contributed via suggestion box

173 people attended a
focus group with HWB.

Adult Focus Groups

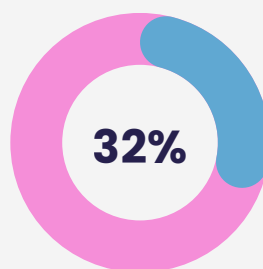


118 adults
attended a
focus group
with HWB

10

adult focus groups

Youth Focus Groups



55 young people
attended a
focus group
with HWB

5

youth focus groups

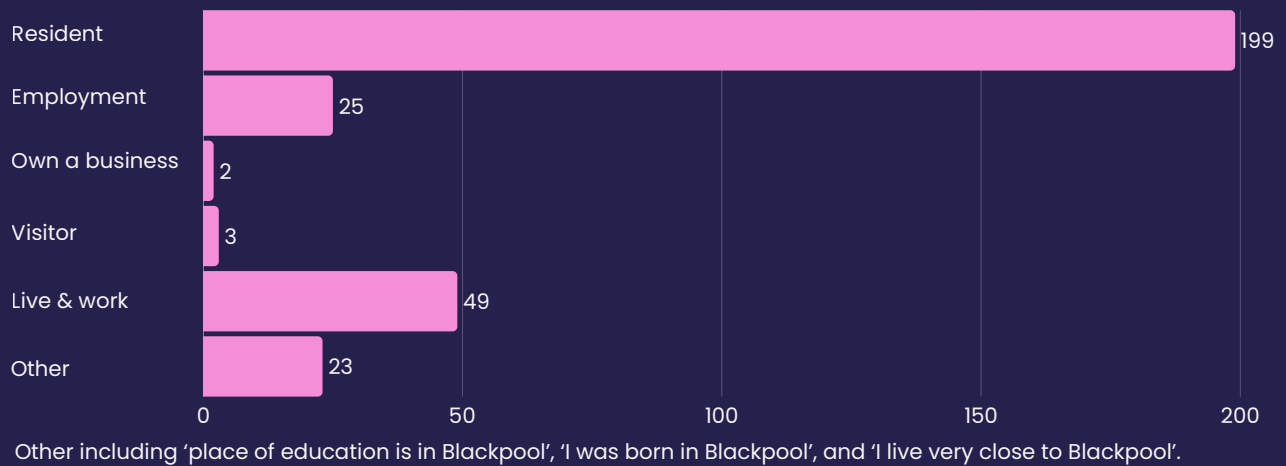


26 Individuals
contributed via door knocking

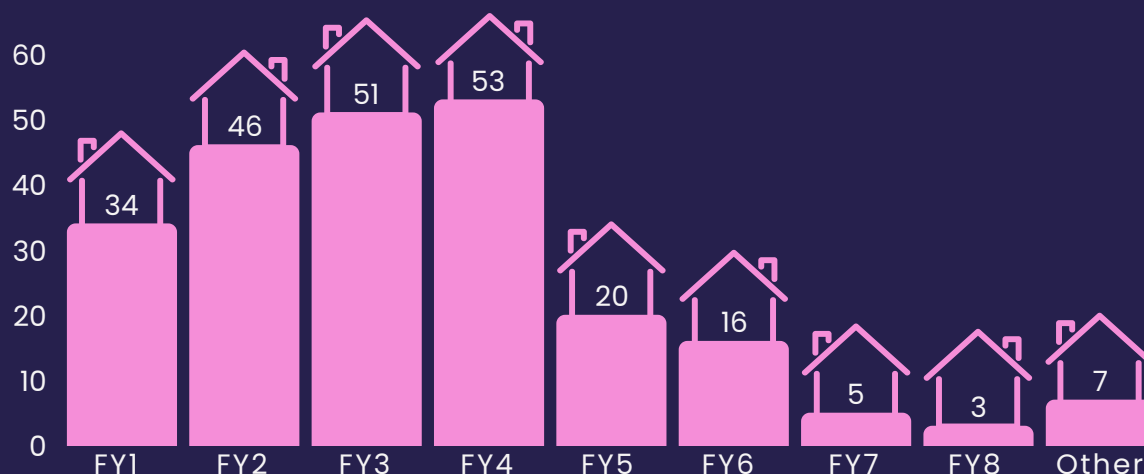
Summary of survey participants



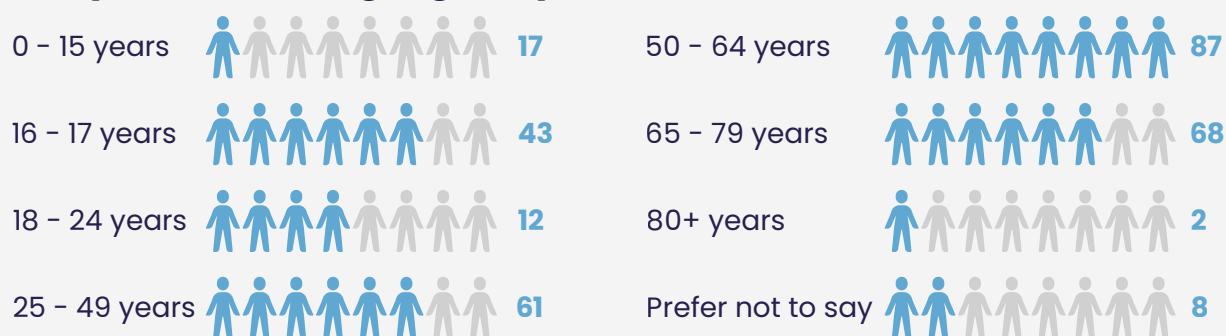
Link to Blackpool



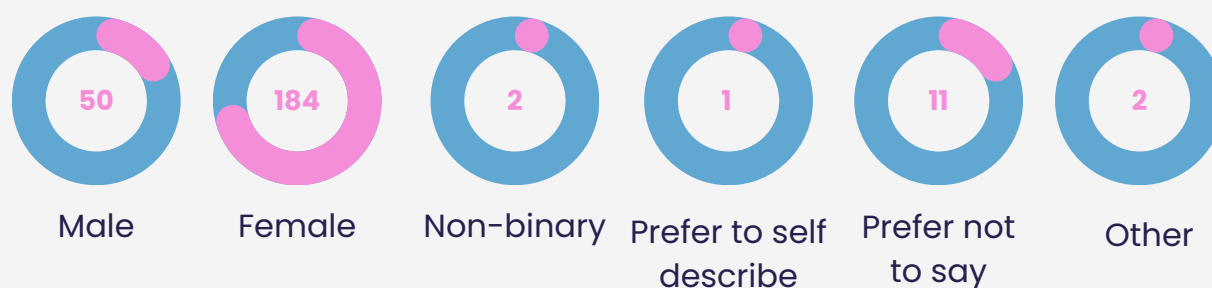
Respondents postcode



Respondents age group



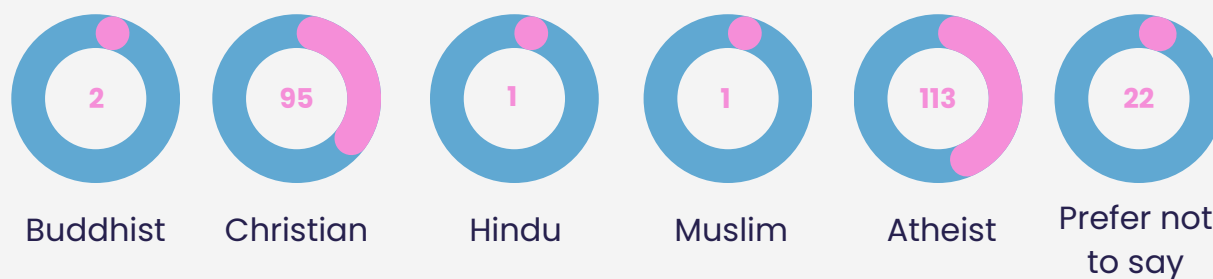
Respondents gender



Respondents sexual orientation

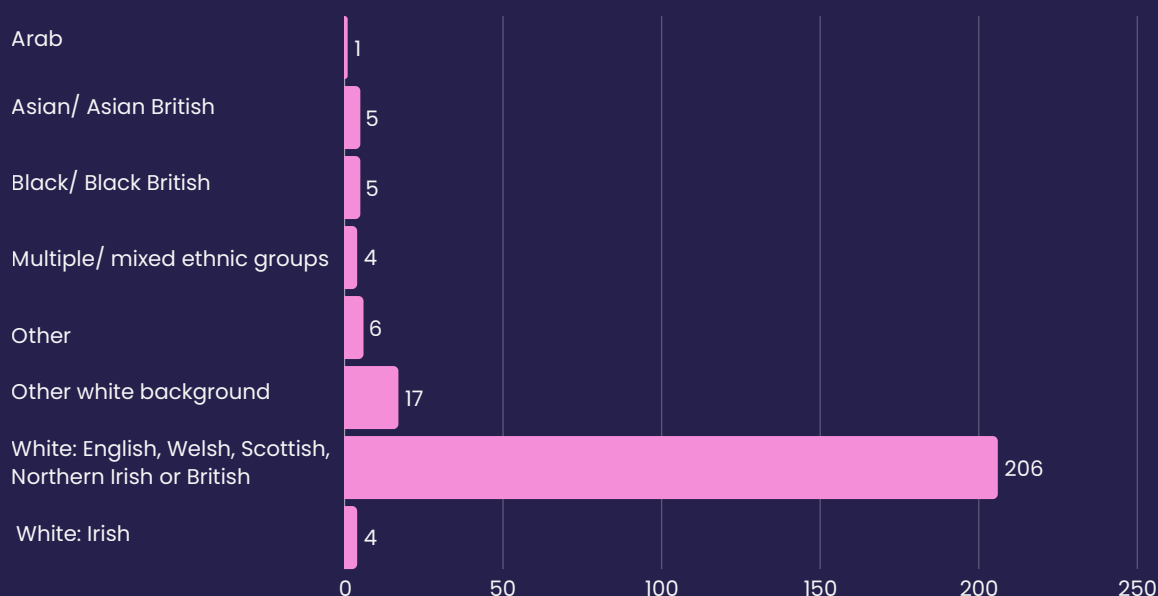
Asexual	8	Hetrosexual/straight	184	Prefer to self-describe	2
Bisexual	6	Lesbian/ gay woman	8	Prefer not to say	24
Gay man	10	Pansexual	3	Not known	3

Respondents religion

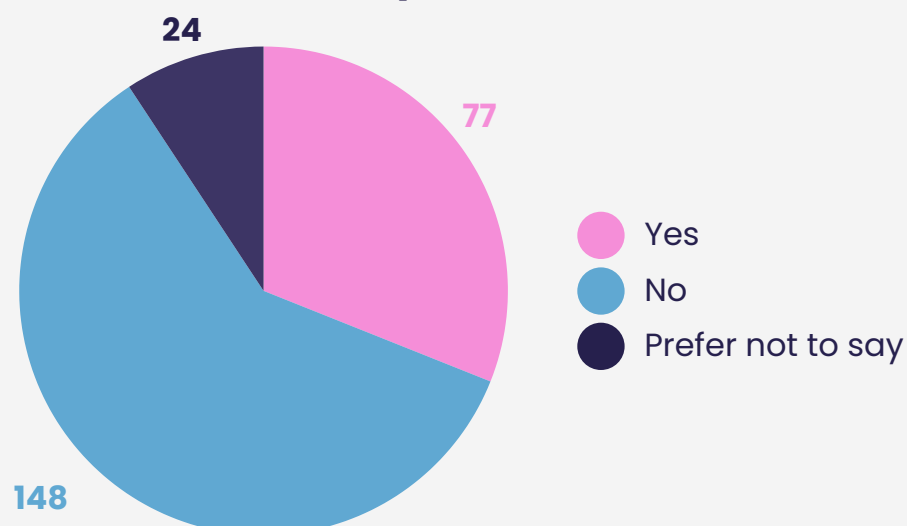


10 respondents selected 'Other' as their religion, which included answers such as Spiritualism and Catholic.

Respondents ethnicity



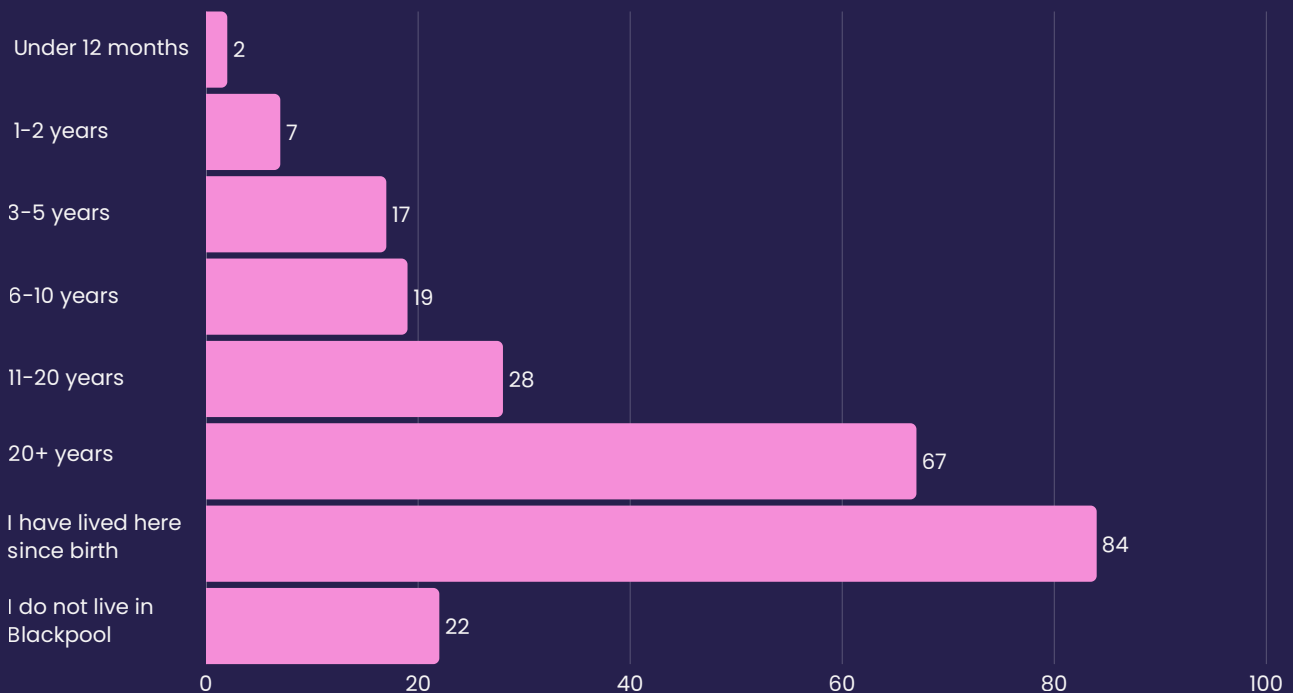
Respondents disability



Belonging

This section presents the findings on residents' sense of belonging to their immediate neighbourhood. It first summarises how strongly respondents feel they belong, before exploring the reasons behind these views and the suggestions offered for how a stronger sense of community could be encouraged in the future.

Length of residency



As shown in the chart above, a significant proportion of respondents are long-term residents, having lived in Blackpool since birth or for over 20 years. This group accounts for 61% of all respondents. A further 19% can be described as well-established but not lifelong residents, having lived in the area for between 6 and 20 years. Only a small proportion of respondents have lived in Blackpool for less than five years. Finally, a small number of participants do not currently live in Blackpool but took part in the survey due to professional links or because their place of education is based in the area.



Sense of belonging to immediate neighborhood



Respondents were asked how strongly they feel they belong to their immediate neighbourhood on a 1–5 scale. The results show a mixed but slightly positive picture, with an average score of 3, indicating a moderate sense of belonging overall. About 29% reported low belonging (1–2), while 41% reported high belonging (4–5). This suggests that although most residents feel some connection to their neighbourhood, strong attachment is less common.

Understanding what shapes different levels of community belonging

Strong sense of belonging

Participants who rated their sense of belonging highly, typically at 4 or 5 out of 5, described several factors that contributed to their strong connection with the area. Many emphasised the importance of long-term ties to the community, noting that **"I was born here"** and **"... been here 30 years, know all my neighbours very well."** Family connections were frequently mentioned as a key element of belonging, with participants reflecting that **"all my family are here."** Positive relationships with neighbours also played a significant role, as some shared that **"everyone looks out for each other. Supportive when needed and I feel safe and can leave my doors unlocked."** Additionally, local community spaces, such as parks, community centres, and places of worship, were highlighted as important in creating and nurturing social connections and reinforcing participants sense of belonging: **"I make full use of neighbourhood facilities."**

"We are a community together, all in the same situation living in one bedroom flats, we don't all get along but we look out for each other."

However, even among those with strong attachments, participants described experiences that suggested a more mixed sense of belonging. Several noted a perceived decline in the area, mentioning that **"the area is plagued with issues."** Concerns about anti-social behaviour and problematic neighbours were also raised, with one participant reflecting that **"when out walking it is normal to smell drugs in the air."** Finally, some participants expressed a sense of loss of community spirit over time, commenting that **"one recently new neighbour is inconsiderate of all others and has disrupted the friendly helpful atmosphere of this area."**

Overall, these experiences suggest that, whilst many participants maintain a strong sense of belonging rooted in relationships, community spaces, and pride in their area, this is tempered by ongoing challenges that affect the 'community feel' of the neighbourhood.

"Still a sense of community and looking out for each other, a common belief and shared values of community."

Moderate sense of belonging

Participants who described feeling somewhat indifferent to their sense of belonging in the area often attributed this to limited social connections within their neighbourhood. Some noted that living on main roads made it difficult to establish relationships with neighbours, saying **"On this road it's really long. 100 + houses. It's not like a small road where you know anyone."** Others reflected that working full-time in the area limited opportunities for interaction, particularly in communities where many long-term residents already had established relationships: **"All my neighbours are pensioners and socialise with each other in the day while I am at work. I don't feel a part of it, but do feel that I could go to them if needed."** Several participants also expressed that they felt comfortable keeping to themselves and were happy with a more private, independent lifestyle:



"We're all just people living our own separate lives."

At the same time, participants observed that the area itself was changing, which contributed to a broader sense of disconnect. Some mentioned that **"community seems to be a thing of the past now"**, reflecting a perception that community ties were weakening and that it was harder to feel integrated in the neighbourhood. These experiences suggest that indifference towards belonging can stem both from personal circumstances and from evolving social dynamics within the area.

Weak sense of belonging

Participants who reported that they did not feel a sense of belonging in the area highlighted several underlying reasons. For some, choosing to keep to themselves was a conscious preference, with individuals sharing that they **"Live by myself and keep to myself."** Safety concerns were also raised, with participants noting experiences or perceptions that made them feel uneasy in their own neighbourhood: **"When we first moved here I would have described the neighbourhood as very inclusive... for the past 8 to 10 years we now fear the area."**

Others reflected on changes in the area over time, suggesting that shifts in the local population and environment had weakened their connection to the community: **"Local community is eroding, no pride and no respect."** A recurring theme was the perceived decline in community spirit, with some expressing that there is **"No such thing as a community spirit anymore."** Finally, frequent references were made to anti-social behaviour, which participants felt weakened both their safety and sense of belonging, with one commenting that **"All neighbours on long term sick and don't work and scream at their kids and constant anti-social behaviour and drug dealing/use."**

Together, these accounts suggest that a lack of belonging often arises from both personal choices around social interaction and broader structural or social issues, such as safety, community cohesion, and anti-social behaviour.



"Because I'm registered blind. Having a disability makes me very isolated. If people aren't in their garden or walking past, I don't see or talk to them."



"Apart from my next door neighbours I do not know anyone on the street where I have lived for 20+ years."

Additionally, economic wellbeing has a huge impact on people's sense of belonging in Blackpool. They often cited that there needed to be more money directed into their communities relating to infrastructure, better paid jobs and lower rates for locals to enjoy local activities. People thought that their area would be improved if more investment goes directly to locals: **"discounts for residents to local attractions," "better employment opportunities for people with qualifications rather than minimum wage and seasonal jobs"** and **"life above the poverty line for all people who are suffering."**

What makes residents feel connected...

"There are churches and community centres that make myself and others feel connected to our communities."

"It is great that we have events like the air show and switch on that can be offered to the community free of charge."

"We have the iconic Stanley Park which is always offering events to the community."

"The recovery community makes me feel connected – there is always someone to talk and people are there for you."

"I feel connected as people are kind here at Warren Manor."

"I feel close to people at the groups I go to like Speak Out."

"I like the beach."

"I feel alright in my neighbourhood, been there 30 years and know the families."

"I was born here."

"Where I am I have a good relationship with 2 of my neighbours."

"I like being here – I don't live here so when I come into work I feel connected (my workplace is my community within Blackpool). Workplace connections are so important for our mental health."

"Because of the variety of clients from all over Blackpool they all give you a different perspective – I feel connected through the experiences of the people we work with."

"I came here because my family is here."

"I like all the art in Blackpool – more art and art groups would be great."

"I like to play sports at the sports centres (Stanley Park)."

"I run a ukulele community group that brings lots of people through music."

What makes residents feel disconnected...

"It is quite intimidating being in Blackpool – it can be quite scary to walk to work on Whitegate Drive – it is just a feeling you get in Blackpool (it's intimidating)."

"There are certain parts of Blackpool that are scary."

"A little bit, we know our immediate neighbours but not much else."

"Where I live everyone is sort of on their own, we say hi to neighbours but that's all."

"I don't talk to my neighbours."

"Commuting and there [are] no job opportunities here (they're not accessible)."

"Some people are fearful of leaving the house – especially in winter when it gets dark from 4pm."

"Very transient area – people moving in from all over the world (that's why some don't know neighbours)."

"I know that with the people we support there is a lot of stigma around those asylum seekers living within the Metropole, lots of false facts and a narrative that they are 'stealing jobs'."

"A lot of political debate that makes people feel disconnected – that's all the time."

"Better housing is needed as this is a reason for disconnect within the area."

"There is lots of anti-social behaviour within Blackpool."

"I don't feel connected to Blackpool, not anymore – so much has changed since I was growing up. There used to be a good feeling here but there's not anymore."

"The quality of houses need to be improved... we need decent landlords who care about their properties."

"Communities only work if you are brave enough to leave the house."

"People move here then realise it's not all cracked up to be."

"There is a massive disconnect with the council, it is so hard to get in to have a conversation with anyone. We work in the same building and can't get in so it must be difficult for others."

How levels of belonging & inclusion can be increased

All participants were then asked to provide ways in which belonging and inclusion within Blackpool and local neighbourhoods could be improved. The majority of participants mentioned having **“more social events together”** and being included in things would

“Maybe an informal monthly meet up opportunity somewhere local for people to find interests and concerns in common.”

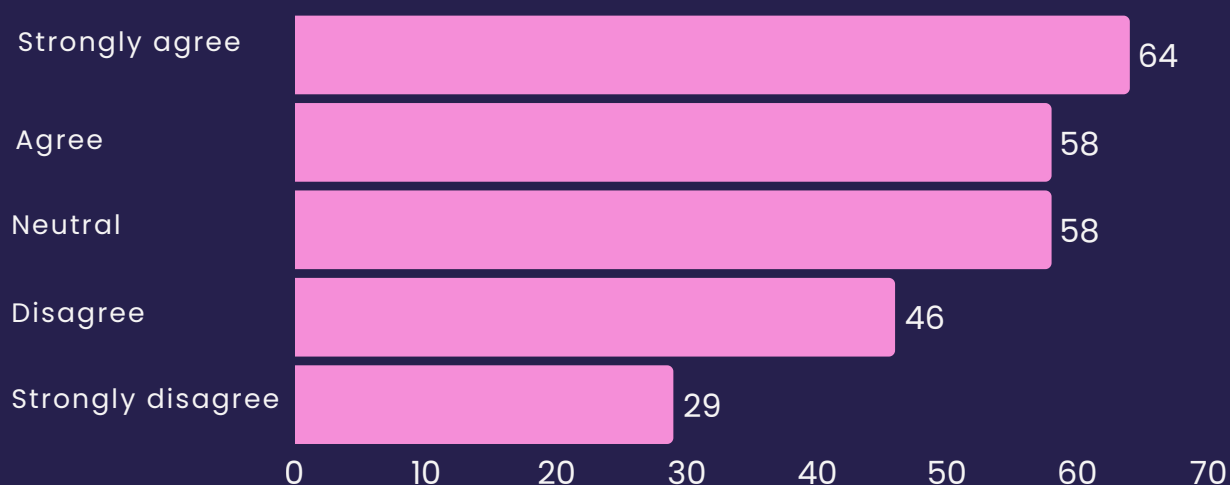
make them feel the most connected. Within this area, many respondents also commented on the financial element of being involved in the community, suggesting that finances make community cohesion out of reach.

One individual suggested that **“training, recruiting and resourcing community leaders to have the confidence and time to bring people together”** would have great impact on connectivity and belonging within the local area. Another respondent stated **“make it easier for people to do their own community initiatives instead of always being led by big organisations where most of the staff don’t even live locally.”** These ideas are reinforced by multiple respondents who suggest the need for **“more advertising for activities going on within Blackpool.”**

Additionally, a number of respondents mentioned the need for improved relationships with their neighbours, with many people suggesting a barrier to this being that there is **“lots of people coming and going, it’s hard to keep connections on the street.”** Many residents suggested that encouraging **“street parties”** and **“neighbourhood gatherings”** would go a long way to help people get to know their neighbours and make those well-needed relationships.



In 5 years time, I would still like to be living in my area...



Residents expressed a wide range of feelings about their local area, reflecting a complex relationship between attachment, satisfaction, and concern for change. Many described a deep sense of belonging and stability, often referring to their current home as a **“forever home.”** Long-term residents value familiarity, security, and connection to neighbours, with some expressing a wish to remain for the rest of their lives: **“I have lived in the same property for 36 years... no desire to move.”**

Others shared more conditional satisfaction, meaning they appreciate their home and the convenience of their area but highlighted frustrations around antisocial behaviour, **“Lovely area but anti-social behaviour has increased,”** declining cleanliness, and a lack of inclusive social spaces. Several respondents linked this to broader changes since the pandemic, observing that people have become less considerate or community-minded with one respondent commenting: **“People think more about themselves and less about how their behaviour affects others – seems to be the case since Covid.”**



The local environment plays an important role in wellbeing. Access to parks, trees, the coast, and good transport links were repeatedly mentioned as reasons people enjoy living locally. However, a growing number of comments reflected concerns about safety, housing quality, and visible decline, particularly in parts of Blackpool described as **“lawless,” “run down,”** and **“unsafe.”**

“The park is on my doorstep. Bus stops are close. Who doesn’t need trees & transport?”

“I live on the prom with beautiful views.”

“It’s next to woodland and has 2 mature trees in the back garden filled with birdsong.”



Financial and personal circumstances strongly influence mobility. Many residents would like to move but feel they **“could not afford to move to a better area,”** and they **“would move but can’t afford to.”** Additionally some residents mentioned caring responsibilities, or health needs. Others, particularly younger respondents, view moving as part of life’s progression, seeking opportunities through education, work, or travel rather than dissatisfaction with the area itself: **“Might move for uni or apprenticeship”** and **“Moving to the States after education.”**

Despite frustrations, there remains a strong undercurrent of local pride and community spirit. Several residents emphasised personal responsibility, neighbourly connection, and optimism that with care and effort, community life could thrive again. Overall, the findings highlight both enduring affection for local places and an urgent desire to see improvements in safety, environment, and civic upkeep to strengthen residents sense of belonging and wellbeing.

“You have to make it how you want it and take personal responsibility.”

“There’s much more community bubbling under the surface – just need to give it opportunity.”

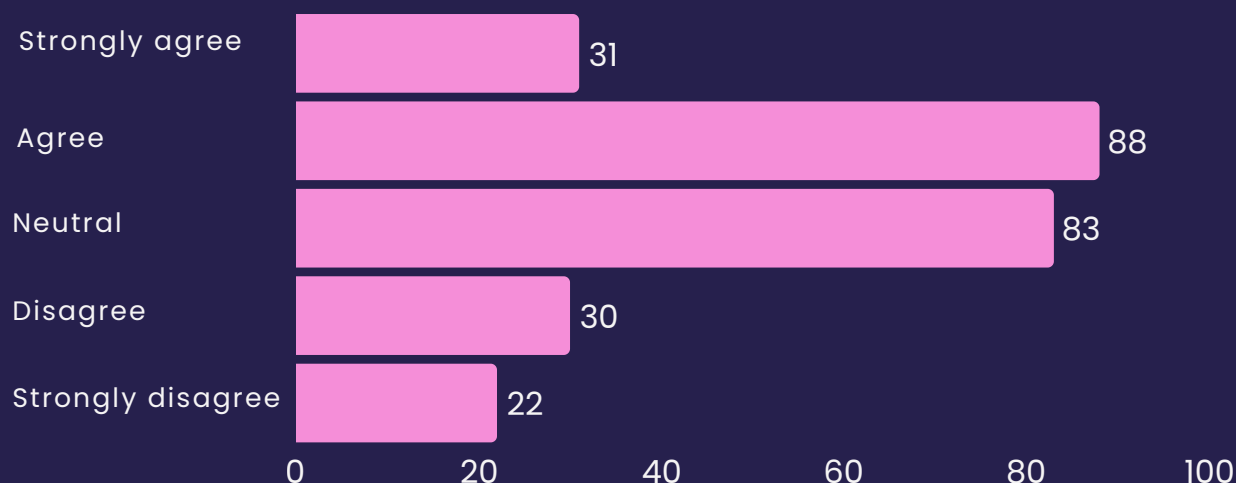
“I love where I live... I always interact with neighbours even if it’s only a hello.”

Neighbourhood

This section explores residents' views on their neighbourhoods, including whether people feel their areas are well cared for, what improvements they believe are needed, and the extent to which they are willing to help and support their neighbours.

Perceptions of neighbourhood care and maintenance

My neighbourhood is well cared for...



Understanding how residents feel about their neighbourhood

Cleanliness

Participants felt that the cleanliness of their neighbourhood could benefit from improvement, with over 25% of respondents mentioning this issue. A common theme that arose was the need for cleaner streets, with particular emphasis on issues such as dog fouling, litter, and weeds. People shared that they believe **“dog fouling is a big problem”** and that the streets should be **“cleaned up.”** Many people felt that this could be improved with an increase in **“litter and dog poo bins”**, **“road sweepers and cleaners”** and more **“litter picking patrols.”** 8% of people felt that residents' pride had a part to play in the cleanliness of their neighbourhood, reporting that they felt **“many residents near me do not take pride in their homes, litter and disheveled properties bring down the area.”**

“Cleaner streets, more attention to rubbish blowing around the streets after bin day, tight fines for dog fouling.”

Community Infrastructure and environment

One in five participants felt that community infrastructure needed to improve to enhance the neighbourhood. People often mentioned that **“accommodation was a massive problem in Blackpool”** and there was a need for a **“better housing environment.”** These views were supported further by individuals often stating that there should be a **“minimum standard of property enforcement.”** In addition to this, empty and derelict property were a common issue raised in the survey. People felt that there needed to be action regarding this, with one suggesting **“knocking down derelict buildings close by as this created anti-social behaviour”** as an option. Additionally, maintenance of road and pavement conditions were commonly highlighted as an area for improvement. People often stated that **“better roads and footpaths”** and **“potholes to be repaired”** were areas that needed to change.



‘It would be nice if coastal housing actually cared about the presentation of the neighbourhood. We live here and want to live in a nicer place, but get no support to make the place nicer, we can’t do it on our own.’

Crime, policing, and anti-social behaviour

Not only did participants feel that there was a lack of pride from community members, they also had concerns about the amount of anti-social behaviour. Some people mentioned their neighborhood needs **“better support with anti-social behaviour”** and that there needs to be an **“anti-social behaviour cleanup.”** Of those who thought this was an issue, they thought that **“people feeling less pride,”** as well as **“lots of drugs”** and **“vandalism”** were amongst the reasons that these problems exist. Participants expressed that **“drugs,” “speeding E-bikes/scooters,” “racism”** and **“swearing”** were included in the anti-social behaviour experienced in their neighbourhood.

Although these problems were identified, many felt that more could be done regarding policing to tackle this. Many respondents felt that **“community policing,” “visible policing,”** and **“more policing”** could help with problematic areas, with many residents referring to the notion of **“bobby’s on the beat.”**

Services, groups, and youth activities

Another theme identified was the need for improved services in the community to support people when they need it most. Many felt that we need an increase in awareness of community groups, as well as improving the accessibility of support available. Specific references were made to enhancing the availability of local gyms, the Light Lounge, social prescribing, and Warren Manor.

“There is already a lot of support in Blackpool what is lacking is helping people access the support that there is. How do we navigate people to groups?”

Many participants felt that their neighbourhood would benefit from an improvement in activities for children and young people. Some suggested youth hubs and more recreational activities for young people to engage with would improve inclusivity.

“More clubs and activities, up to date stuff. More stuff young people would like to do.”

“It would make our neighbourhoods better if there was a youth hub like the one that has just opened in Salford.”

Many residents expressed concerns around young people not having enough things to do within the community, potentially leading to anti-social behaviour and the need for more local police. Some residents shared that if there is **“An increase in youth clubs and youth schemes, it would give the young people in Blackpool something to do, especially the teens.”**



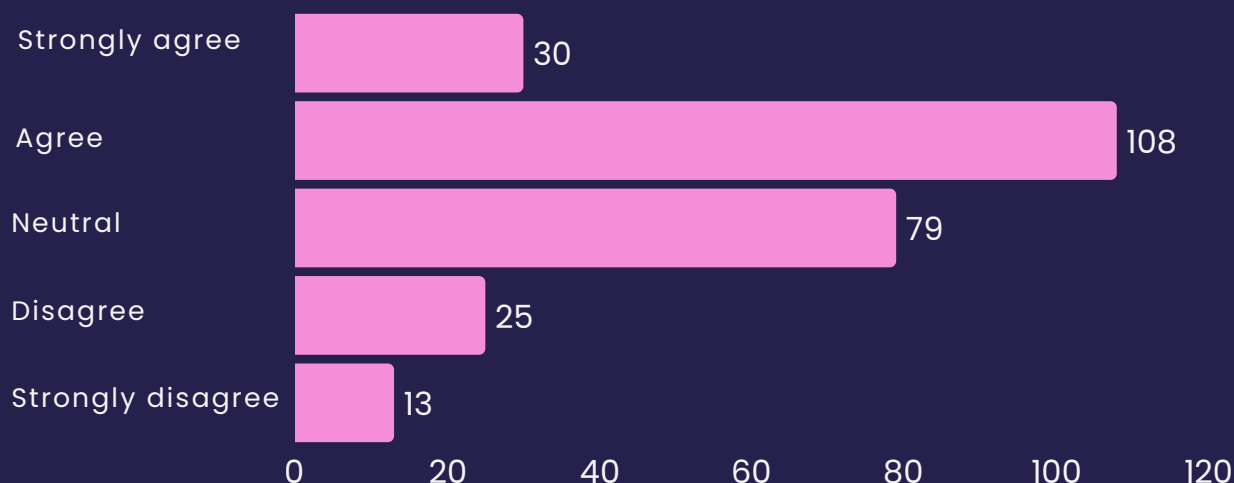
Participants felt that groups and activities could enhance their lives, by allowing them to engage in meaningful ways with other members of the community. Suggestions such as promoting family hubs and creating groups to include dancing, healthy activities and improved children's activities could be beneficial.

"There is not enough stuff to do. I want to move out of Blackpool eventually"

"More stuff to do in the area, more singing more dancing"

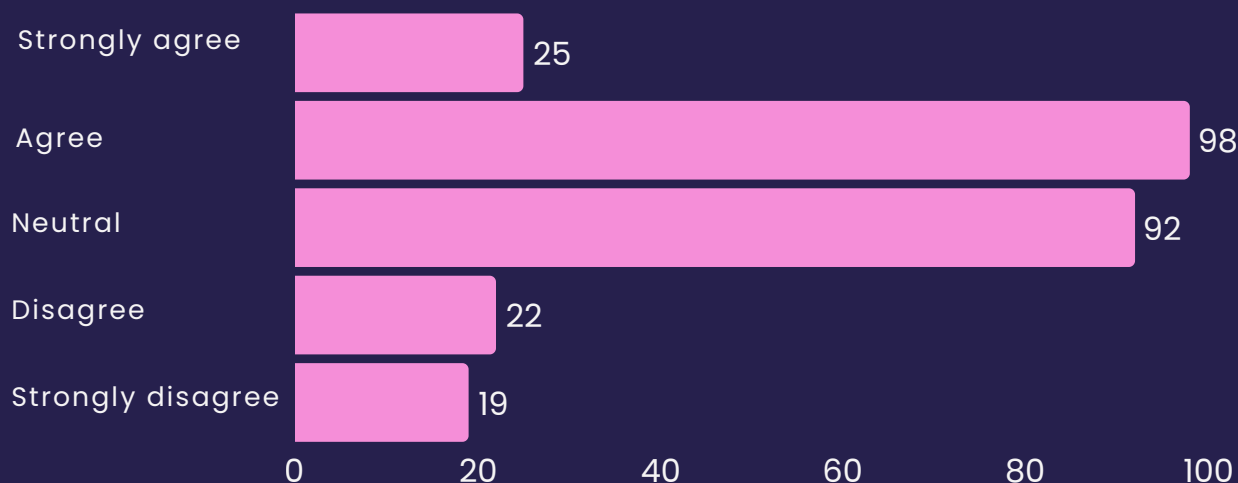
Exploring neighbours willingness to help each other

People in my area are willing to help thier neighbours...



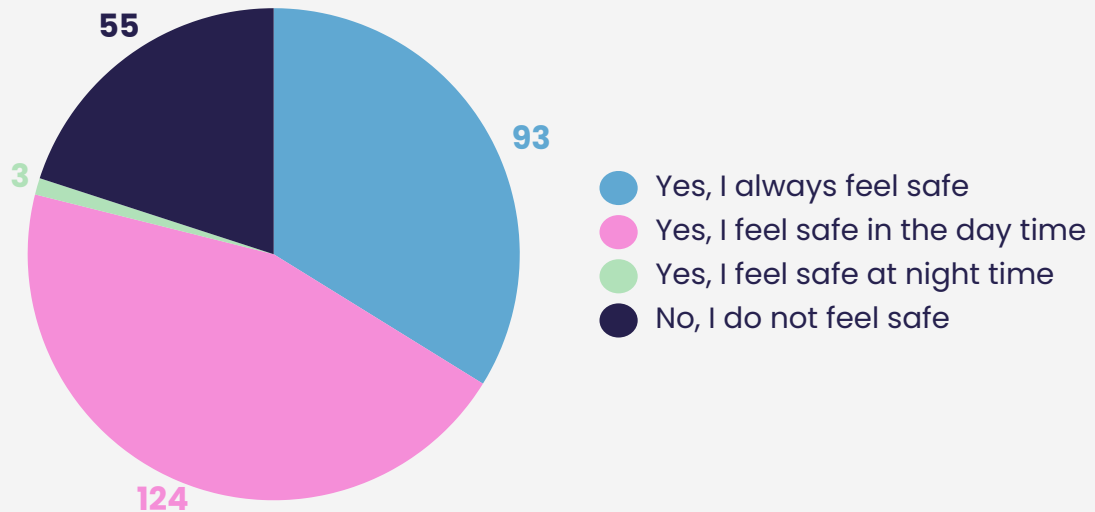
Exploring levels of trust among neighbours

I trust people who live in my neighbourhood...



Safety

Do you feel safe walking around your community at all times of the day?



No, I do not feel safe

Those who reported feeling unsafe in their local area primarily attributed this to visible drug and alcohol use, which many described as creating an intimidating atmosphere and contributing to antisocial behaviour. Respondents noted that groups congregating in public spaces, particularly in the evenings, often made them feel vulnerable and uneasy when walking alone or returning home after dark. This sense of insecurity was made up by perceptions of inadequate community policing and poor street lighting in certain neighbourhoods, which were said to heighten the risk of crime and reduce feelings of safety. Several participants proposed practical measures to address these concerns, including improved lighting in residential estates, greater police presence, and more visible community patrols. Typical comments included calls for **“more street lights on estates”** and the presence of **“a local bobby on the beat”** to deter antisocial activity and reassure residents.



Yes, I always feel safe

Many respondents who reported feeling safe attributed this to the area they live in and the quality of their neighbours, with many making comments such as, **"I live in a nice area with good neighbours."**

A small minority, however, linked their sense of safety to past experiences or personal attitudes, with remarks like, **"I've lived in far worse areas of the town than I do now,"** and **"I refuse to be intimidated."**

One individual noted, **"I'm a tall, well-built, middle-aged, confident male. I'd guess this might be different for women and children,"** while another shared, **"I'm always vigilant as a woman,"** highlighting how perceptions of safety may differ based on gender and personal circumstances.

"There isn't any crime and it's very peaceful."

"I have not experienced anything that would make me feel otherwise."

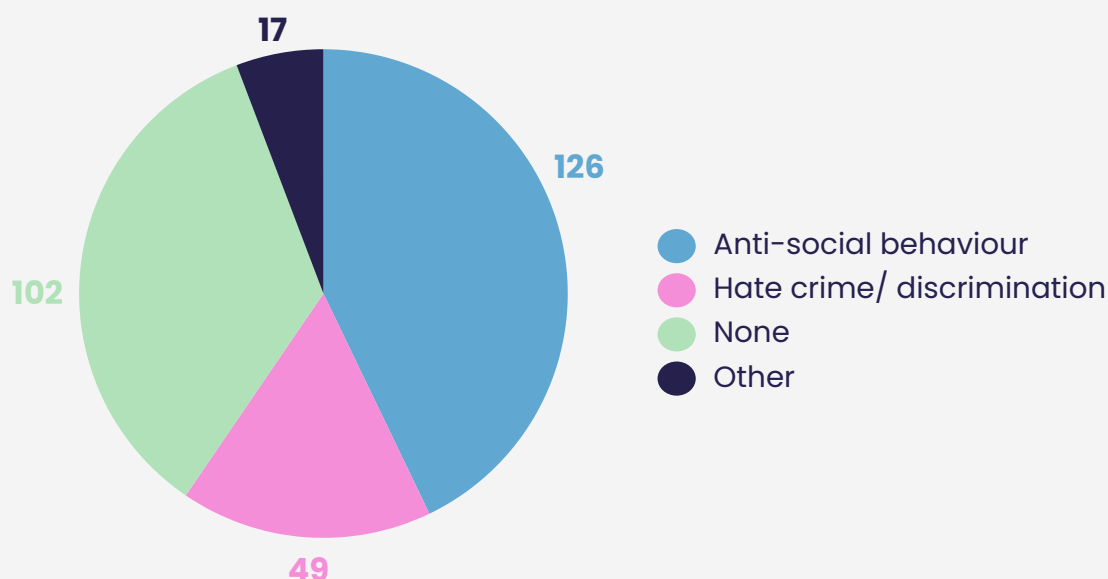
"Because I know there are always others looking out for me."

"Elderly centred neighbourhood so most people are respectful."

Yes, I feel safe in the day time

Most respondents attributed feeling safe during the daytime to the presence of more people and increased visibility. In contrast, feelings of fear and unease were more common at night, when fewer people are around: **"Feel safer in the day time however at night I wouldn't feel safe due to antisocial behaviours and intimidation from others."** Several participants also mentioned concerns about antisocial behaviour, disturbances involving teenagers, and drug and alcohol use after dark, with one commenting **"at night there are gangs of teens at times,"** whilst another stated **"I don't like being out at night - I don't think anyone will do anything you can just see more in the day and there's more people about."**

Experiences in the past 12 months



Impact of these behaviours

Experiencing or witnessing anti-social behaviour, hate crime, and/or discrimination were found to have varying levels of impact on individuals across the community. A small number of respondents reported feeling largely unaffected, suggesting that such incidents **“did not directly impact”** them or commenting that it was **“just anti-social behaviour.”**

However, for most participants, witnessing or experiencing these behaviours had a noticeable emotional or behavioural impact. Responses ranged from describing the effect as **“it’s just inconvenient”** or **“it’s sad but it seems so much more common,”** to expressing that such experiences made them feel scared, nervous, or angry. Some individuals also reported changing their routines or behaviour for example, **“I will not walk my dog in the park at night”** and being **“more conscious to go out at night,”** whilst also avoiding certain areas due to feeling unsafe or uneasy.

Those who had personally experienced hate crime or discrimination tended to describe deeper emotional consequences. Feelings of sadness, anger, and frustration were common, alongside a sense of alienation or hopelessness about life within the town. For some, these experiences contributed to a diminished sense of belonging and trust in the wider community: **“I feel hopeless and that I will never be fully accepted for my race”** and **“I felt a bit out of place.”**

Encouraging a greater sense of safety

Almost half of participants felt that improvements to policing would help them to feel safe in their neighbourhood. People shared that **“a more visible police presence”** and **‘having community officers again,’** working in partnership with community members, could be beneficial in promoting a feeling of safety where they live. Participants reported that their perception of how safe they felt was connected to issues such as previous experiences of being victims of crime, drug related crime, and members of their community engaging in anti-social behaviour. In addition to better policing, less crime and antisocial behaviour, over ten percent of people thought this could be improved by better lit areas and an increase in CCTV.

“More lighting would be helpful...”

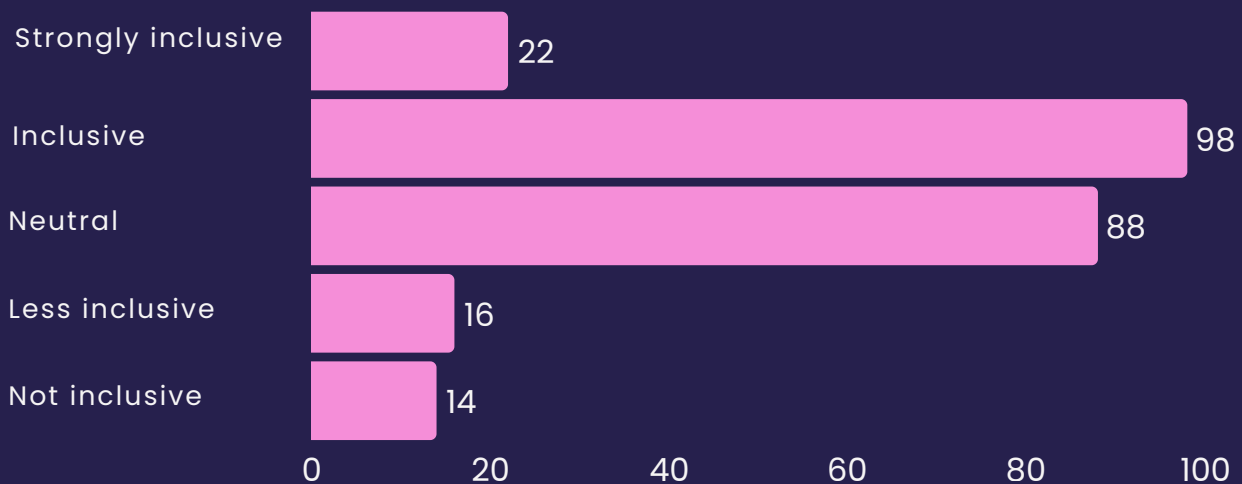
“We would feel safe if there were more police/auxiliaries around.”



Inclusion

This section assesses perceptions of cultural and social diversity in the local area, focusing on how differences in background, identity, and culture are respected. It presents the proportion of residents who feel their neighbourhood is inclusive, explores the reasons behind these views, and considers suggested changes or improvements that could enhance inclusivity.

Community Views on Diversity and Inclusion

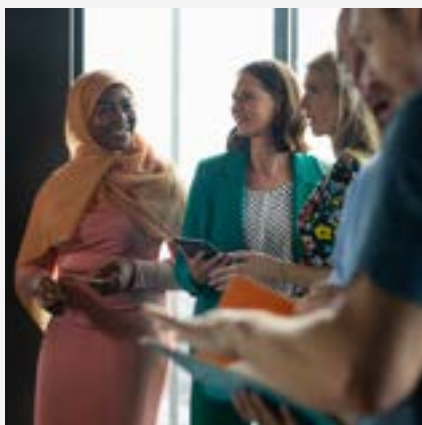


The primary response highlights that people feel their neighbourhood is **inclusive**, indicating generally positive perceptions of respect for cultural, religious, and socioeconomic differences. Over a third of views are **neutral** or have mixed views, suggesting uncertainty about how inclusive the neighbourhood truly is. Meanwhile, a small number feel their neighbourhood is **less/not inclusive**, highlighting that whilst many residents perceive respect for diversity, a minority experience exclusion or disconnection, pointing to areas for improvement in creating a fully inclusive community.

Making our streets welcoming for everyone

Once the level of perceived inclusivity among Blackpool community members was established, participants were asked: 'What changes or improvements do you think could help make your neighbourhood more inclusive and respectful of different cultures, backgrounds, and identities?'





Community spaces

Some respondents suggested improvements around community spaces and increased community engagement would help to improve this. Several people mentioned the need for a diverse and welcoming community centre, stating **“more opportunities to bring different faiths and cultures together may help”** whilst another suggested the need for **“community centres and more green spaces.”**

Poverty & social issues

Poverty and social issues were highlighted by other community members as a barrier to inclusivity. These individuals suggested that if social issues were addressed, it would likely lead to a more inclusive and respectful community in Blackpool. One participant observed that some people attribute poverty and low living standards to immigration, rather than to funding reductions in certain areas – **“... the levels of poverty and the influx of immigrants mean that long term white British residents see the immigrants and transience as the leading problem, when in reality poverty and poor living standards brought around by cuts to welfare, slashed council budgets and austerity are to blame.”**

Education

Furthermore, others put forward that education would make a difference to inclusivity in Blackpool, suggesting that it would help if people were in possession of **“factual information.”** Multiple people felt that social media outlets negatively influence people’s opinions on the subject of inclusivity, **“For people to stop taking what they read in the press and social media as gospel...”**

“Education for older and more isolated residents in cultural diversity.”



Integration and events

Some respondents identified integration as the main solution, whilst others highlighted a desire for local events as the key to improving inclusivity in Blackpool. One participant noted that, **"Seeing multi-faith churches is a good step, as well as celebrating different holidays with local events."** However, others reflected on the challenges of integration, observing that, **"It's really hard to integrate people who don't want to integrate. Or for people to adapt to a new culture."**

Racism

A number of participants raised concerns about racist and prejudiced attitudes affecting Blackpool's ability to be inclusive. One respondent commented that, **"People are becoming afraid of difference, and xenophobia and racism are becoming more prevalent."** Another stated that, **"Blackpool is full of racists because it has a disproportionately high percentage of asylum seekers who appear to get preferential treatment over locals."**

Uncertainty

A significant proportion of respondents, either felt that no action was needed or were unsure what could be done to make Blackpool's neighbourhoods more inclusive and respectful of different cultures and identities.

"No changes should be made, making changes creates segregation."

Overall, there was a diverse range of opinions on what could improve inclusivity in Blackpool. The four biggest areas for improvement were increasing community spaces and engagement, addressing poverty and social issues, and improving education and integration.



Mapping Social Connectivity

The most commonly mentioned group of people that respondents felt were disconnected were elderly people. Some participants mentioned elderly people as being at risk of isolation, **“Elderly people are a mixed bag- I think a portion do attend groups such as church groups, but there are still a large portion who are isolated at home.”** The next most mentioned group was people who have poor physical and/or mental health, **“people with disabilities/ long term conditions – often underrepresented in community activity.”** Other groups mentioned include: young people, young males, those living in poverty, LGBTQ+ residents, children with complex needs, carers, refugees/asylum seekers, neurodiverse people, transient adults, and ethnic minorities.

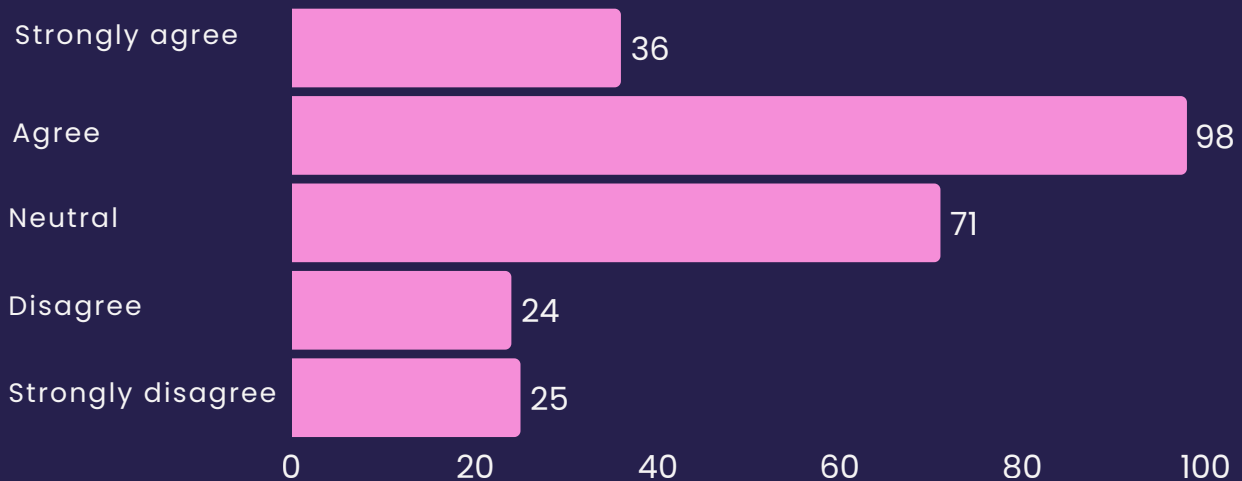
In contrast, the group that people felt is most connected are religious groups. Some respondents said that this group is connected: **“Faith-based communities- provide strong informal support, especially for older and vulnerable residents.”** Other groups that were mentioned were some ethnic groups (unspecified which), parents of younger children, and VCFSE leaders and active volunteers.

Pride

This section explores participants sense of pride in their local area, identifying the key factors that contribute to this feeling. It outlines the proportion of people who report experiencing pride of place, examines the reasons behind these views, and considers what this means for the wider community in Blackpool.

Pride of place - Residents

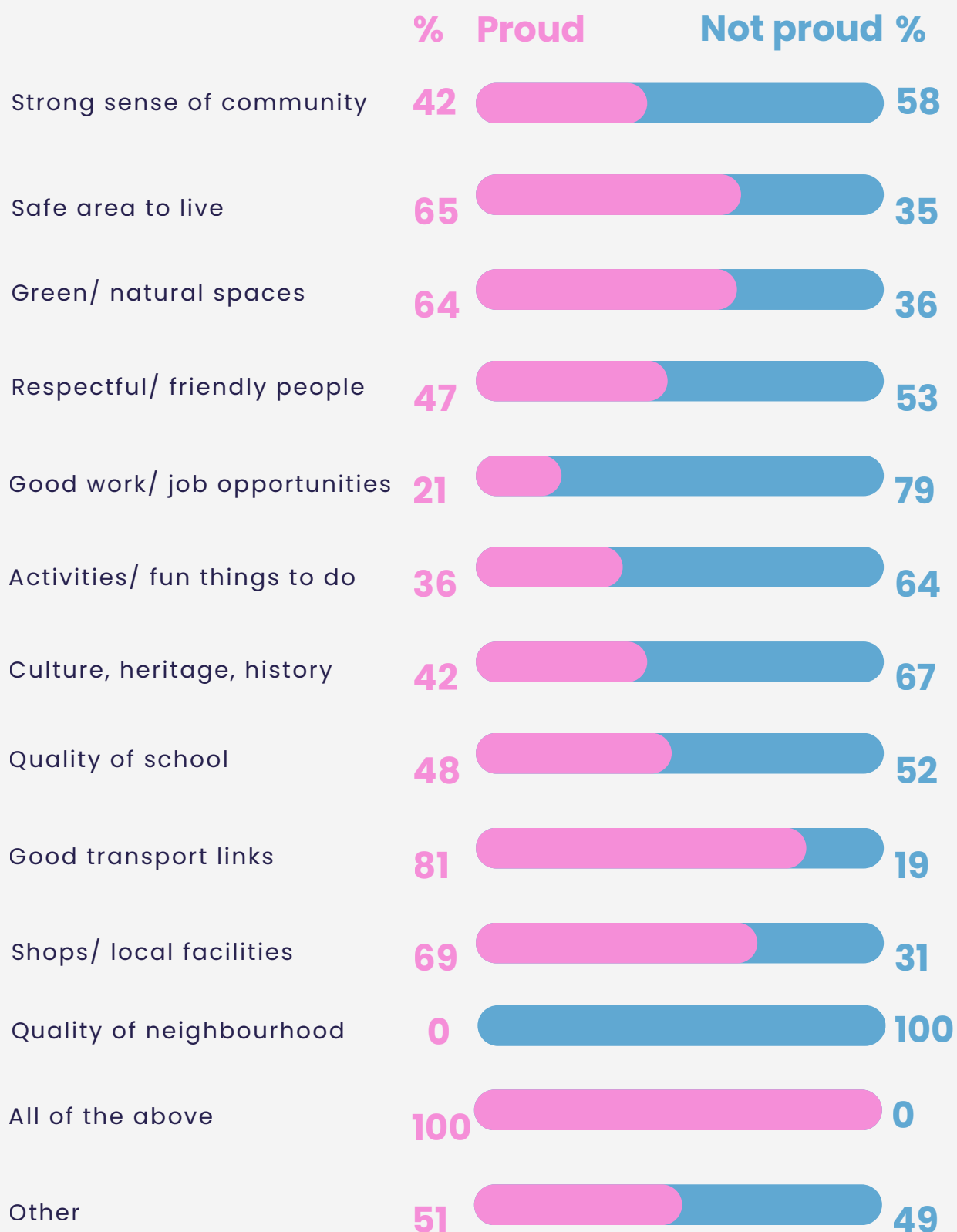
I feel proud to live in my neighbourhood...



The majority of respondents feel proud to live in their neighbourhood, indicating a generally positive sense of place and community. However, over a quarter, are neutral, suggesting ambivalence or mixed feelings, and one in five, express dissatisfaction, highlighting that pride is not universal and there may be underlying issues affecting residents connection to their area.

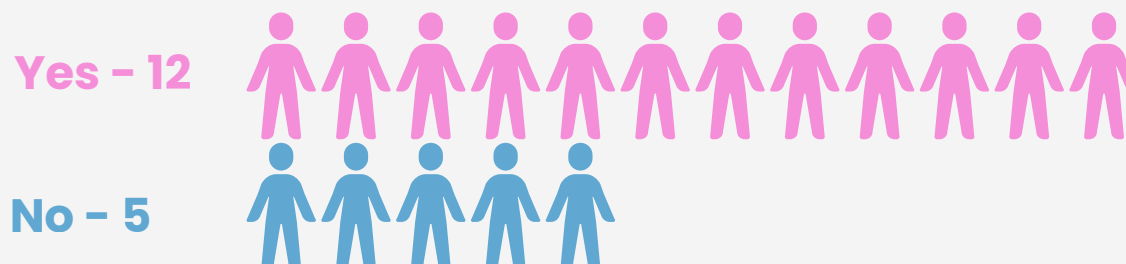
Factors influencing pride – residents

To better understand perceptions of local pride, respondents were asked to identify factors that contribute to or detract from their sense of pride in the area. The results highlight a mix of community, environmental, and social influences, as shown in the table below.

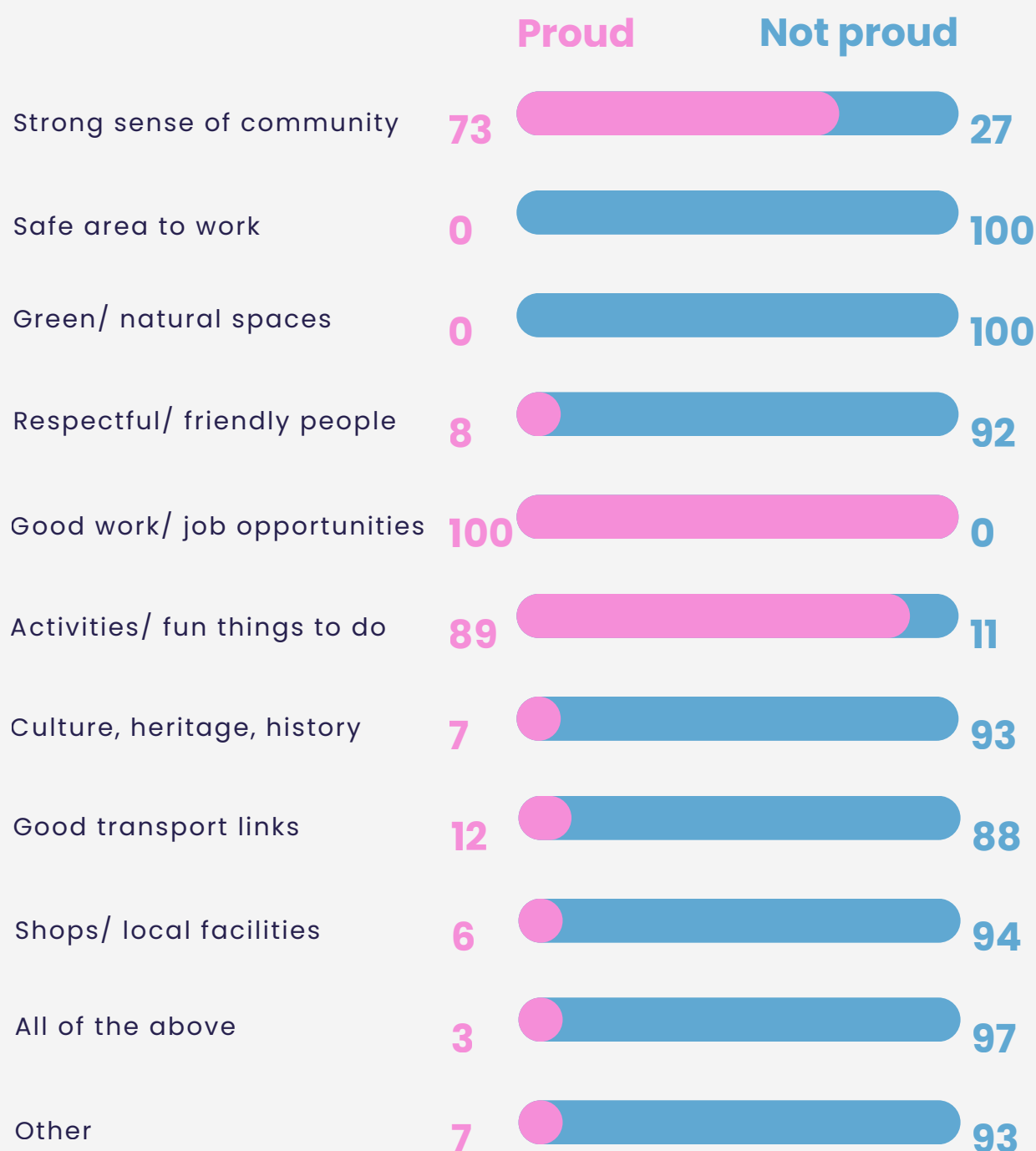


Pride of place - Workers

I feel proud to work in Blackpool...



Factors influencing pride - workers



Our Town, Our Pride

Young people were invited to share their thoughts on what makes them feel proud to be part of the town through a range of engagement activities. The questions were asked during school sessions and youth group discussions, encouraging open and creative responses.

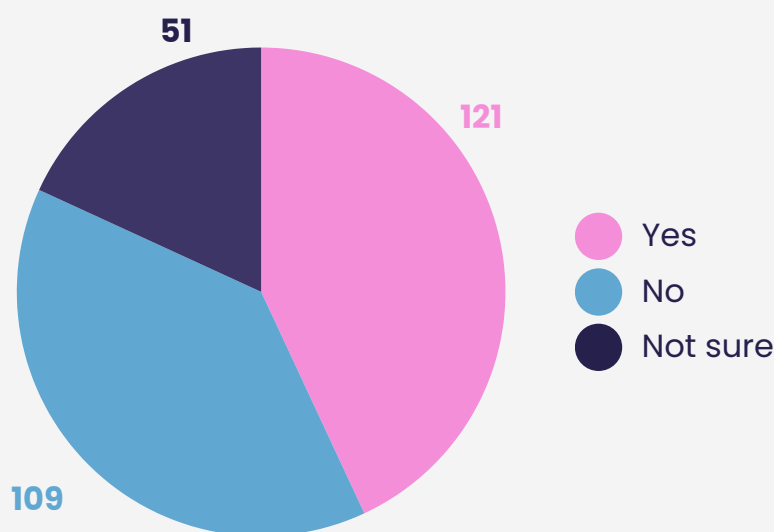
To reach a wider audience, suggestion boxes were also placed in key locations across the town, allowing wider participation for individuals to contribute their views independently. This approach enabled the collection of a diverse range of perspectives and experiences, offering valuable insight into what matters most to the younger generation in the community.



Community

This section explores the extent to which residents feel a sense of belonging within their local community, examining not only whether they identify as part of a community, but also the nature and characteristics of that community. It also considers how this sense of belonging, or lack thereof, influences residents overall wellbeing, social connections, and day-to-day experiences.

Do you identify as being a part of a community?



What community do you identify as being a part of?

A racial or ethnic community	17
A religious or spiritual community	21
An LGBTQ+ community	17
A professional or occupational community	39
An academic or educational community	32
An online or gaming community	8
An artistic or creative community	28
Prefer not to say	18
Other	36

Feeling part of a community

Participants provided a diverse response regarding feeling a part of a community. Some said that they thought **“family hubs give people a great sense of community,”** whilst others felt that they **“don’t feel a part of any community in Blackpool.”** These differing views were almost equally split.

Those who felt a part of a community shared that this was due to being able to attend community hubs, groups, and activities. They felt that these outlets enhanced their social life, enabled them to explore hobbies, and maintain friendships. Many highlighted that being part of a community helped them feel a sense of belonging, acceptance, and understanding.

“It helps me feel I belong to something, it stops loneliness.”

“It enhances my sense of wellbeing after suffering from years of anxiety.”

People also commented on the positive ways community affects them. Along with connection and understanding, many felt that community was essential in promoting wellbeing and mental health.

Another emerging theme was that of support. People felt that by being able to connect with their community, they could access support, informally or formally, through organised activities and hubs.

“It is important to me to meet people in my situation.”



No Sense of Community

Of those who reported that they did not feel a part of a community, many said this had a negative impact on their lives. People often said that a lack of community left them feeling isolated, lonely, and depressed.

“Nobody knows anything about my family and the struggles we face, it can feel very isolating.”

Individuals were asked whether they felt part of a community, and how this sense of belonging affected their lives. A substantial proportion of respondents, representing a wide range of demographic groups, highlighted a perceived lack of belonging within a community. Many expressed that this absence of connection caused feelings of isolation, with some noting: **“Without a community people often feel angry, lost and turn to unhelpful coping strategies.”**

Respondents frequently linked their sense of disconnection to life transitions or the absence of local groups: **“Once my child grew out of the clubs I lost my link.”**

Several participants also drew attention to the specific challenges of forming positive connections in Blackpool. For some, the town’s associations with alcohol and drug use created additional barriers to belonging, particularly for those who have struggled with addiction: **“Communities have negative connotations in this town due to drink and drugs. If you have an addictive personality it is difficult in Blackpool as you fall in with the wrong kind of community. It becomes difficult to leave these communities due to the fear of isolation.”**

“I don’t feel a part of any community in Blackpool.”



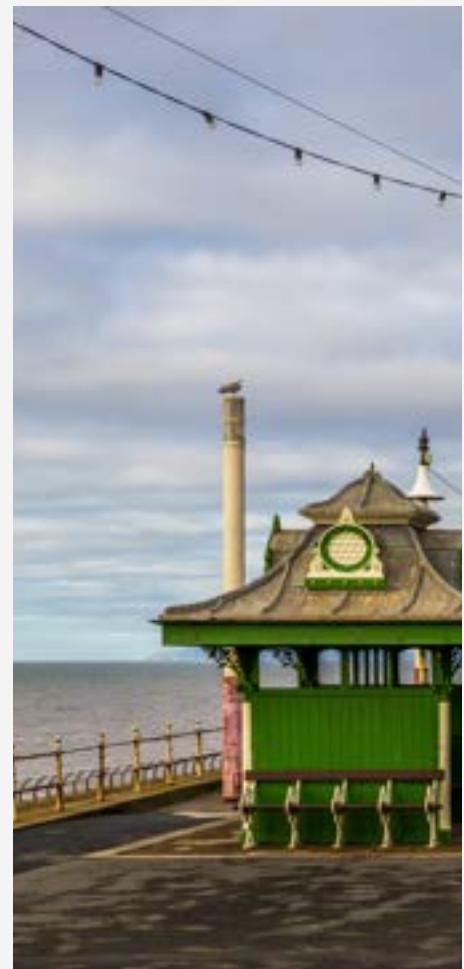
Some participants highlighted wider societal challenges, noting that the absence of community support can leave individuals feeling isolated, particularly during times of crisis: **“Without groups I would feel isolated – we saw that a lot during COVID.”**

Although respondents often commented on the negative impacts of not feeling part of a community, this was not necessarily because communities were lacking. Some people felt that they did not want to be included in the **“wrong kind of communities,”** and highlighted the need for social activities that were not centred around drugs or alcohol. Participants suggested an increase in delivering community-based support at weekends, to support those feeling isolated or in recovery.

Additionally, some participants felt unsafe going out, which affected their ability to be part of a community: **“I choose to keep myself separate for safety reasons.”**

Stronger Communities

Many people felt they had seen strong examples of community in Blackpool. They often noted that dedicated individuals and community champions drive change and encourage community spirit. Areas such as Grange Park and the recovery community were seen as having high community engagement.



“There are pockets of strong community connection, e.g. South Shore and Grange Park areas. This seems to depend very much on the VCFSE sector to promote and facilitate the sense of community.”

Participants felt that sport events and local activities played a big role in facilitating community, along with the VCFSE sector.

Connections with neighbours were highlighted as another challenge in community development, with some people reporting **“not knowing their neighbours.”**

One in ten respondents identified strengthening community as the most impactful change that could improve life in the town. Many residents expressed they would like more opportunities to engage with each other. There is a growing sense that people are becoming more isolated, despite being surrounded by others. Survey feedback suggested that more community events, such as street parties, town hall meetings, and local groups, could help bring people together and develop a stronger sense of belonging. People also highlighted the role of community projects and improvements that support residents in improving their own communities. They stated that it would be **“nice if there was more community”** and **“more community things going on.”** Overall, the responses indicate a need for initiatives that encourage connection, participation, and a shared sense of purpose among residents.



“Town hall meetings and community forums for residents to participate in local decision making.”

Workplaces and Community

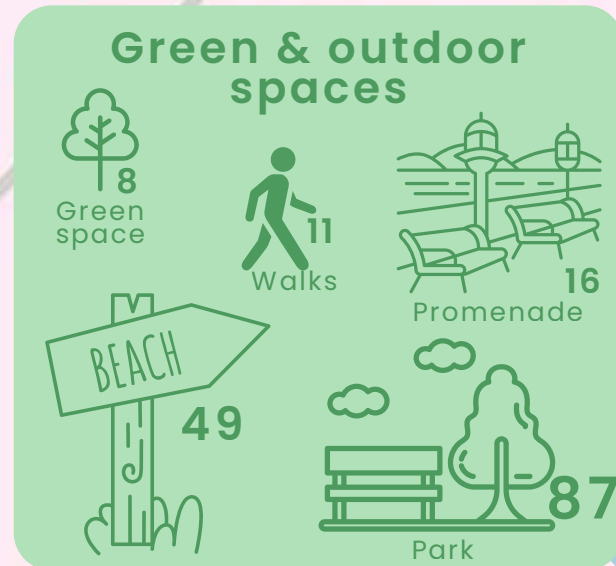
Participants recognised that workplaces, particularly in the VCFSE and public sectors, played a role in supporting community ties. Some felt their workplaces were highly engaged with this agenda, whilst others believe more could be done. Suggestions included proactively identifying community and workforce needs, and dedicated roles to lead connection-building.

These insights suggest that when community is lacking, individuals can face challenges such as isolation and poor wellbeing. On the other hand, those who engage actively with a community that resonates with them benefit from a sense of belonging, connection, and purpose.

“Organisational values do not always match those of the community. Working with different people from different backgrounds can lead to awareness of the different communities your colleagues come from.”

Social spaces & activities

Below is a display of where residents like to socialise locally.



What is missing for residents?

The responses highlight a strong community desire for more **accessible**, **affordable**, and **inclusive spaces** in Blackpool. Many residents emphasised the lack of safe and engaging activities for young people, calling for an increase in youth hubs and affordable family options. Others expressed a need for better-maintained green spaces, clean parks, and local areas that encourage outdoor recreation and social connection. Across age groups, people noted that while some facilities exist, factors such as cost, accessibility, and outdated infrastructure often prevent participation. There is also a clear appetite for creative, cultural, and community spaces. Places where residents can meet, learn, and share experiences without alcohol or high costs. Overall, the feedback reflects a community eager for investment in social, recreational, and cultural opportunities that enhance belonging, wellbeing, and pride in place.

"There should be more for our young people providing a safe environment for them out of school hours – like the youth clubs of years ago!"

"Although we have Stanley Park and are very lucky, we need more green spaces and trees in Blackpool, especially in the town centre."

"Lack of decent shops in Blackpool. There are too many discount shops and charity shops."

"More free activities and for families."

"Youth clubs. Young people do not have nearly enough to occupy them."

"Cheaper access to classes, gym or crafts."

"I would love to see more cultural spaces like café gardens along the promenade, places where people can meet, relax, and enjoy a calm atmosphere."

"No alcohol-related spaces for meetings and activities."

"There's not a lot of facilities for high school kids to have some independence and be safe at the same time. Anywhere that is available is expensive and requires travel."

"A sense of local neighbourhood shared-space – where we could socialise, share, organise, and meet."

Community Participation

Participation in decision making groups (In the last 12 months)

A decision making group set up to regenerate the local area	13
A decision making group set up to tackle local crime problems	8
A tenants' group decision making committee	6
A group making decisions on local education services	7
A group making decisions on local services for young people	5
Another group making decisions on services in the local community	14
None of these	197
Other	14



The table above shows how many respondents have engaged in various decision making groups over the last 12 months, and whilst there are pockets of engagement across different local issues, the overwhelming majority of residents who responded (around 85–90%) reported no involvement in formal decision-making groups. This highlights potential barriers to participation, a lack of accessible opportunities or a lack of awareness of such groups to influence decision-making.

Solving barriers

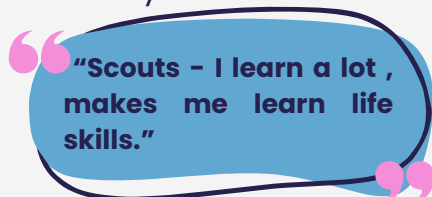
Survey participants were asked what would enable them to take part in a decision-making group. Their responses provided valuable insight into the factors that could enhance resident involvement and accessibility. Many respondents highlighted the importance of flexibility, suggesting **“online participation”** or that opportunities to participate be offered through direct surveys or polls: **“low effort ways such as completing surveys or feedback forms.”** In addition to travel barriers, several residents noted that having **“opportunities outside of working hours”** or **“at weekends”** would make participation more feasible due to work commitments.

Others emphasised the need for accessible and convenient venues, mentioning locations such as **“Community centre, churches”** and **“local places such as GP surgeries”** as preferable options. Some residents also identified a lack of awareness as a key barrier, explaining that groups are often not well advertised and therefore remain unknown to many: **“If you don’t advertise then we don’t know”** and **“I would love to be apart but don’t know how to.”** Finally, a few participants expressed frustration about feeling unheard or disregarded in previous consultations, stating comments such as, **“I would need to feel like the group has clout and actually addresses the systems and structures that perpetuate inequality”** and **“if the council does not agree it’s not happening and if they want to it’s not being stopped”**.



What helps children **feel connected** to their community

Groups and activities make children and young people feel a part of their community.



What they wish for in their community



40%

Wished for a reduction in drug and alcohol use.

CYP said people using drugs and alcohol made them feel **unsafe**



25%

wished for no **smoking** and **vaping**.



24%

wished for a **cleaner** place to live.



25%

wished for more **kindness** in their community.

Empowerment Observations

Whilst engaging with individuals for this project, the Empowerment Engagement Team observed several patterns and behaviours that were not reflected in the analysis of respondent feedback.

Sense of Community:

Many individuals in our town did not recognise themselves as being part of any particular community, with most respondents identifying they believed they only belonged with their workplace or educational setting. However, the team noted that these individuals were, in fact, connected to other communities such as local neighbourhood groups or hobby-based communities, though they did not recognise or label these as such.

Understanding of Diversity:

The team also identified a general lack of understanding or education in Blackpool regarding people from different cultural or social backgrounds. Notably, the most significant stigma and lack of awareness appeared to concern asylum seekers, refugees, and resettled individuals. During engagement sessions, members of other organisations were observed to avoid or shut down discussions around these topics, suggesting discomfort or uncertainty in addressing them.

Engagement and Awareness:

Many residents appeared indifferent or disengaged, often choosing not to participate in the project. This seemed to stem from a limited awareness of what community means, as well as a lack of understanding or motivation to be involved in one. As well as this, the concept of community cohesion appears to be quite abstract and removed from daily life for many, meaning they prioritised discussing other issues that feel more real and relevant.

Recommendations

Empower local voices through community champions

Recommendation: Establish a community champion model that focuses on developing and supporting local residents to take active roles in their communities. This approach would provide training, mentoring, and capacity-building opportunities to help individuals grow in confidence, communication, and leadership skills. Community champions would act as trusted connectors between their neighbourhoods and local organisations, sharing information, gathering feedback, and promoting local initiatives. Recruiting champions from a wide range of backgrounds would ensure representation of the community's diversity, while ongoing support and recognition would help sustain their involvement and sense of purpose. This model not only strengthens local engagement and relationships, but also invests in the personal and professional development of residents, helping to create a stronger, more empowered community.

Strengthening community spirit and neighbourhood connections

Recommendation: Develop initiatives that create a stronger sense of community belonging. This could include neighbourhood meet-ups, "get to know your neighbour" events, and community street parties supported by local councillors or community champions. Promotion of this through local networks and social media will ensure inclusivity and awareness. Encourage intergenerational activities to bridge gaps between age groups and strengthen local ties.

Expanding local social opportunities and events

Recommendation: Increase the number and visibility of local social events, such as coffee mornings, park gatherings, and cultural festivals. Provide small community grants or micro-funding to support resident-led activities. Ensure events are affordable or free to attend and spread across different wards to reach diverse residents. Encourage people to have a say about events they would like to see.

A vertical photograph of Blackpool Tower at night, illuminated with bright blue lights. The tower's lattice structure is clearly visible against a dark sky. The base of the tower and the surrounding area are also lit up, with reflections visible in the water in the foreground.

Tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB) through community collaboration

Recommendation: Strengthen relationships between residents, community police, and youth services to proactively address ASB. Reintroduce a visible community police presence and support neighbourhood watch groups. Encourage restorative approaches that engage young people positively through diversionary activities, mentoring, and youth leadership schemes.

Improving affordability and access to local attractions and services

Recommendation: Provide incentives to encourage local venues and businesses to offer residents discounts, community passes, or “local days” at key attractions. Develop partnerships with service providers to ensure affordable options for leisure, wellbeing, and cultural activities to ensure barriers to participation are reduced.

Enhancing youth engagement and opportunities

Recommendation: Create more safe spaces for children and young people to socialise, gain new skills and engage in positive behaviours. Improve advertising of existing groups through schools, social media, and community notice boards. Include youth voices in decision-making through youth forums and advisory panels linked to the local Authority. Create a ‘follow on’ provision for older teens to bridge the gap between youth clubs and adulthood.

Encouraging community use of green spaces

Recommendation: Promote local parks and green spaces as hubs for wellbeing and social connection. Organise guided walks, outdoor fitness sessions, and nature-based events to encourage residents of all ages to spend time outdoors. Improve accessibility and safety in parks by ensuring they are clean, well-lit, and welcoming for all.

Supporting resident-led action and volunteering

Recommendation: Provide small grants, resources, and logistical support for residents who want to improve their neighbourhoods. Create a simple process for community-led clean-ups, garden projects, or local art installations. Recognise and celebrate volunteer contributions through local awards or features in community newsletters.



Enhancing area cleanliness and shared responsibility

Recommendation: Introduction of more regular community clean-up events, in partnership with ENVECO and local residents. Increase bin availability, introduce seagull-proof bags for those without wheelie bins, and encourage reporting of fly-tipping through easy digital channels. Promote shared ownership of local environments to build pride and accountability. Run regular community clean-ups encouraging residents, organisations and businesses to clean the public spaces around them to encourage community pride.

Building cultural understanding and inclusion

Recommendation: Facilitate opportunities for different cultural and faith groups to connect safely through shared events, festivals, and dialogue sessions. Introduce educational workshops or campaigns that challenge misinformation about diversity and celebrate heritage, ensuring all communities feel represented and respected.

Improving housing and neighbourhood safety

Recommendation: Collaborate with housing providers and residents to address property conditions, improve lighting, and ensure safe communal spaces. Strengthen community-police relations through regular drop-ins and open communication channels between residents and local officers to build trusting relationships.

Encouraging civic participation and transparency

Recommendation: Promote opportunities for residents to get involved in local decision-making through online consultations, accessible forums, and ward-level discussion groups. Ensure that residents have the opportunity to feel heard and have their suggestions actioned. Improve advertising of what's already happening locally and simplify ways for people to contribute ideas or feedback to boost inclusivity and accessibility.



Empowerment
Charity

Blackpool Council

Get in touch to find out more:

www.empowermentcharity.org.uk

0300 32 32 100 (Option 1)

