



Age friendly engagement in the Royal Borough of Kingston

Research report

(Summarised version of Kaizen and Social Engine report. Summarised sections prepared by Royal Borough of Kingston Council)

January 2024

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Who conducted the research

The research was delivered by Kaizen and Social Engine.



Kaizen, founded in 2000, is an award-winning social business that specialises in designing, delivering and facilitating cutting edge projects. Kaizen delivers work across the community sector including the areas of regeneration, education, employment, housing and the social care field. Kaizen has wide-ranging community engagement, research and consultation expertise.

The community outreach was delivered by highly experienced members of the Kaizen engagement team. All are expert at quickly getting into relationship with people, enabling them to engage with people who do not normally get involved and give their views. They come from a variety of different cultural backgrounds and have diverse lived and professional experience including substantial experience of engaging young people. Members of the team are fluent in a range of languages including, Amharic, Arabic, Farsi, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Tigrinya.



Social Engine was founded in 2015 to support organisations to adopt an evidenced-based and insight-led approach. We work with charities, local authorities, social enterprises and other social purpose organisations to overcome organisational challenges through engagement, research and the application of evidence into practice.

Our work involves conducting research, gathering insights and applying behavioural insights to support service improvement across a wide range of policy and service areas in order to improve outcomes for individuals and communities.

Introduction and background to the research

The Royal Borough of Kingston commissioned Kaizen and Social Engine to undertake engagement across the borough as part of their ambition to become an age friendly place. We set out to design engagement to help the council understand the barriers and motivators to being physically active in Kingston and to gather insights into the age friendliness of the area.

The research scope and questionnaires were designed in collaboration with RB Kingston staff, in a process over several months that included co-design workshops.

Aims of the research

Research Question - *How age friendly is Kingston currently, and what would make it a really great place to grow older for all residents?*

Beneath this overarching research question we developed five questions which would guide our survey design:

1. What are current perceptions of Kingston as a place to grow older? How age friendly is Kingston?
2. What sorts of activities are older people currently doing and what would they be interested in taking part in?
3. How do older people find out about relevant services and activity and how aware are they about particular opportunities available?
4. What are the motivations and barriers to being more active and doing more activities?
5. What would make Kingston a better place in older age?

Methodology and approach to analysis

We designed a survey as our research instrument, to engage the local community and gather evidence and insight to help provide answers to our research questions.

We used a combination of community outreach to conduct face-to-face interviews and an online survey to gather opinions from the borough's local communities.

The following methods were used to hear people's views:

- One-on-one conversations in the community
- Small group conversations in the community
- Online survey
- Telephone interviews
- Self-complete questionnaires to return by post

A total of 400 members of the community participated in the research

- 169 individual interviews conducted through the outreach
- 86 people were involved in 27 small group conversations as part of the outreach

- 132 people completed the online survey
- 4 individual conversations were held over the phone
- 9 postal responses were received

Outreach

Community outreach took place in late October and early November 2023, over 18 days of engagement.

The engagement process involved members of the Kaizen engagement team going out into the community in various areas of Kingston and speaking to people on their terms, in their spaces, in the community.

Engagement took place on all days of the week, and between the hours of 10am and 7pm.

Individual interviews

- A semi-structured questionnaire was developed and used as the primary method for capturing the views of local community members. 169 people were interviewed using this method.
- The questionnaire included a mixture of open and closed questions and on average would take 15 minutes conversation to complete.
- Interviews were conducted in a wide range of locations across Kingston.
- Interviews were conducted on all days of the week, including weekends, between the hours of 10am and 7pm.
- All questionnaires were completed in paper form and then were transcribed online for analysis.

Small Group Conversations

- 86 people were involved in 27 small group conversations.
- Street Focus Groups are a community consultation methodology pioneered by Kaizen.
- Street Focus groups mean that groups of people can be engaged in discussions about key themes, where individual interviews are not practical or the best methodology.
- Conversations ranged from 10 to 30 minutes and were held in many different locations in the area.
- Group size ranged from 2 to 6 people.
- The responses from the group discussions were also transcribed online for analysis.

Online engagement

- The engagement team had business cards with a URL and QR code linking to an online survey, which they could share with people who would prefer participating in this research in their own time.
- 132 people completed the online survey.
- The online survey was open from middle of October until middle of December 2023

Telephone conversations

- 4 individual conversations were held over the phone.
- Conversations took approximately 30 minutes.

Self-complete questionnaires

- 200 paper copies were also distributed by the Council for people who wished to complete the survey on paper and return it by Post. Pre-paid envelopes were provided
- 9 postal responses were received.

Where we engaged people

- We carried out street outreach and engagement in various areas of the Royal Borough of Kingston, including:
 - Kingston Town - High street, Cambridge Estate, Fairfield Park
 - Maldens & Coombe - Malden High Street and surroundings
 - Surbiton - High Street and surrounding streets
 - South of the Borough - Chessington, North Parade
- We stopped people on busy high streets, speaking to people outside shops, supermarkets, cafés, corner-shops and parks. We engaged with people in their local communities in everyday spaces that they frequent, such the church, the local library or the market.

Approach to analysis

The engagement generated a significant amount of qualitative and quantitative data. To guide our approach to analysis and to reduce the risks of cognitive biases and other common errors made when analysing data, we:

- Finalised data sources and the variables within each source;
- Identified covariates to be analysed;
- Devised an approach to explore each data source.

Quantitative data analysis

For the quantitative data, the headline analysis was supplemented by exploring a range of covariates to identify any differences in responses to the questions among particular segments of the population within our overall sample, in order to ensure the views of particular groups were not overlooked.

For the covariate analysis, we investigated whether there are any statistical associations with certain demographic characteristics collected within the survey specifically; gender, and age. We also looked at differences in findings collected through the outreach compared with those from online responses.

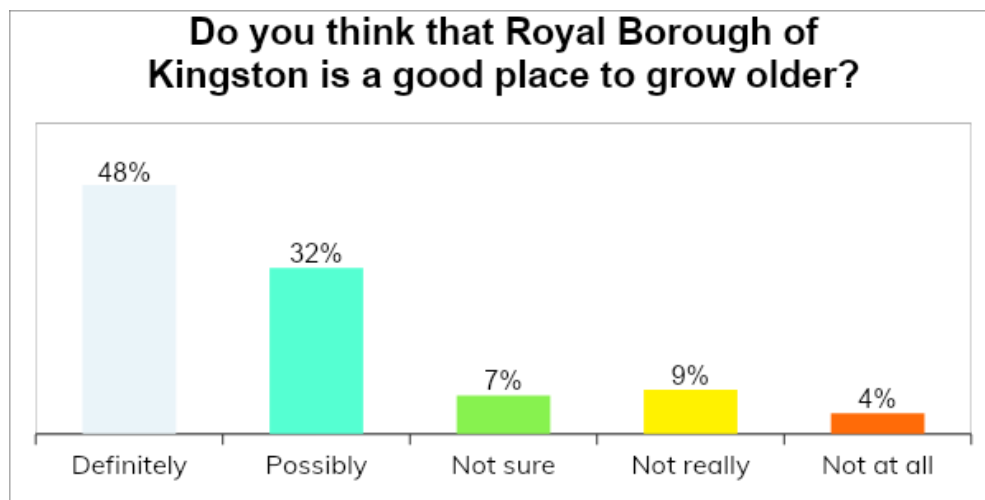
Qualitative data – thematic analysis

For the qualitative data in our open survey questions, we used thematic analysis to uncover the issues raised. Thematic analysis is a theoretically flexible qualitative analytical method which searches for themes or patterns in the data. It is a method suitable for a wide range of research questions but is particularly appropriate for questions around people's experiences, views and perceptions. To identify themes, we used the principles of 'grounded theory'. The phrase 'grounded theory' refers to theory that is developed inductively from a body of data, rather than from the preconceptions of the researchers.

Findings

What are current perceptions of Kingston as a place to grow older? How age friendly is Kingston?

When we asked people whether they felt that Kingston was a good place to grow older, a significant majority told us that they felt it was. Around half (48%) said 'definitely' and 80% said either 'definitely' or 'possibly'. Only 4% of people who responded to the survey said 'not at all' and around one in 8 (13%) said either 'not really' or 'not at all'.



When asked to explain more about the reasons for their responses, we heard a number of people comment on things including the local shopping and retail offer, good health care provision, access to green space and the natural environment, local transport and that Kingston was a safe place to live. Some people told us that they value the free travel for the over 60s, that there were 'lots of good activities' available in the Borough, and that they valued the local community.

"I can walk everywhere - Great transport links."

"Feel safe, has green spaces, I would agree it could be"

"There is some good things like the river, hospital nearby, shops in town."

"Lots to do & feel part of the community."

"We have an age-friendly community here, so I'd say yes, definitely."

Many of the things which were felt to adversely impact on the quality of life for older people were the same as those which others felt were positives about living in the borough. Whilst some felt the range of things to do was a positive, others felt there was not enough things to do which were suitable, interesting and dignified for older people. Similarly, safety and crime – whilst being seen as a positive by some – was also referred to as a negative aspect of being an older person living in the area by others.

Transport and healthcare were two other issues that were seen as both a positive and a negative aspect of local life from different respondents. People who are reliant on using a

car travel or public transport due to health reasons in particular, saw the borough's focus on cycling and active travel as a barrier for them. The thing most frequently viewed as a negative aspect of healthcare was the emphasis and reliance on online services. Among the other things which people felt impeded the quality of life for older people were the high cost of living in the area, a shortage of public toilets and parking. Some people told us they felt it 'used to be better' in the past.

"I'm worried about provision of adult education, and other local activities, which seem to be declining"

"Access to GP appointments difficult. Emphasis on cycling and walking doesn't seem to take into account those less able to do this and need car parking or good public transport. Lack of public toilets around the borough"

"Crime has gone up, lots of stabbings in the area recently not safe in Kingston anymore"

"Aside from living costs. Need more weekend activities with a regularly schedule, so if you don't have fixed program you can go"

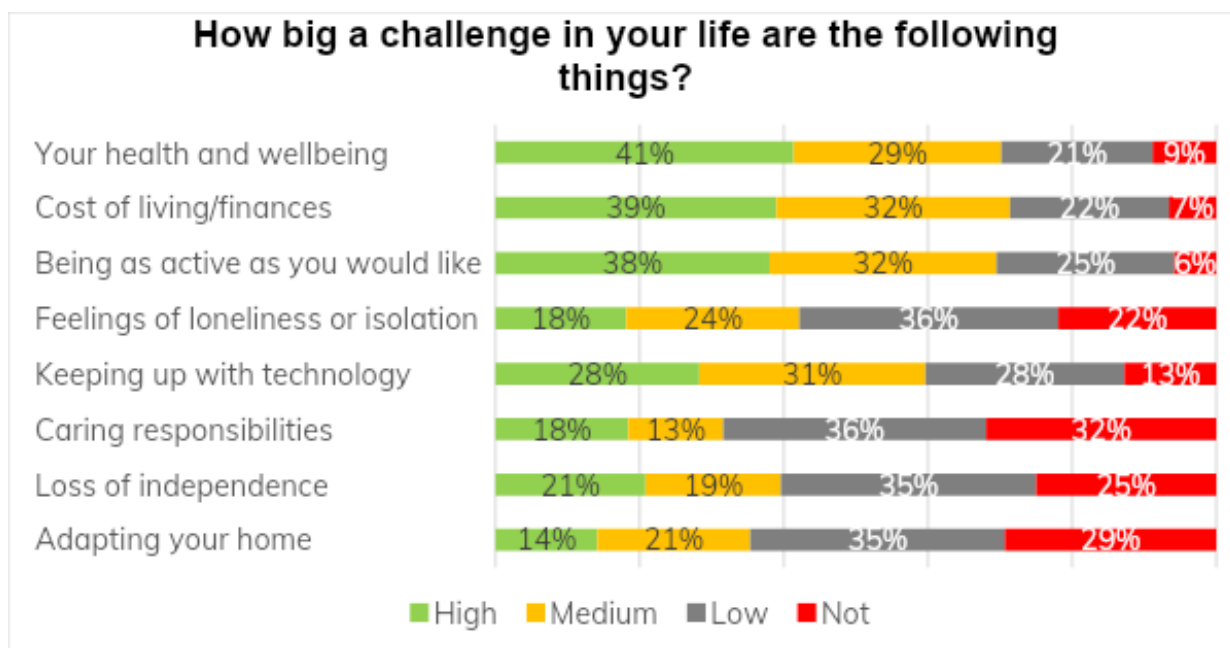
We asked people how much of a challenge various factors were in their lives – whether they were high, medium or low or not a challenge at all.

We heard that health and wellbeing, the cost of living and finances and being as active were the biggest challenges people faced in their lives – around 40% of people said these were 'high', along with a further 30% rating them as 'medium'.

Keeping up with technology was also viewed as a major challenge for older people in the borough – with 28% ranking it 'high' and 31% 'medium'.

Caring responsibilities was most frequently felt not to be a challenge for people – with two-thirds of people rating it 'not a challenge' or 'low' and a similar proportion felt that adapting their homes was not a major challenge.

Feelings of loneliness and isolation and loss of independence were also felt by a slight majority to be less of a challenge, although around 40% of people did rate these as 'high' or 'medium'.



Other significant challenges which people mentioned they faced included:

- A range of health or disability related personal challenges
- Using technology
- Infrastructure, in particular finding the state of pavements a challenge
- The cost of living

“My eyesight deteriorating which makes day to day life challenging.”

“Hearing, balance and vertigo.”

“I use IT but the way it is becoming ubiquitous is very disturbing. I was trying to help a friend who cannot cope with the fact that his GP practice sends him texts and tells him to contact 111 for something they used to do.”

“Old people do not (on the whole) like all this modern technology i.e. Waitrose won't let me have a new card because I don't use emails or a computer. Car parking becoming much more difficult”

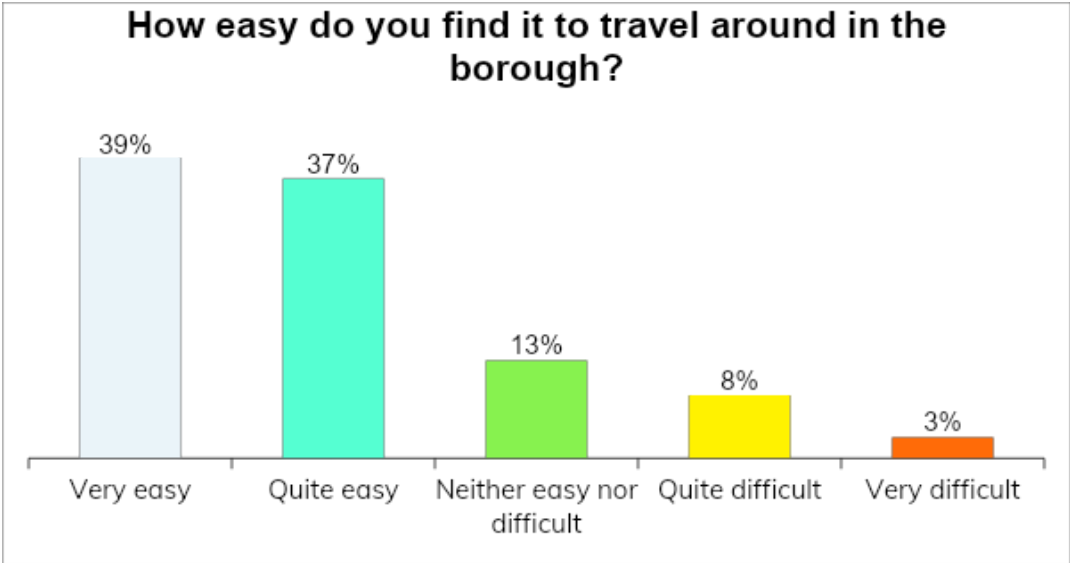
“Walking on uneven pavements is a big challenge. All pavements should be asphalt, smooth, non-slip and easy to walk on with no raised edges to trip over.”

“As a carer to my husband, I need to help him move around, the pavements are treacherous with many trip hazards, when he needs to use a wheelchair, it is a nightmare. The binmen leave bins all over the pavement.”

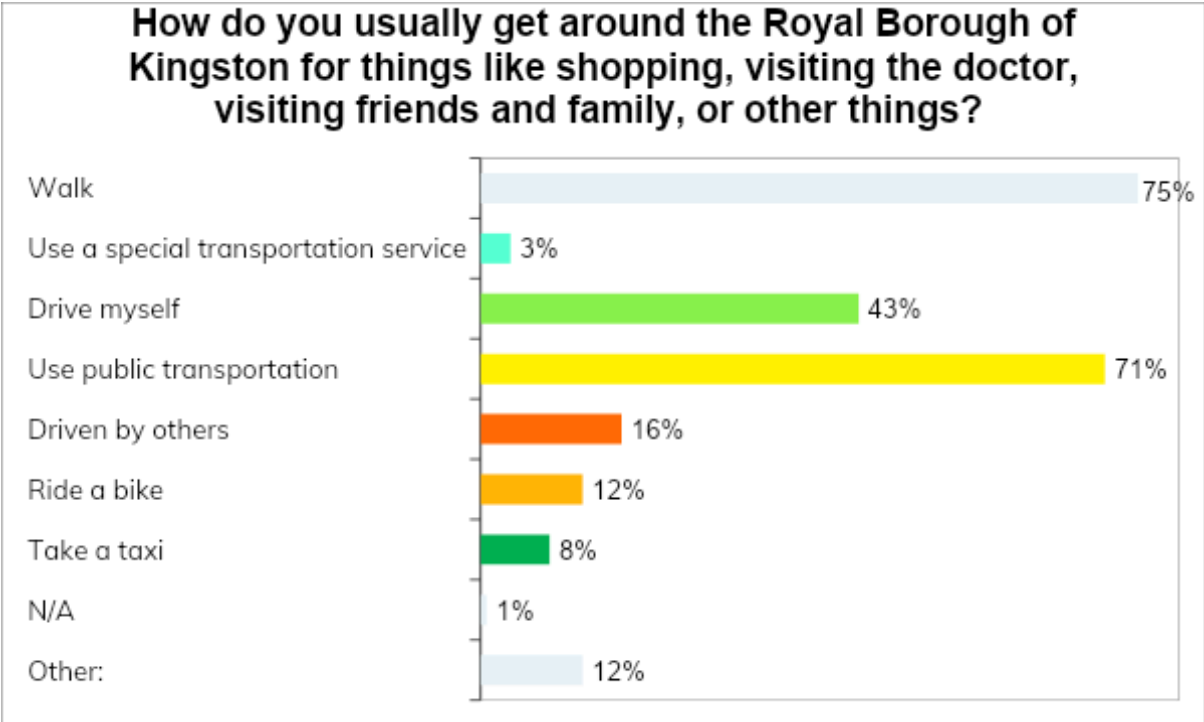
“So expensive now with bills & food.”

“Housing and rent are so high. Food is high priced.”

Travelling around the borough was felt by a majority of people to be easy to do – with three-quarters of those we heard from saying they found it either ‘very easy’ or ‘quite easy’ to do. However, one in ten older people expressed some difficulty – with 3% saying they found it ‘very difficult’ to travel around in the borough.



Public transport (71%) and walking (75%) were by far the most common forms of transport that people said they used to get around on a day-to-day basis. 43% of people we heard from said they drove themselves, whilst a further 16% said they were driven by others.

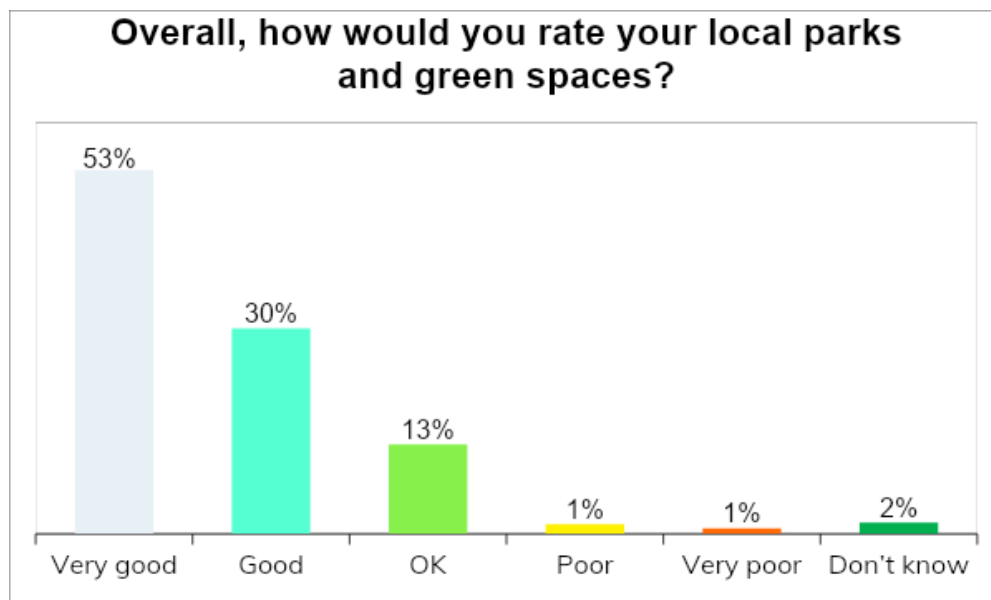


Relatively few people gave alternative forms of transport under ‘other’, although mobility scooter was mentioned. Some repeated transport methods already included – such as bring driven by family members – whilst others commented on there not being enough public transport provision in the evenings. A couple of people said that they had previously cycled by no longer did.

"I used to be an avid cyclist but confidence has gone now"

"The Kingston buses are terrible/came an hour early, very bad for evening"

Opinions of local parks and green spaces were extremely positive, with over half saying they thought they were 'very good' and 83% rating them either 'good' or 'very good'. Only 1% viewed them as 'poor' and a similar proportion as 'very poor'.



When asked what might make people want to use local parks and green spaces more, the comments we received were overwhelmingly positive. However, a few suggestions were made for improvements that would encourage increased use:

- Better maintenance of paths and pavements and less litter.
- Safety improvements – reducing anti-social behaviour, better lighting, dog-free spaces and fewer cyclists or bicycle-free areas.
- Improving facilities and infrastructure such as public toilets and more public seating.
- Easier access – where some spaces were felt not to be particularly easy to get to or where nearby parking was quite limited.

"Difficult to get to Richmond Park/bus to get to the park."

"Some litter & a little bit of anti-social stuff!"

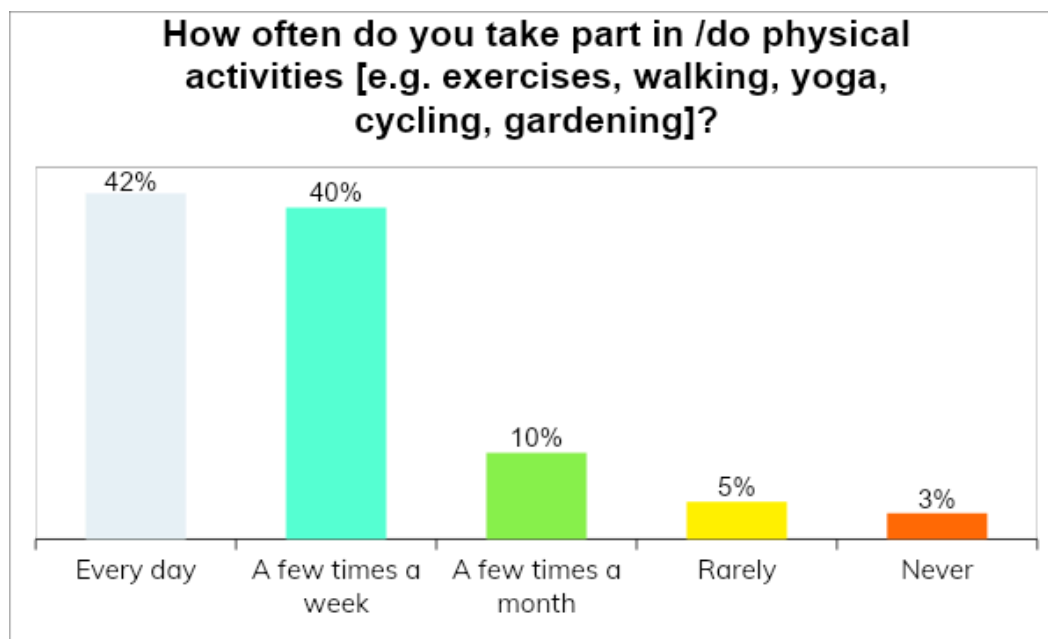
"Public toilets could be better, I know it costs!"

"Maintenance of some of the green spaces has declined...it isn't really feasible to rely too much on volunteers."

What sorts of activities are older people currently doing and what would they be interested in taking part in?

When asked how often they take part in exercise and other physical activity, we were told by the vast majority of people that they do so regularly. 82% of people said they exercised either 'every day' (42%) or a 'few times a week' (40%).

Less than one in ten (8%) people said they only exercised 'rarely' or 'never', with less than half of these (3%) saying they never exercised or took part in any physical activities.



People told us they were currently undertaking a wide range of activities, with most people reporting engaging in several different pursuits. Walking was the most commonly mentioned activity, but socialising and a variety of sports were also commonly referred to. Some people mentioned arts and cultural activities, courses and volunteering. A few people said they read books and others watched TV. A handful of people mentioned activities that the council deliver or commission, such as craft classes at libraries, "Walk and talks" offered by local councillors, or the "Better bones" class.

"Walking with my husband every day"

"Walking the dog. Playing bowls. Meeting friends for lunch."

"Work, visits to the theatre, concerts etc, visits to National Trust properties, overseas travel, meeting friends, gardening, foraging, cooking."

"Learning a foreign language, aqua fit, Foodbank volunteer, church service."

"Exercise classes provided by council, run by an excellent instructor physiotherapist"

When asked what sorts of things people would like to do, a number of people mentioned exercise and in particular walking and swimming. Dance was also mentioned several times.

Educational classes and courses were also mentioned frequently by people, with arts and crafts, languages, cooking and cycling all suggested as courses and classes that people would like to do.

Less frequently mentioned, but also suggested, were socialising and community interests, such as inter-generational pursuits, along with travelling and other sorts of outings.

“Inexpensive classes. Better campaign to tell people what's available - adult education.”

“Classes offered aren't that great. Need more variety.”

“Pottery - Centre I would use, like to try it”

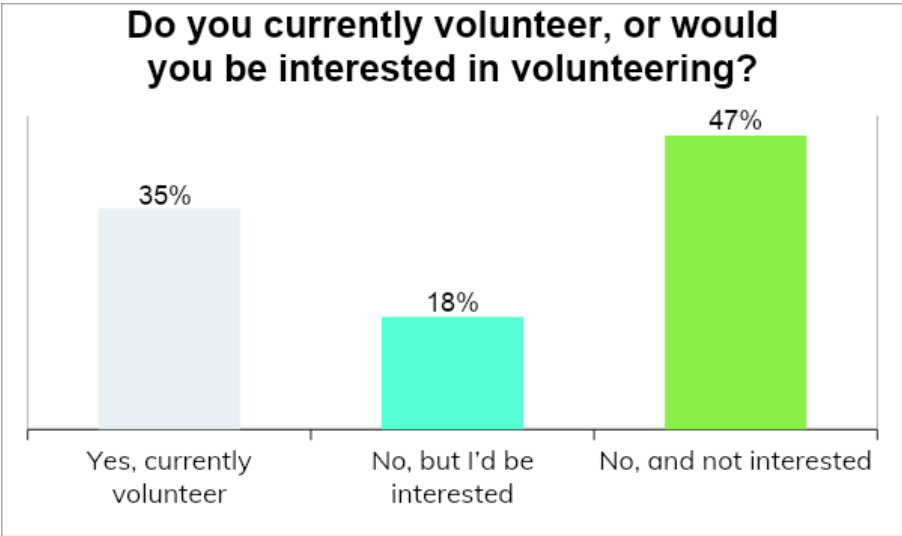
“More aerobics. Hot yoga I'd like to try.”

“Swim - no pool. They've shut it down.”

“More community activities like coffee mornings.”

“Holiday, sight-seeing. Oh, that would be lovely!”

Around one third (35%) of older people we heard from said that they currently volunteered, with around half (47%) saying that they did not and would not be interested in doing so. Around one in five (18%) said that although they were not currently volunteering, they would be interested in doing so.



We asked people what sorts of things they might be interested in doing in relation to volunteering. Many people gave reasons why they could not or did not want to volunteer, including a lack of time, poor health or lacking energy or that they were busy as caregivers or working.

Some people told us that they had volunteered in the past and hadn't enjoyed it, or that they'd tried to secure volunteering opportunities but hadn't been successful, while others said that they were unaware of what was available to do.

“I've done my bit! it was fun, but now I'm done!”

“I used to volunteer for a few organisations but now my own exercise classes and grandma duties keep me fully occupied”

“I have in the past enquired about volunteering but never heard back every time I tried so I gave up. I've done the odd bit here and there though.”

Those who did provide details of the sorts of things they would be interested in doing included nature-based and outdoor activities such as gardening or animal care; helping in charity shops and schools, working with the elderly, at foodbanks or at places of worship.

“Work with young children/gardening.”

“Helping at sports events, races etc.”

“Volunteer at care home & church”

How do older people find out about relevant services and activity and how aware are they about particular opportunities available?

We wanted to understand how people find out information about activities and services which are available to older people and to gauge levels of awareness of specific provision provided by the Council and partners, such as the Active Kingston card, Connected Kingston website and walking for health. We also wanted to assess levels of access to the internet and use of technology – as tools for accessing information and support.

When we asked people how they find out about local services, activities, volunteering opportunities and events, people told us that they access a wide range of sources of information. Social networks, such as friends, family and other groups were the most frequent sources of information, along with the internet.

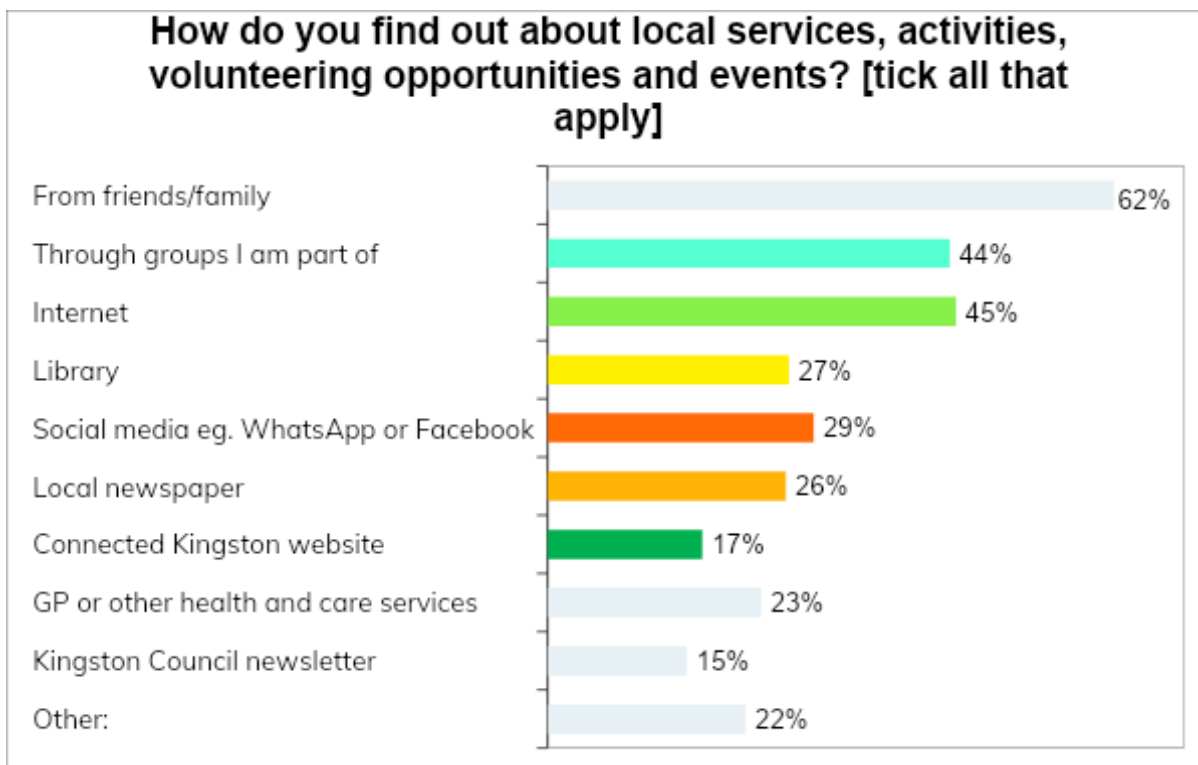
Other common, but less frequent, responses included the library and local newspaper, as well as social media and health services or the GP. Around one in six people said they accessed information via the Connected Kingston website or the council’s newsletter.

Other sources of information which people mentioned were the church and faith organisations, including through Whatsapp groups linked to these and through local media, noticeboards, other community members and directly from the council. Some people commented about the lack of a centralised source of information being available.

“Chessington chat & the Epsom magazine.”

“Chat to people down the pub”

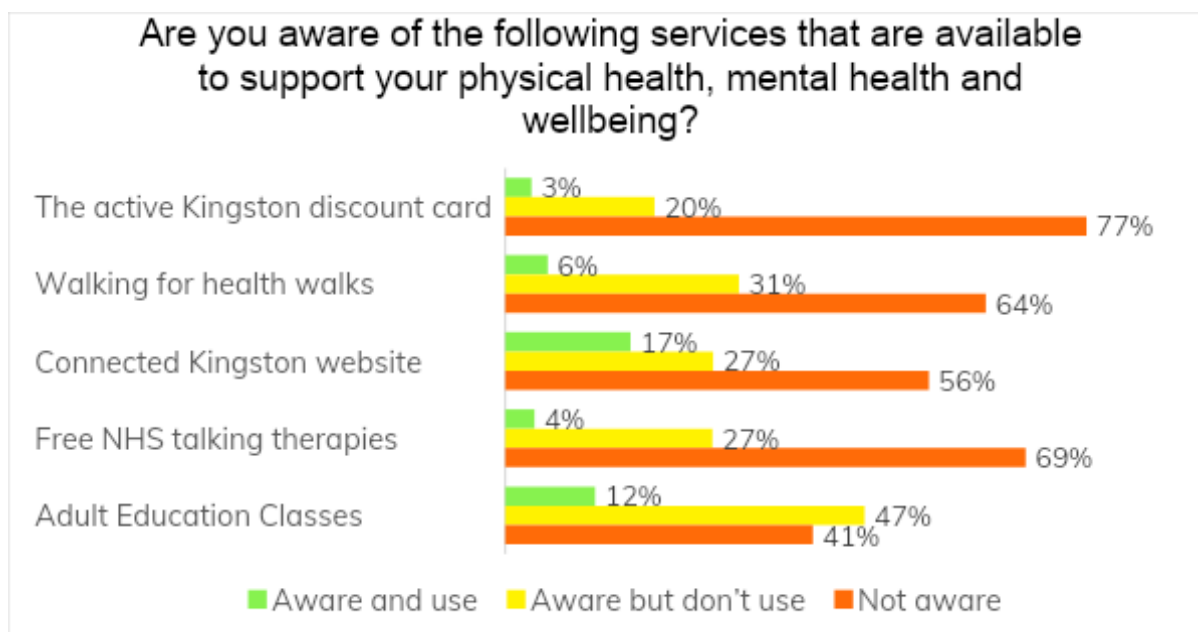
“The information about activities and events is not centralised, it comes from different sources, so keeping up with what is happening can be challenging.”



Awareness of specific services that are available to support physical and mental health and wellbeing which we asked about varied considerably, however they were generally used infrequently and most people were unaware of the majority of them.

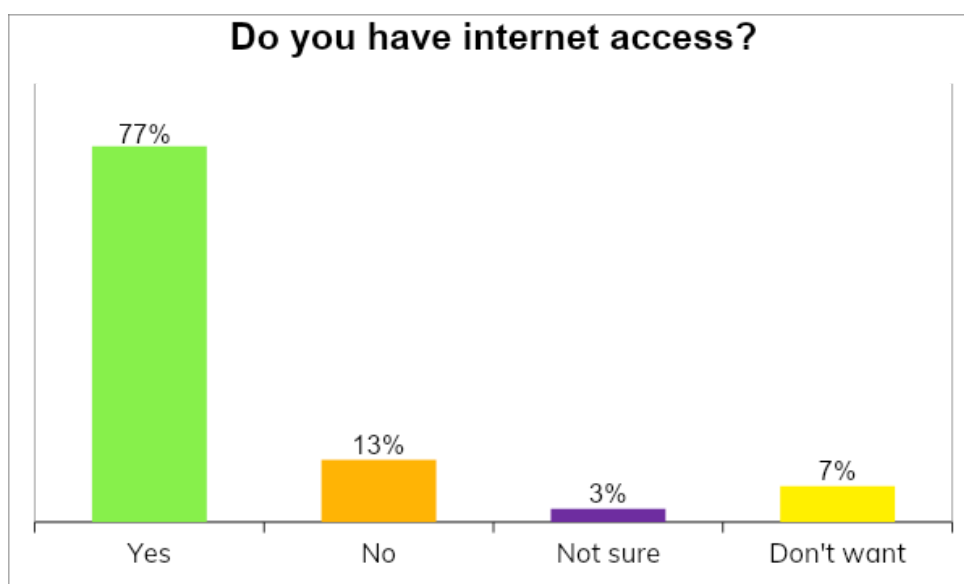
Adult education classes were the most widely known, and this was the only service where fewer than half of people we heard from said they had not heard of it. However, only 12% said they participated in these, which was lower than the 17% who said they used the Connected Kingston website.

Between two thirds and three quarters of people said they were unaware of the active Kingston discount card (77%), Walking for health walks (64%) and Free NHS talking therapies (69%). These services were also used by only around one in twenty people who took part in the research.

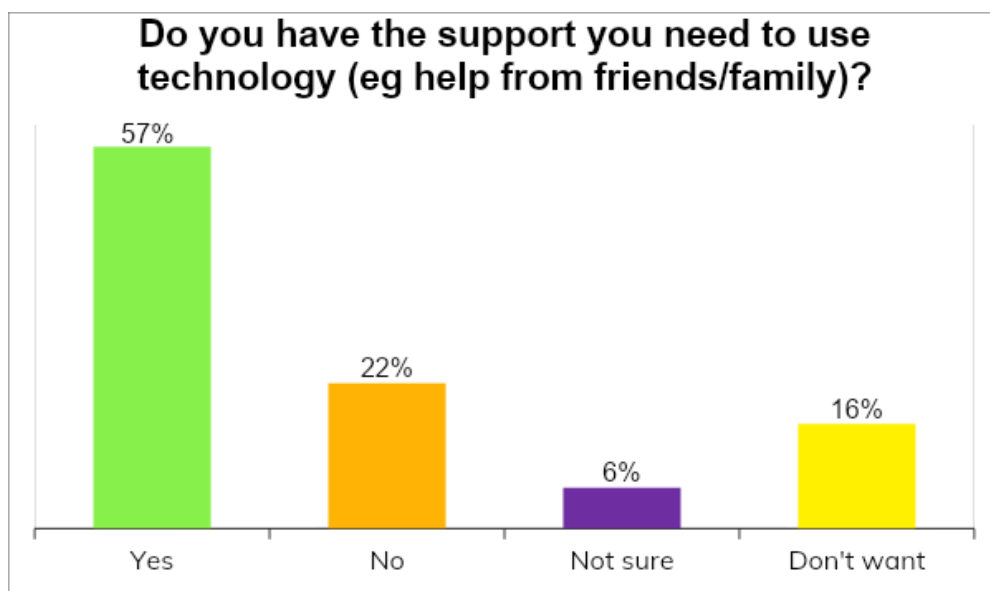


We asked people whether they have internet access and also whether they have the support they need in order to use technology, for example help from friends or family.

The response we got suggests that around three quarters of people have access to the internet. One in five people we heard from said they did not have internet access, although around one third of these (7% in total) said they did not want it.



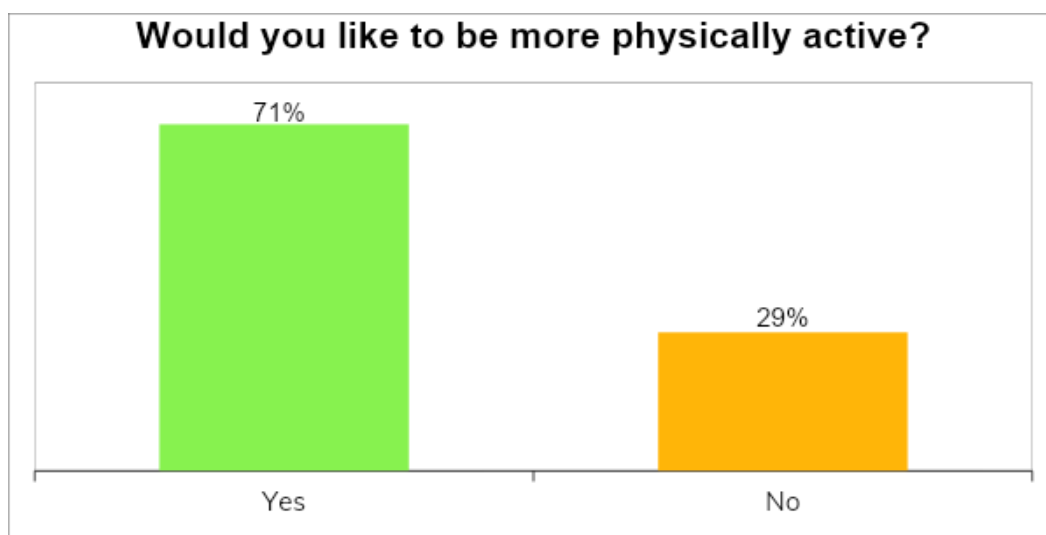
Access to support to help people use technology was less prevalent, though we still found that over half (57%) said they did have help available to them. A larger proportion of people – 16% - said they did not want help and a further 22% said they did not have support.



What are the motivations and barriers to being more active and doing more activities?

We asked a series of questions which were intended to help us understand what would motivate and enable people to become more physically active, what factors prevented them from doing so.

We found that the majority of people (71%) would like to be more physically active, with just one third (29%) saying they did not.



The most common barriers to being more physically active were a lack of time (36%), the cost (30%) and not having the energy (27%). However, a smaller proportion of people also suggested that knowing what was available, not finding things on offer that were of interest, local opportunities and people to go with all adversely impacted on their behaviour.

Alongside the responses given to barriers that were suggested in the question, around half of people we heard from also mentioned other reasons that got in the way of them exercising more.

The most frequent 'other' barriers that people mentioned were people's health – either related to age or injuries – time constraints, as a result of work or caregiving and costs, with people referring to gyms and other health-related leisure activities being prohibitively expensive.

Less frequently mentioned factors included a lack of provision in their neighbourhoods – with swimming pools and outdoor gyms being referenced in particular. Others talked about limited mobility making it harder for them to move around easily and the weather. Some mentioned habits and preferences in relation to having other priorities, low motivation, laziness and being fearful of trying new things all being barriers to doing more physical activity. A few also stated that they were happy with what they were doing currently and they did not want to increase the amount of physical activity they undertook.

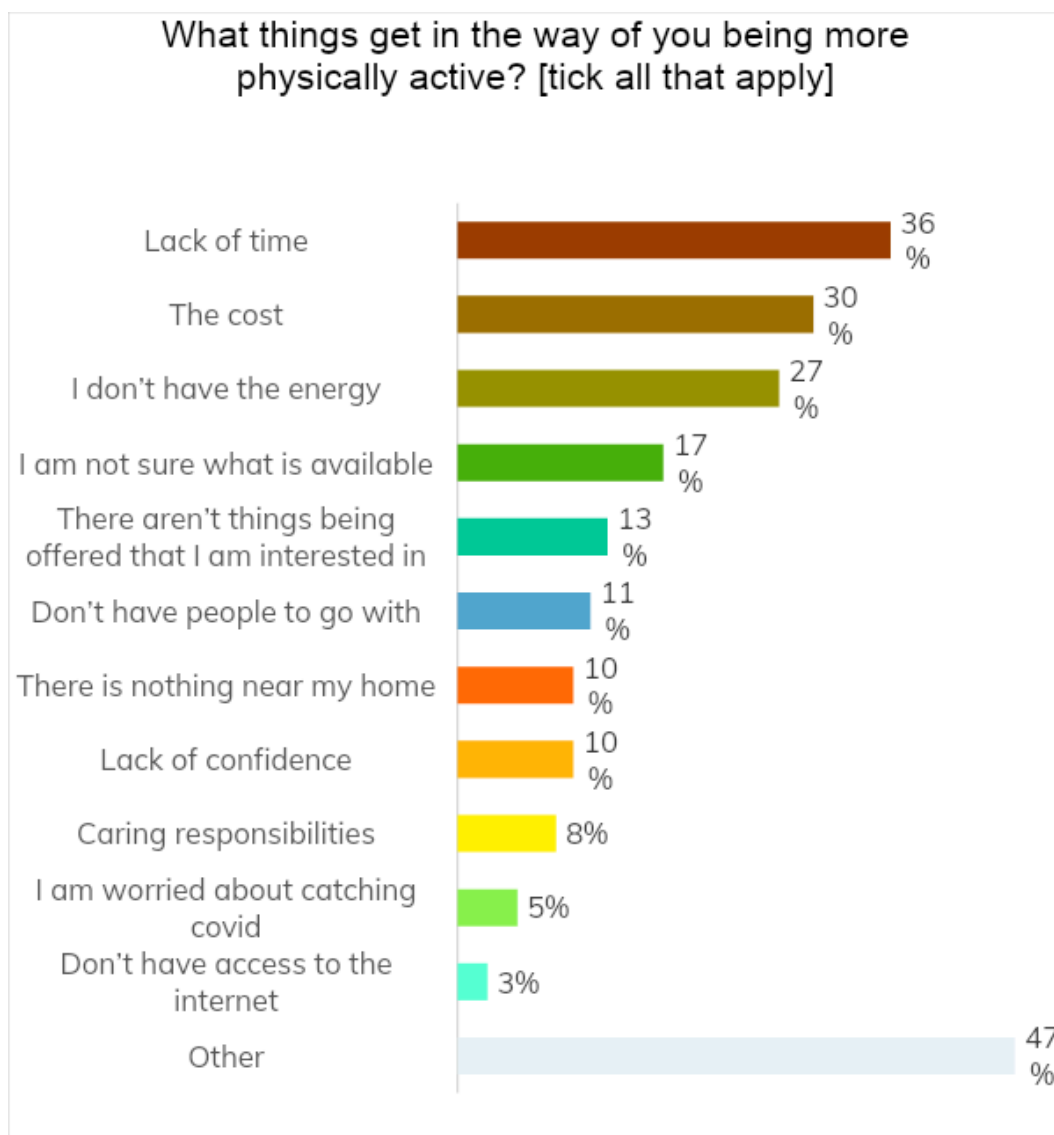
“Look after my husband don't always have time”

“Laziness, not interested in the gym.”

“Health & age - I can't do the things I used to.”

“Classes etc aimed a gym membership, any casual classes are too expensive”

“Too expensive. No Swimming pool”



We received a large number of suggestions for things that people felt would enable and support them to be more physically active. Several people talked about having more time available for themselves in addition to their other commitments such as work and caregiving. People also mentioned making activities and access to exercise facilities more affordable and others mentioned being in better health.

There were also a number of suggestions made which referred to local facilities, ranging from extended opening hours and the availability of local provision such as gyms and swimming pools and having access to a personal trainer. Others mentioned activities and courses that were nearby, free or affordable and age appropriate and we were also told by a few people that improved accessibility or mobility would help them to do more physical activity. A small number mentioned having someone to go with, being better informed about what was available in the area and having improved energy levels or personal motivation as enabling factors.

"A new knee. More hours in the day"

"A new body! I can't walk far or stand for long."

"Nothing, except more money and time, free activities"

"If there were more options that didn't cost money"

"Affordable, local classes that I can get to"

"Swimming pool, more options."

"More of a campaign to get people thinking about it."

"Someone to go with! i.e. a friend"

"Being better connected to what's going on in the area. We found out about this through a friend"

What would make Kingston a better place in older age?

People that we heard from suggested an array of ideas which they felt would make Kingston more age-friendly. A number of themes were frequently mentioned, even when specific ideas differed.

- Activities and facilities
 - More intergenerational activities
 - Community spaces for people to socialise and take part in activities
 - More swimming pools, leisure centres and improved libraries
 - Increased information about available services, activities and opportunities on offer.

"More community events! Intergenerational/inclusive!"

"More events and communities for older generation to meet and have adventures."

"Not sure, a functional leisure centre would be a start to enable socialising and activity."

- Infrastructure and public realm
 - Maintenance of pavements so they are easier for older people to use and less litter
 - Improved accessibility for disabled people and wheelchair users, making it easier to get around
 - More public toilets were regularly mentioned as well as seating in public spaces.

"More seating with shade in hot weather; public toilets; transport access to activities for people isolated at home."

"The accessibility of places. Some areas need better roads, no stairs, more space for wheelchairs. More inclusive for all older people."

- Transport

- o Traffic was mentioned by a number of people, but often with somewhat different perspectives and interests. Some want more car-friendly policies and cycle lanes removed, while others want increased pedestrianisation and cycle-friendly roads.
- o Some felt that there was insufficient parking space
- o Greater availability of dial-a-ride options and more frequent public transport was also mentioned.

“Easier local transport. Too much focus on cycling when many of us cannot cycle due to health or physical disabilities.”

"Not enough private transport organised for disabled people and elderly"

- Safety
 - o Some felt afraid after dark and wanted to see an increased police presence on the street
 - o We also heard that Anti-Social Behaviour and young people congregating on the street made people feel unsafe.

“Lighter streets, safer streets - control the teens sitting in Alexandria Park/Fields late at night drinking and smoking hash!”

- Community cohesion
 - o Respect for elderly was felt to be lower than it could be and that increasing this would make the borough a better place for older people to live
 - o Intergenerational activities were also felt to be a way to improve cohesion and make Kingston more age-friendly.

“Kingston is so bland, so lacking in identity, there is nothing to draw all age groups and ethnic groups together”

- Housing
 - o The availability, quality and affordability of housing (including supported housing) was mentioned by some people who responded.

“More housing for older people for them to live independently but within a community. It must be easily accessible to shops and buses but with attractive outside space for people to sit, communicate and garden for those like it and are able.”

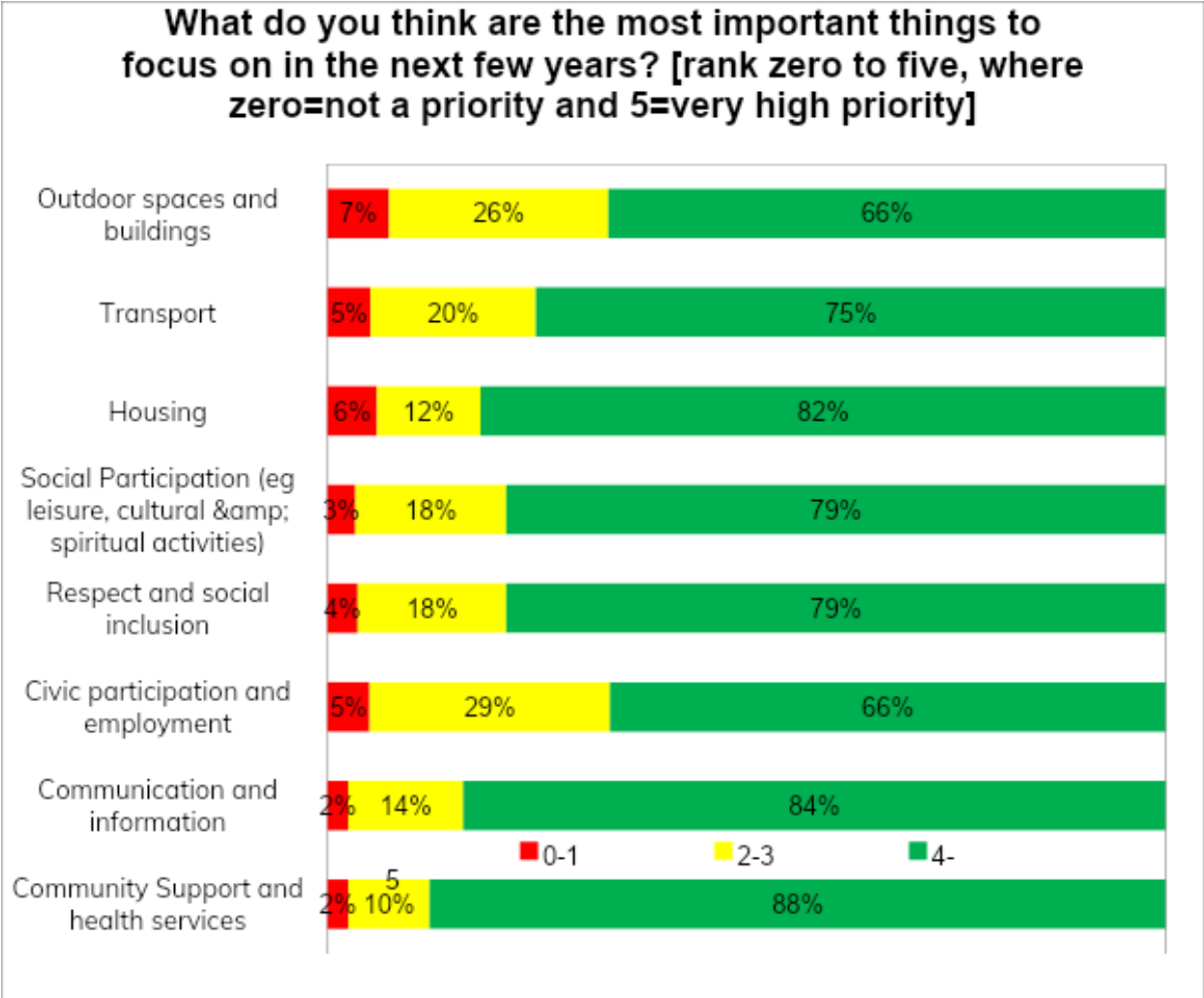
- Engagement
 - o A few people wanted to see more face-to-face engagement, less reliance on online services and more help to use digital technology.

“Elderly really struggling to use internets for payments etc. Support them & help.”

To assist the council to develop its action plan as part of the process of becoming an Age Friendly Borough, we asked people which themes they felt it was most important to focus

on. We found that a majority of people regarded each of the themes as being high priorities, with very few people saying they felt any of the suggested areas were low priority or not a priority at all.

However, we did find that there was some difference in the strength of opinion for particular themes. Outdoor spaces and buildings and civic participation and employment were least likely to be ranked as a high priority – although two thirds of people still viewed them as such. At the other end of the spectrum, community support and health services, communications and information and housing were all viewed as high priorities by more than 80% of people we heard from. Social inclusion and social participation were only slightly less strongly regarded; with 79% of people ranking them as high priorities.



The comments people made in relation to the selection of priorities for future action closely resembled their thoughts and suggestions on what would make the borough more age friendly (as mentioned above).

People mentioned the desirability of access to leisure centres, swimming pools and libraries in close proximity, as well as other community spaces. Some talked about pavements being better maintained and easier to use, greater provision of public toilets and seating in public spaces. We also heard that people want more accessible and age-appropriate activities, but also better provision of information about what is on offer.

Other suggestions included addressing difficulties accessing GP appointments and better support for disabled people. We also heard calls for more affordable housing, better

quality social housing and maintenance and more age-appropriate housing for older people.

“More senior activities & sign posted clearly.”

“Intergenerational activities.”

“Old people don't want special activities for old people. Mentally we are the same as you lot. Activities that welcome everyone are what we need.”

“If parks become boggy, the elderly don't go there. All weather surface paths in boggy areas.”

“Issues with NHS - on the phone/appointment too long.”

“Bungalows for the elderly. Stairs are an issue.”

“Better on sight communication access for many older people and NOT just an online service.”

Covariate analysis

To better understand differences in responses from particular groups of people who participated in the research, we conducted covariate analysis. We looked at whether people of different age and gender had different views and whether people who had responded online or as part of the outreach had answered particular questions differently.

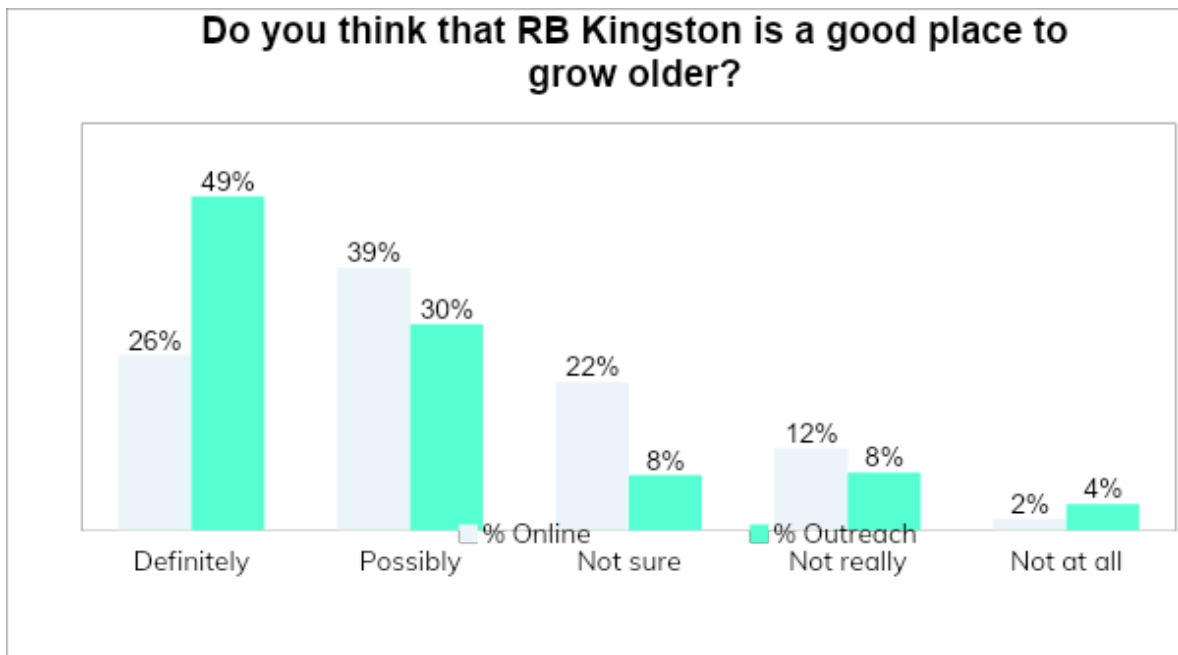
In some instances, particularly when analysing responses from people of different ages, the size of sub-groups becomes quite small. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted with a degree of caution as we cannot discount the possibility that these findings are unrepresentative of the population as a whole and are certainly more susceptible to randomness.

Online vs outreach

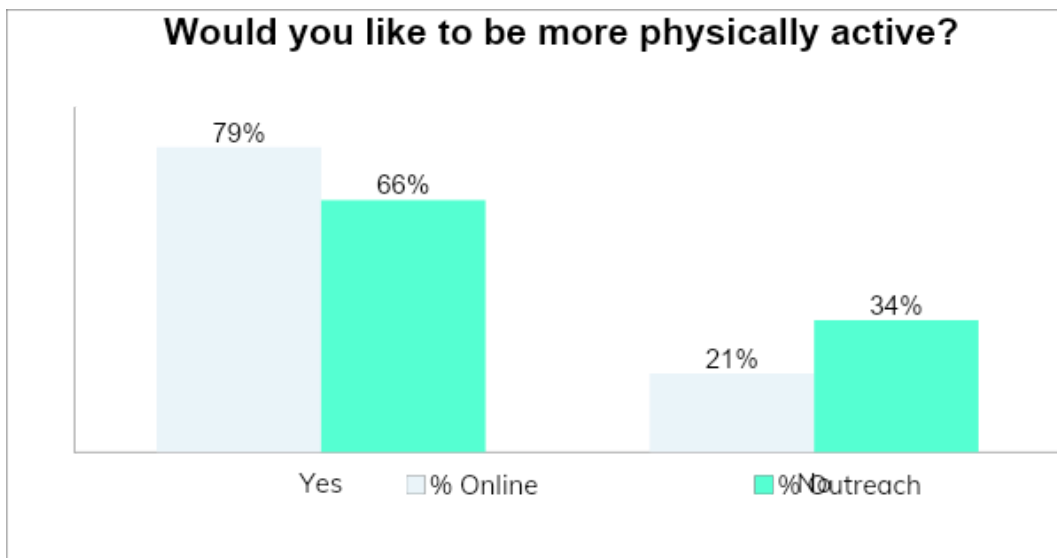
We compared responses from those who completed the survey online to those who had participated in the outreach.

When presenting the outreach figures the data combines both individual and small group conversations.

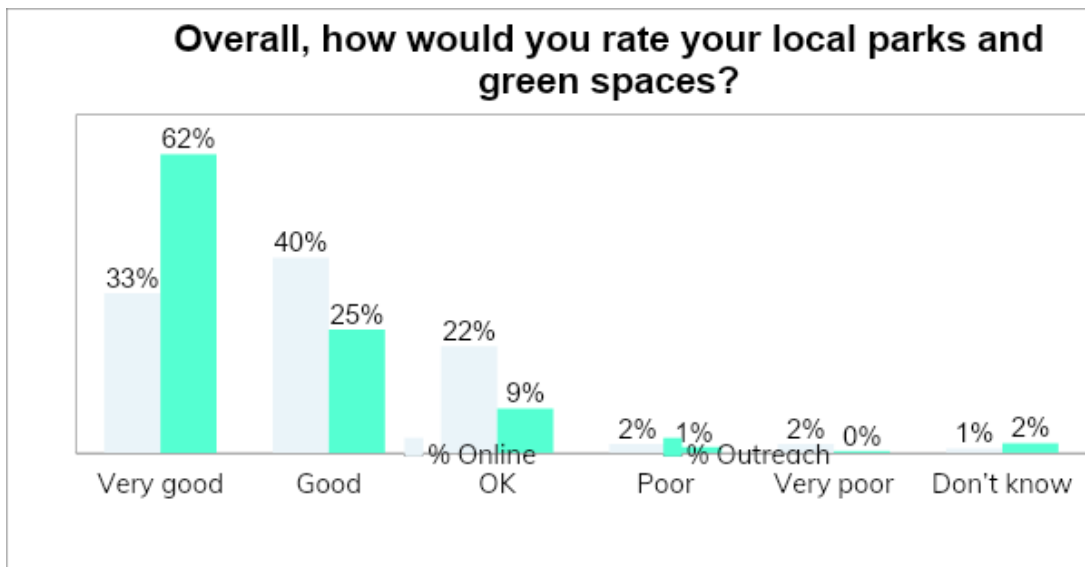
Those who were engaged through the outreach were twice as likely to view Kingston as ‘definitely’ being a good place to grow older than those responding online.



Online respondents were somewhat more likely to say they would like to be more physically active than those who participated in the outreach.



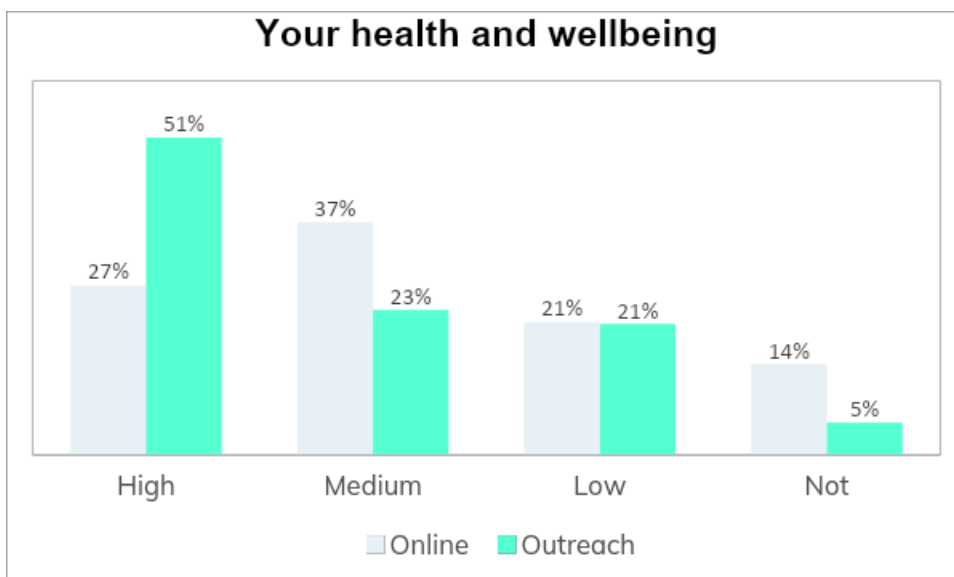
Participants in the outreach were significantly more likely to view the borough's parks and green spaces more positively than those responding online. Almost twice as many people engaged through the outreach said they were 'very good' as online respondents.



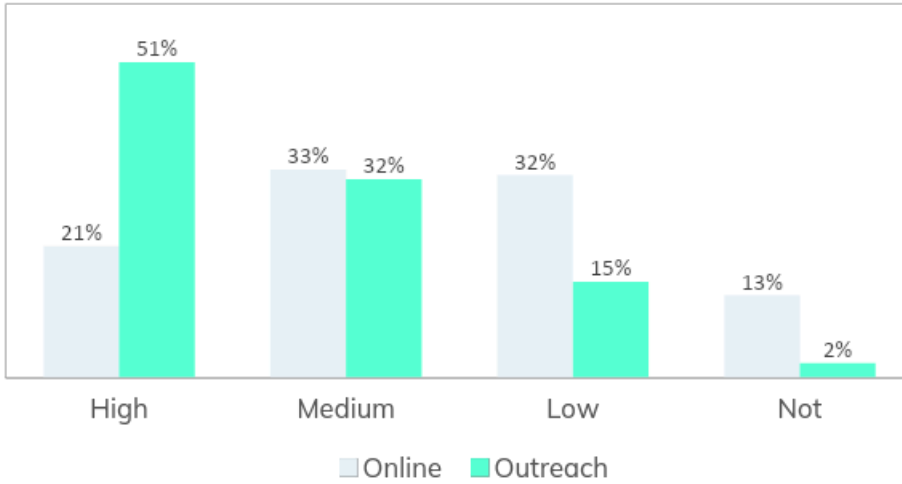
Challenges faced

Those responding online and people engaged through the outreach had, in some instances, marked differences in their views of the challenges they face.

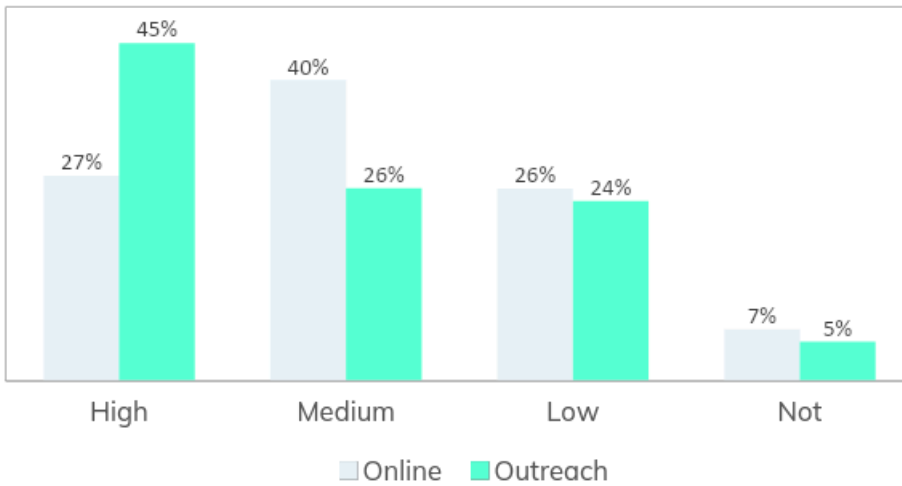
There was a great deal of consistency in the responses to the challenges of loneliness, caring responsibilities, loss of independence, use of technology and adapting the home across online and outreach findings. However, where there were differences – in health and wellbeing, cost of living and personal finance and being as active – the contrasts were stark. Almost twice as many people engaged through the outreach rated health and wellbeing as ‘high’ as those responding online and the gap was even greater (two and a half times) for the cost of living and personal finances. Being active also elicited a significant proportion of people from the outreach who viewed it as a major challenge.



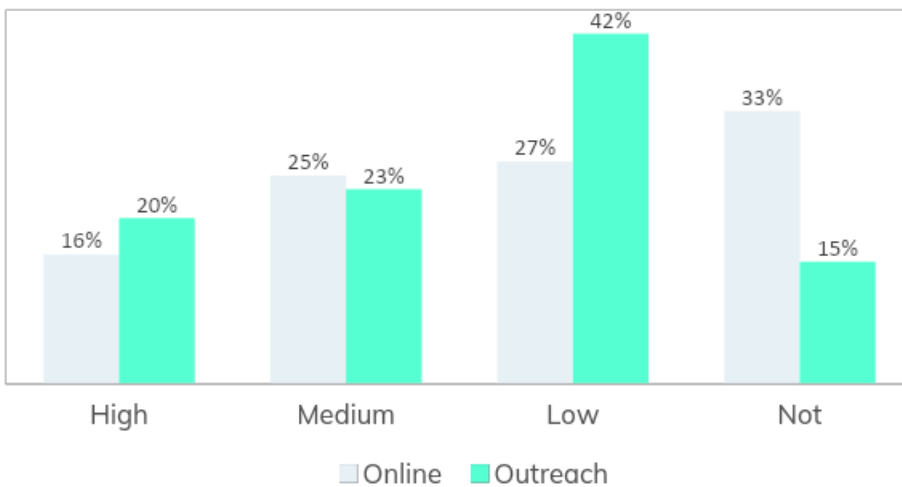
Cost of living/finances



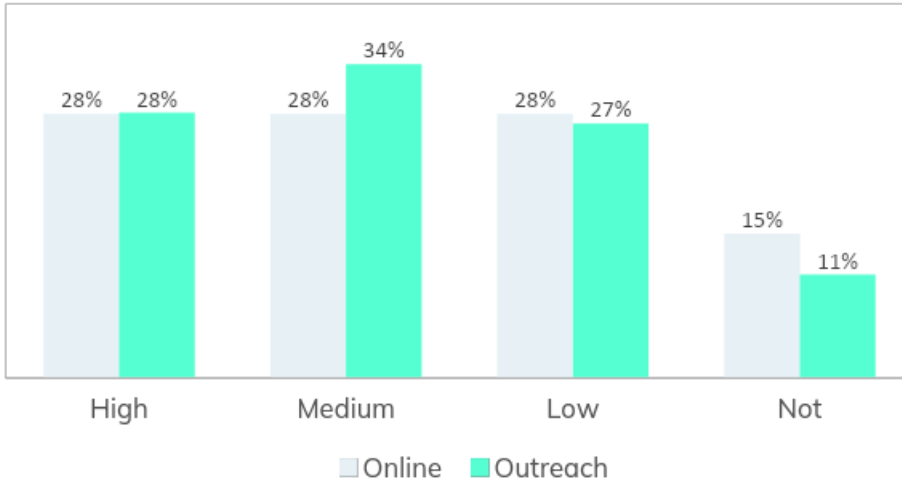
Being as active as you would like



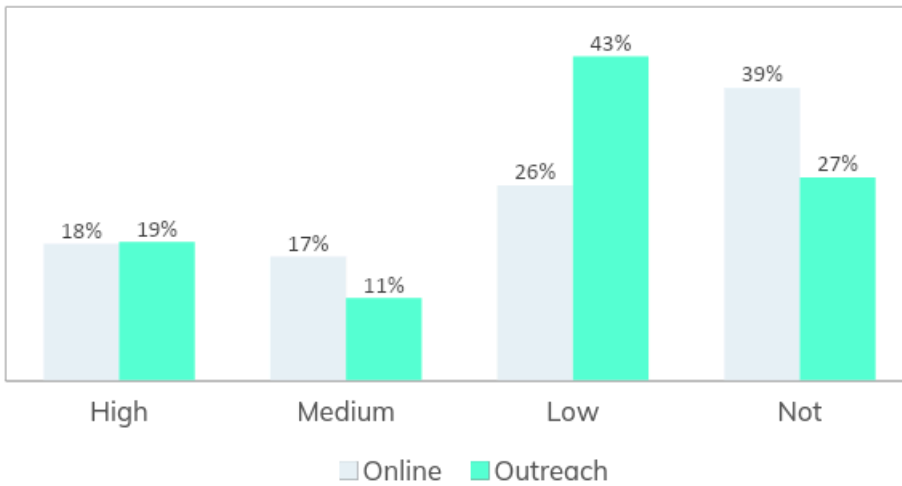
Feelings of loneliness or isolation



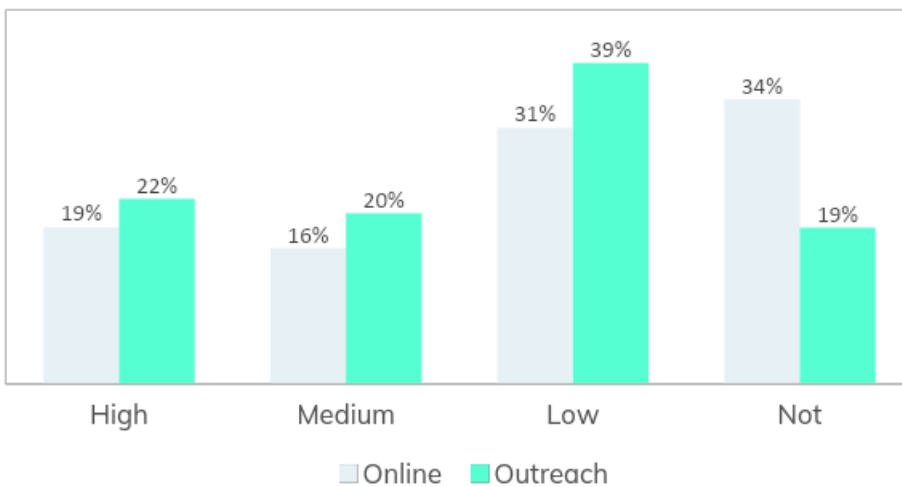
Keeping up with technology

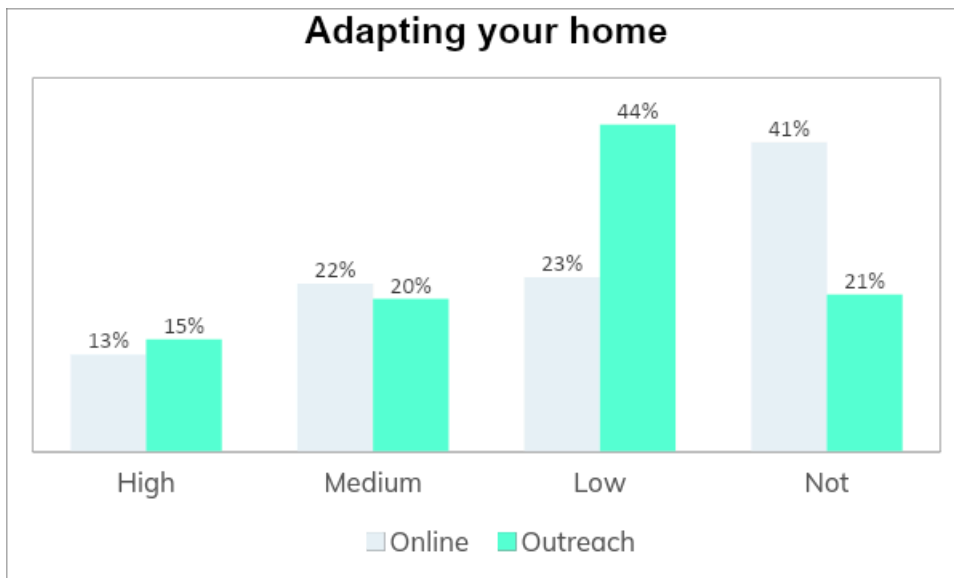


Caring responsibilities



Loss of independence



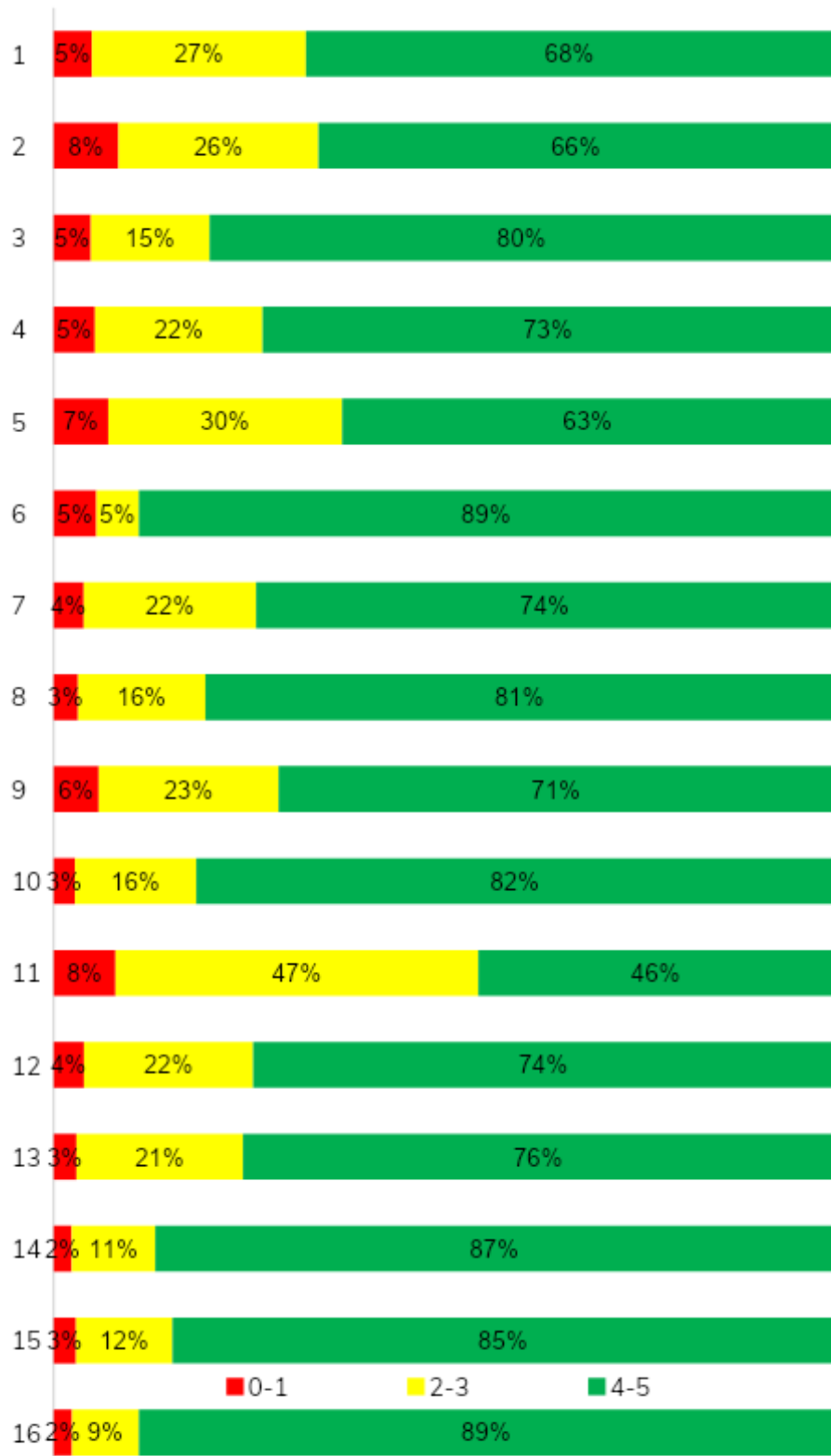


When comparing views on the priorities for the council to focus on, we found some interesting differences between online responses and from the outreach. Overall, those engaged through the outreach were more likely to view things as high priorities, however this difference was far more pronounced on some priorities than on others. Whilst 63% of online responses viewed housing as a high priority, 89% of responses from the outreach felt it was important for the council to focus on.

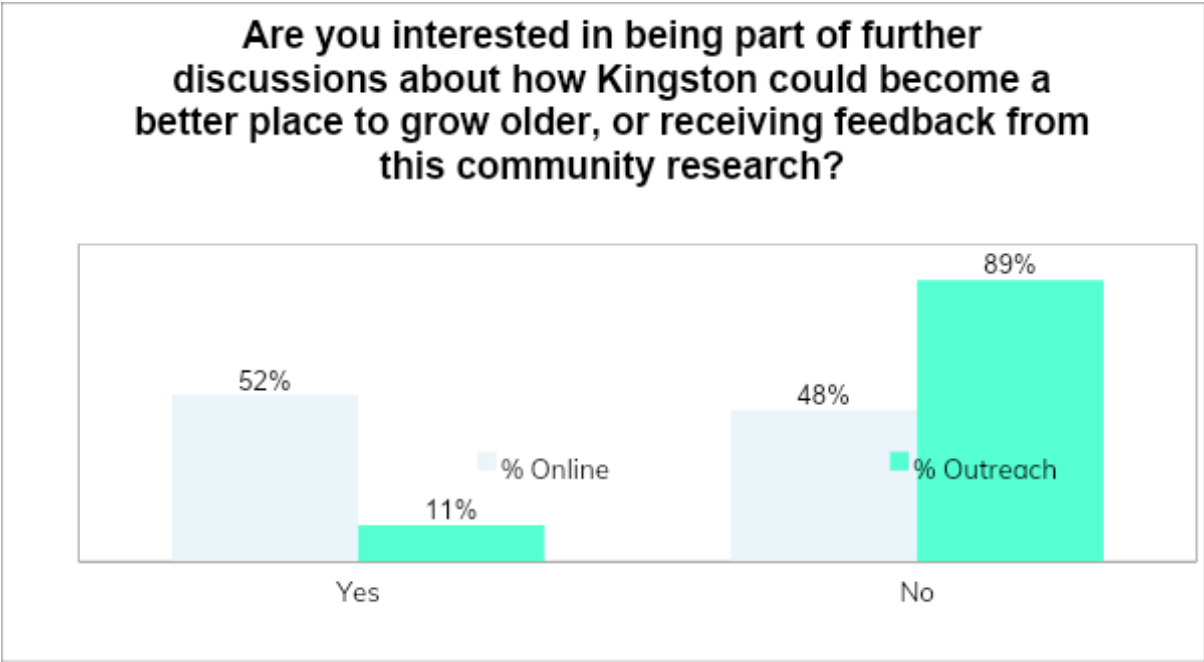
Similarly, 74% of people who we engaged through the outreach felt that civic participation and employment was a high priority, but only 46% of those responding online ranked it as high.

The generally lower ranking of priorities among those responding online was, however, not wholly consistent – outdoor spaces and buildings (one of the lowest ranked focus areas) and community support and health services (one of the highest ranked areas) both received very similar results from the outreach and online respondents.

What do you think are the most important things to focus on in the next few years?
 [rank zero to five, where 0=not a priority and 5= very high]

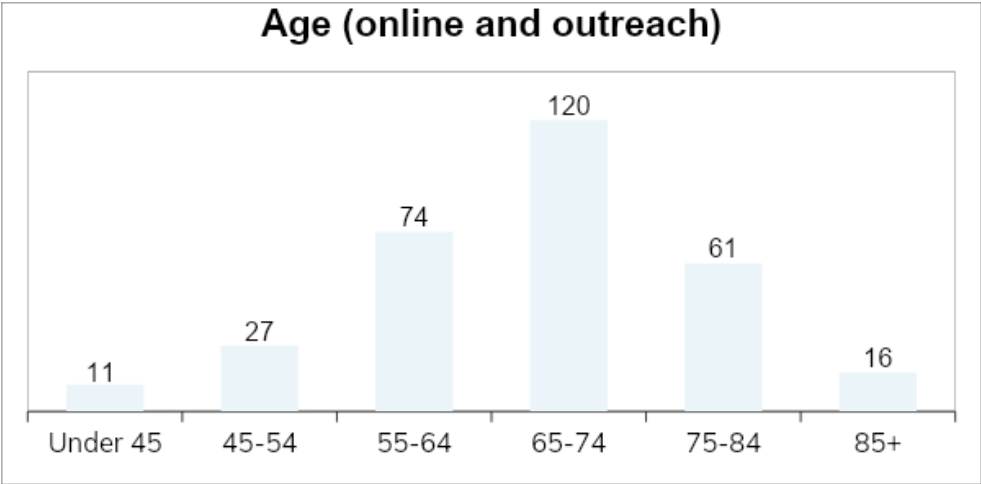


Online respondents were significantly more likely to want to take part in further discussions about the progress of making the borough more age friendly than those who engaged through the outreach.



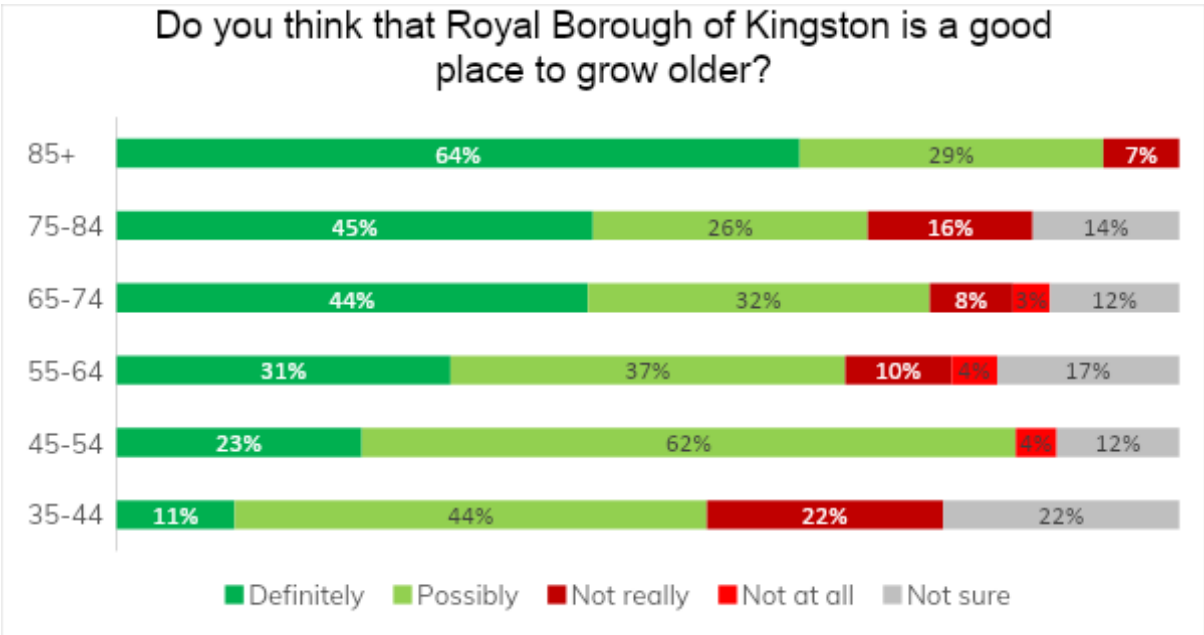
Age

Looking at the responses of people by age group helps us to understand whether the perspectives, experiences and aspirations of particular groups may be different. However, as the sub-groups are relatively small, we need to interpret the findings with a degree of caution, as the small sample sizes makes them more susceptible to chance. This is particularly true of the youngest and oldest ages – 35–44-year-olds and 85 and above, where the number of people were smaller than other ages, as can be seen from the chart below.



We can see that age correlates with views of how age-friendly Kingston is. The older respondents are the more likely they are to view Kingston as being ‘definitely’ a good place to grow older. While just one in ten of those ages 35-44 viewed the Borough as ‘definitely’ age-friendly, almost two-thirds of those aged 85 or above and half of those over 65. Whilst the sample size of sub-groups,

particularly at the extremes of the age bands, is small, the correlation appears to be strong, even taking this into account.



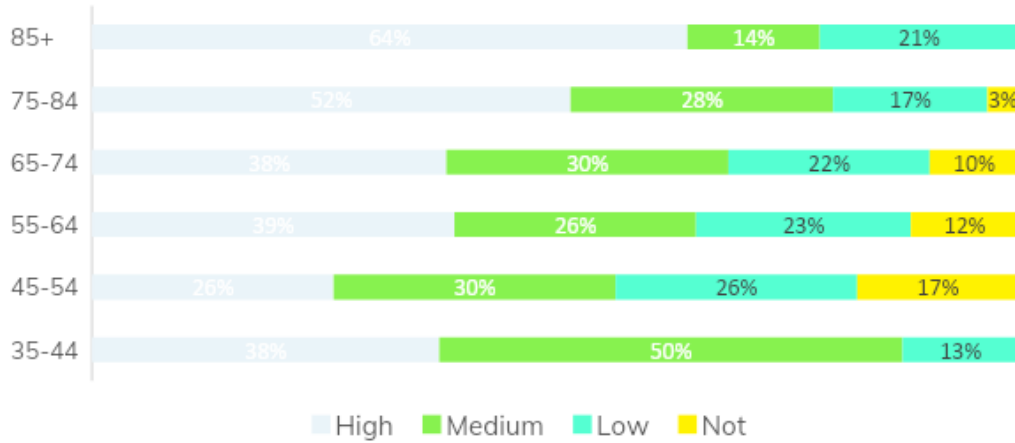
How big a challenge?

When we look at how great a challenge people of different ages felt particular things were, we can see some clear differences in responses on some of the themes we asked about, whilst others appear not to differ according to age.

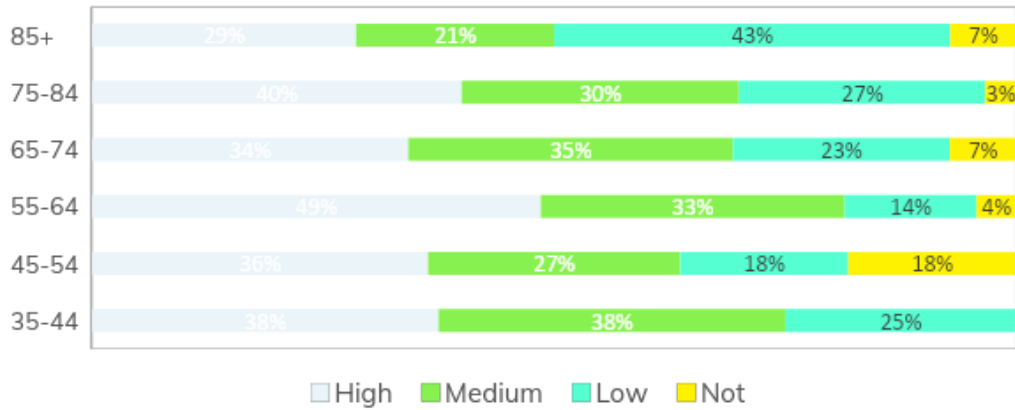
Health and wellbeing, keeping up with technology, adapting your home and loss of independence were all more likely to be regarded as high priorities by older people who participated than their younger counterparts. Conversely, those of younger age who responded tended to rank caring responsibilities more highly than older people who we heard from.

The cost of living/finances were generally consistent across age groups, with the exception of a spike in the 55–64-year-old range who were more likely to view it as a high priority than all other groups. Being active was also relatively consistent across age ranges, with a slight increase in prioritisation among the oldest and youngest participants.

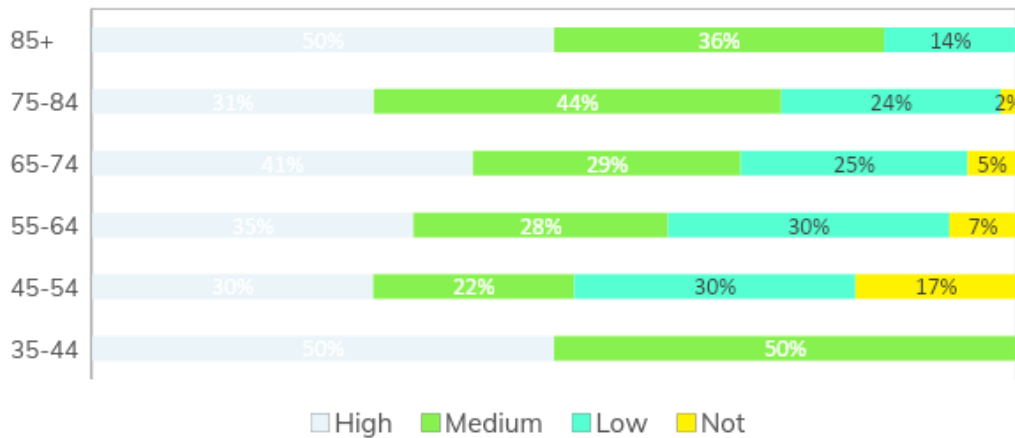
Your health and wellbeing



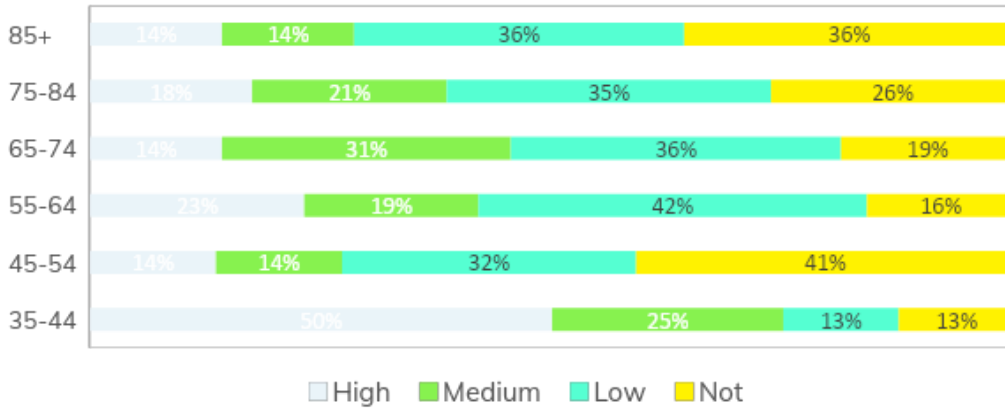
Cost of living/ finances



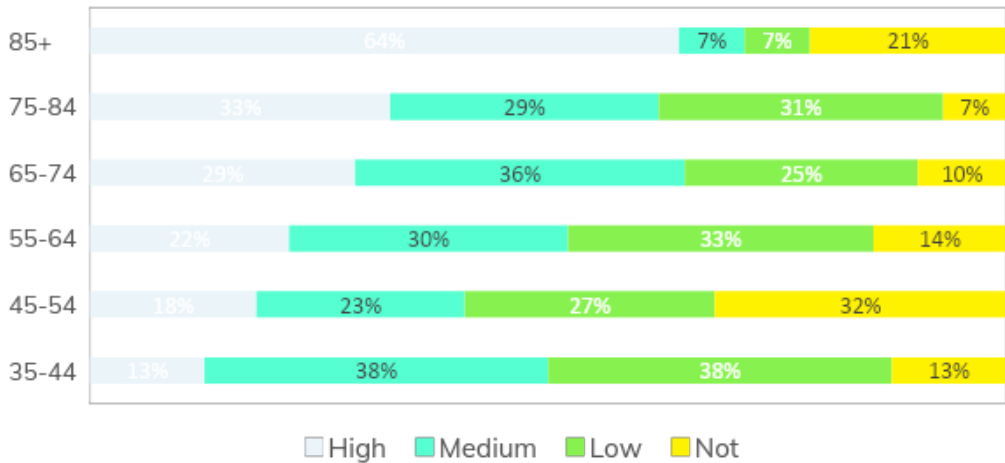
Being as active as you would like



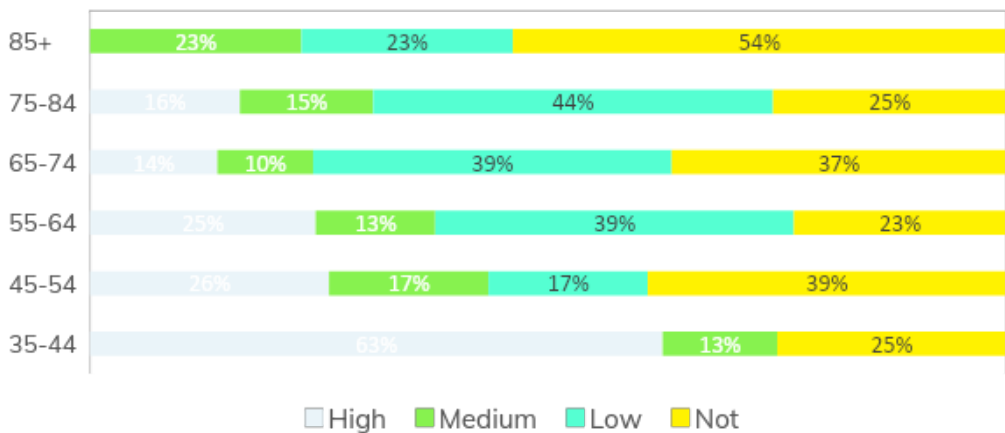
Feelings of loneliness or isolation

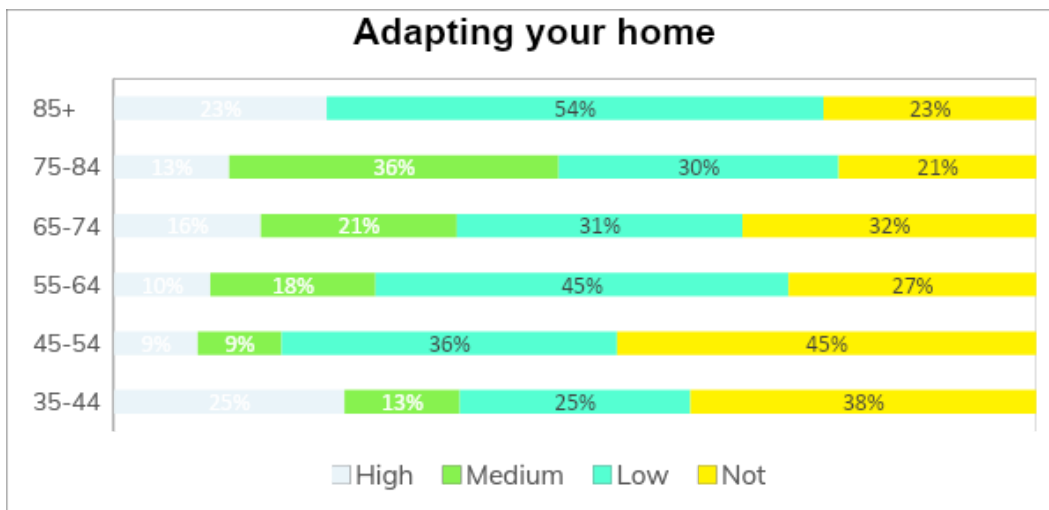
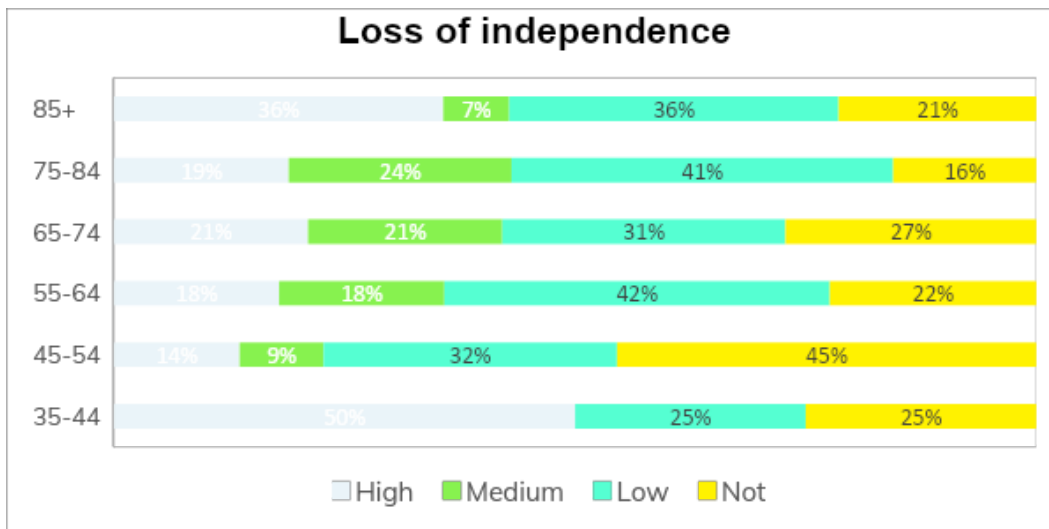


Keeping up with technology



Caring responsibilities



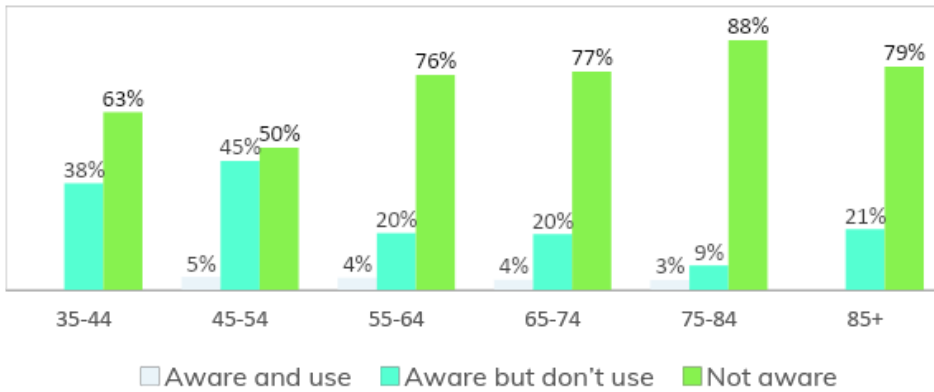


Aware of services

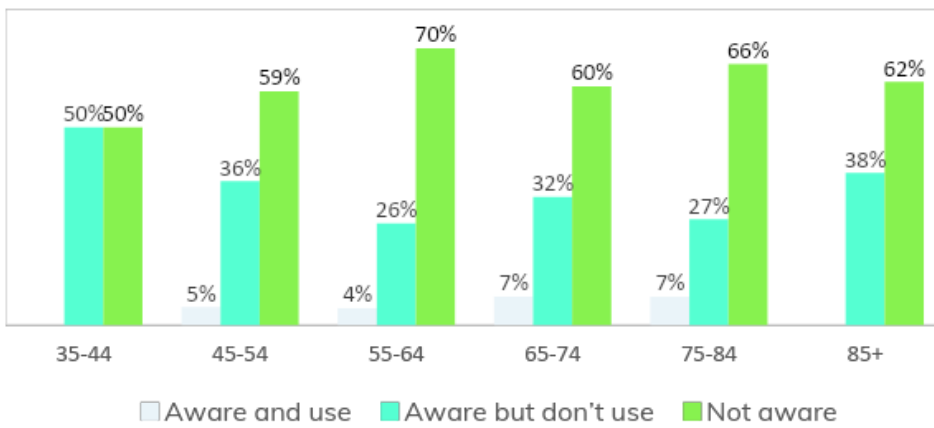
Generally, we can see that awareness of services reduced as age increased. However, this did not always translate into noticeably higher take-up and use.

The Active Kingston card – younger people were more aware of it, but not particularly more likely to use it. Similarly, the Connected Kingston website, awareness reduced with age, but use didn't vary greatly apart from a drop-off among over 85s. Nonetheless this was the most widely used service among all age groups. Awareness of NHS talking therapies reduced with age but take-up was consistently low. Adult education was the best known service among all age groups, however the proportion of people participating remained low.

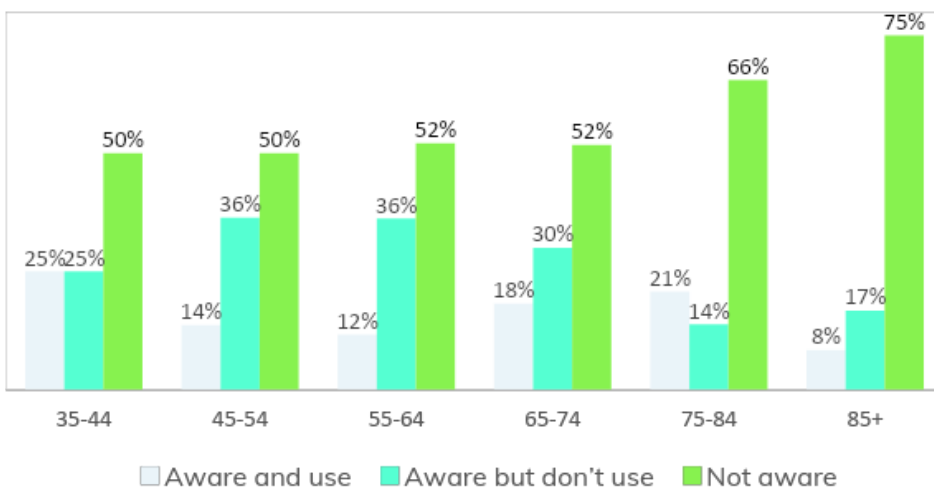
The Active Kingston discount card

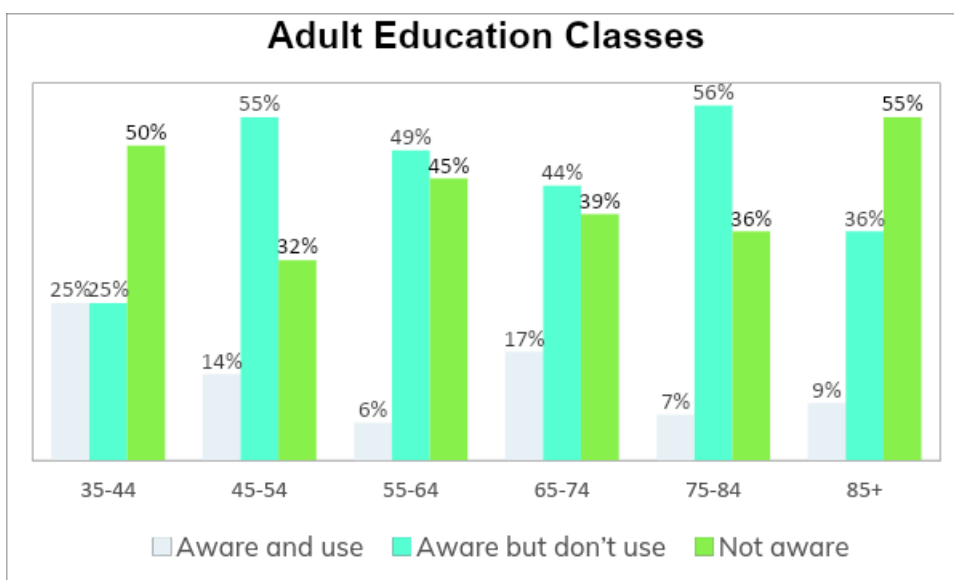
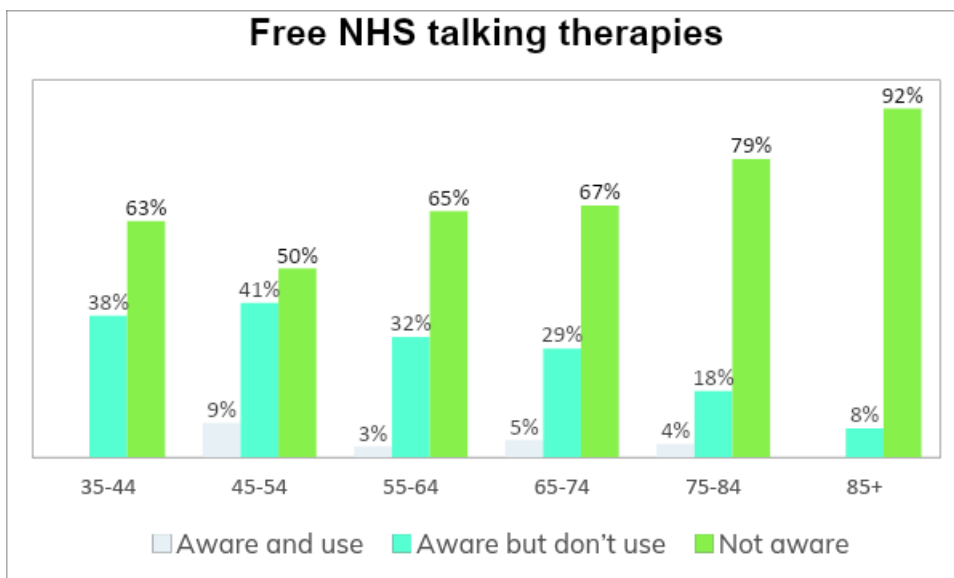


Walking for health walks



Connected Kingston website





Gender

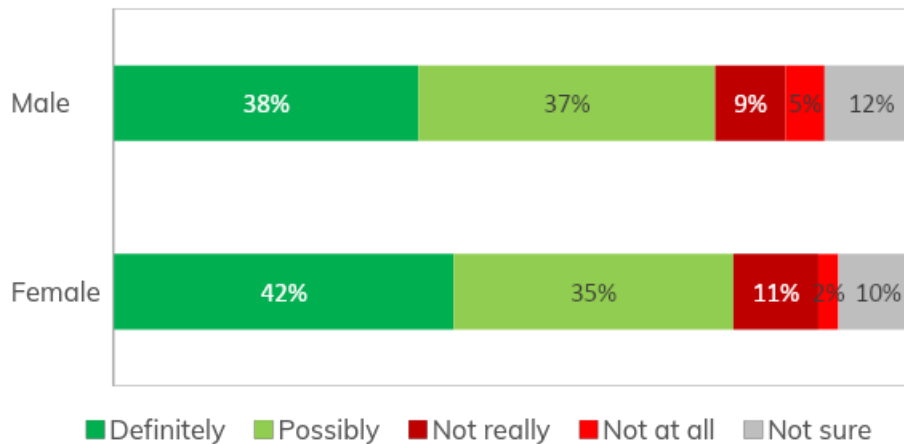
When we analysed differences in responses according to gender, we had the benefit of sizeable sub-groups and we can be reasonably confident about the observed differences between men and women.

However, we found relatively little difference in responses between men and women. Men were slightly more likely to say that finances and the cost of living was a high priority, whilst women were slightly more likely to view caring responsibilities as a higher priority.

Whilst men were more likely to be aware of the Active Kingston discount card than women, women were more likely to be aware of walking for health walks.

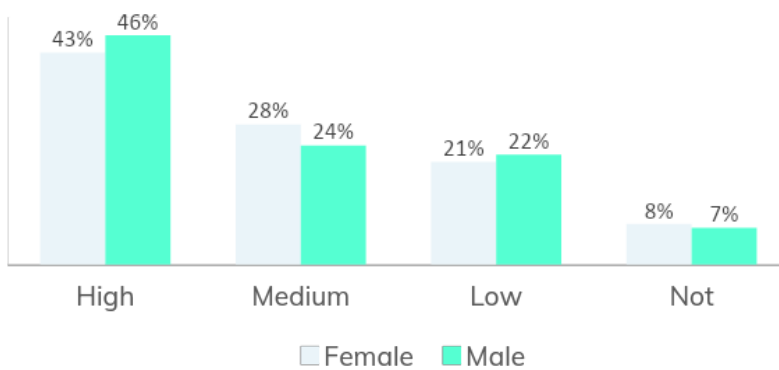
However, despite these slight variations, generally the findings were very consistent, with very little gendered differentiation.

Do you think that Royal Borough of Kingston is a good place to grow older?

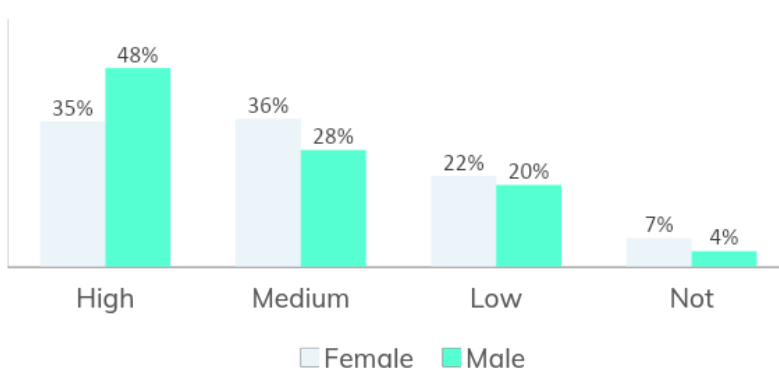


How big a challenge?

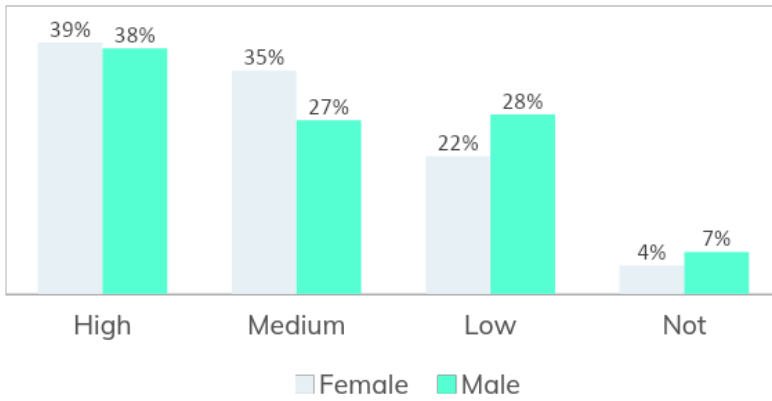
Your health and wellbeing



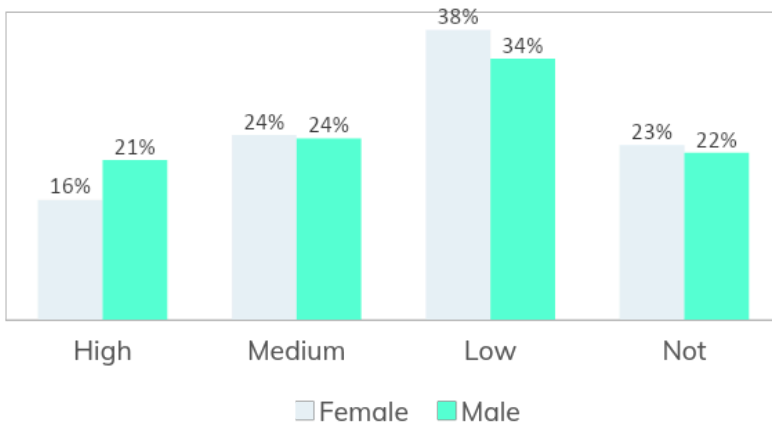
Cost of living finances



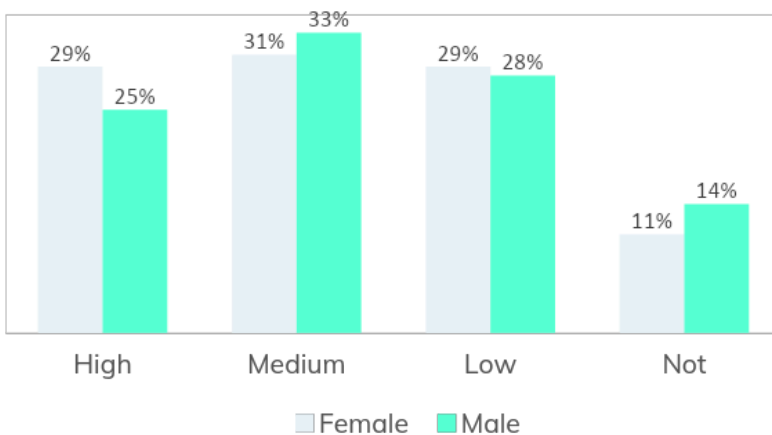
Being as active as you would like

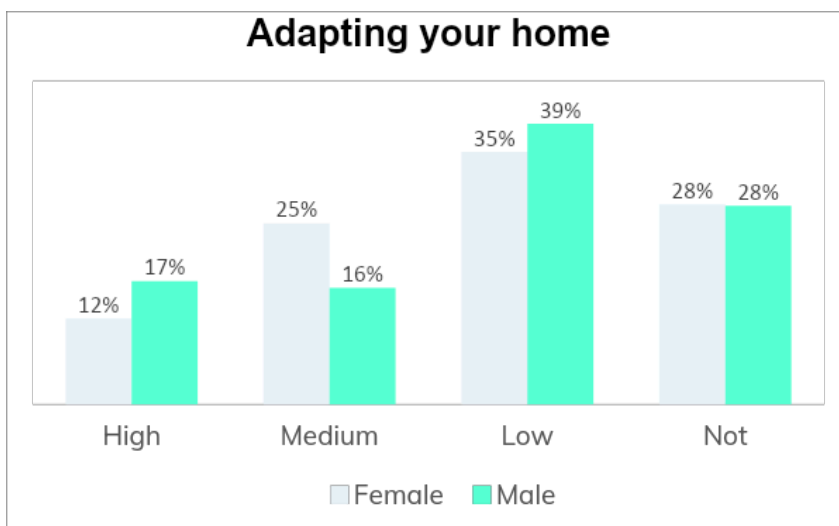
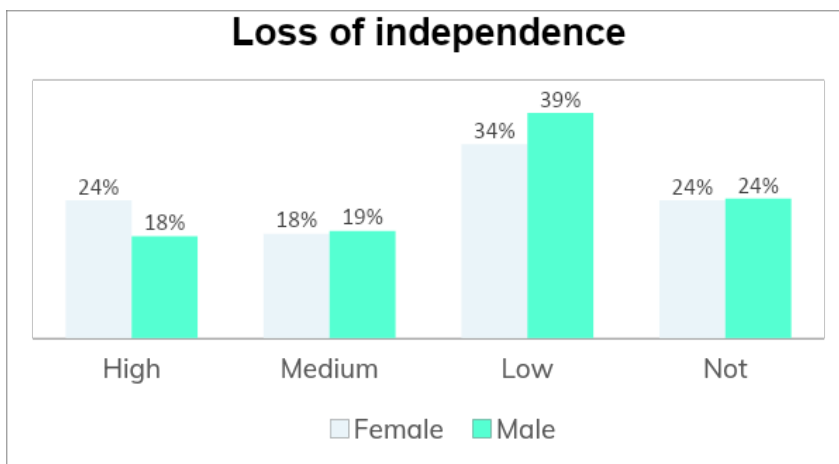
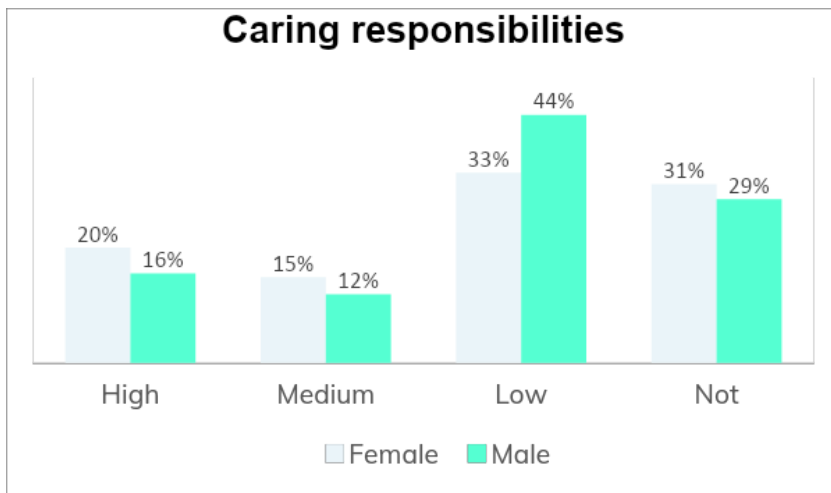


Feelings of loneliness or isolation

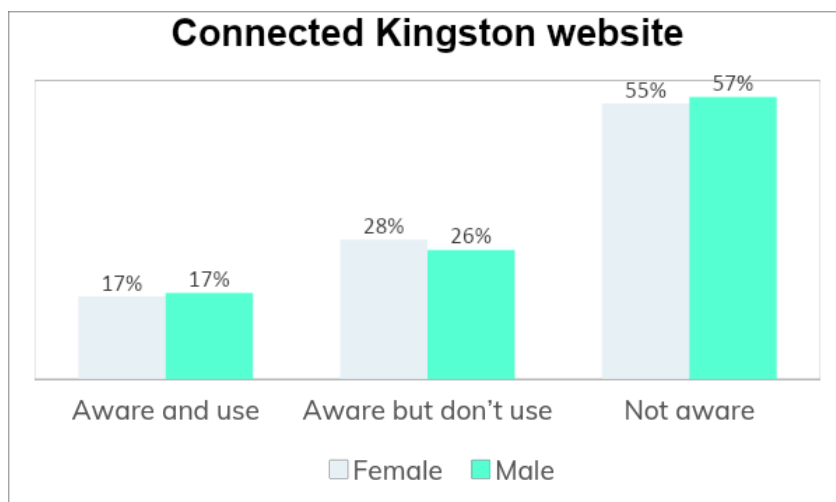
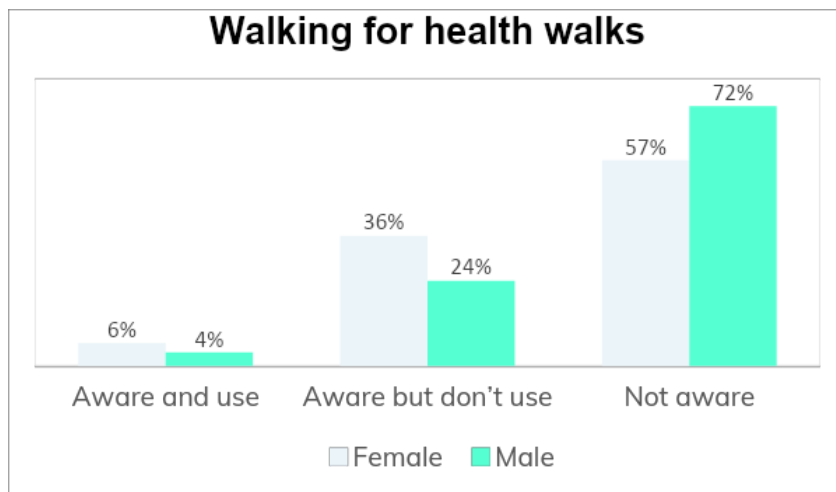
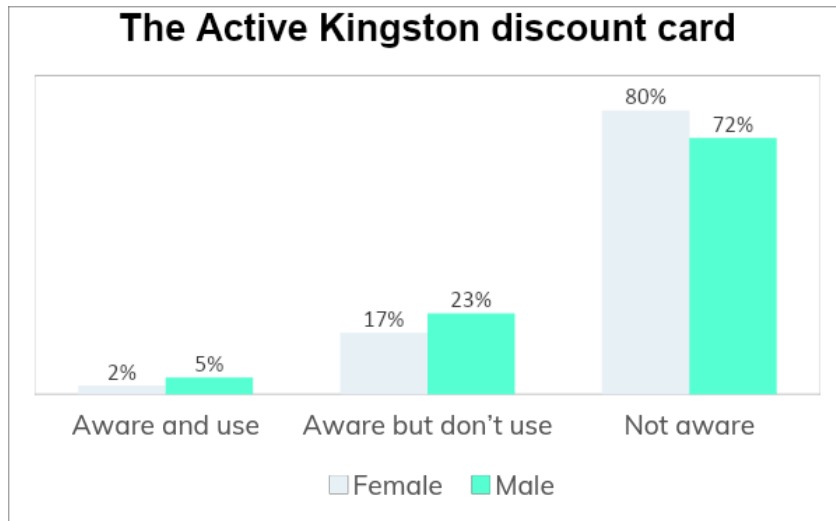


Keeping up with technology

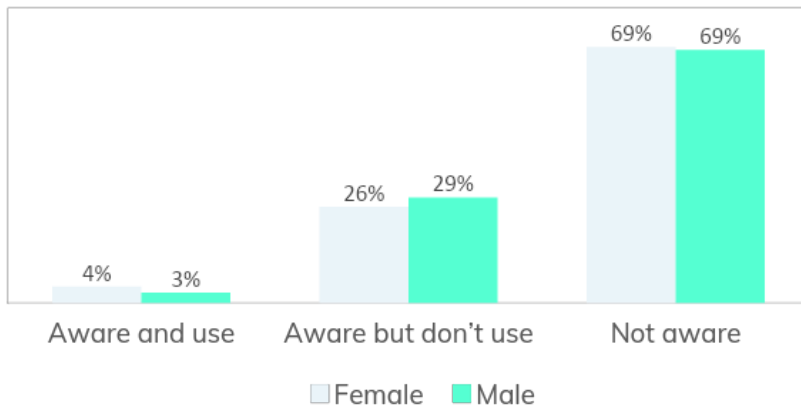




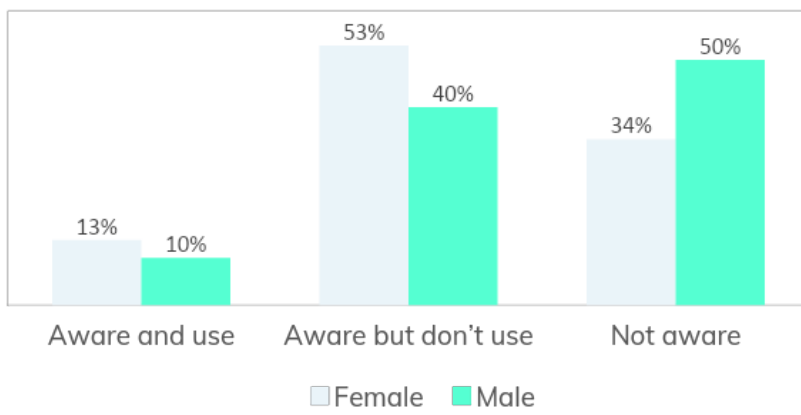
Awareness of services



Free NHS talking therapies



Adult Education Classes



Who participated in the research

Demographic questions used in the online survey differed slightly from those asked in the outreach, as the online survey contained a significant number of additional questions and in a few instances were worded differently. Consequently, we have analysed the demographics of those who responded online separately from those who took part in the outreach.

Unless otherwise stated, figures for the outreach contain data from both individual interviews and small group discussions (Street Focus Groups).

The demographics of those who took part in the research largely reflected that of the borough population, based on census data, for gender, ethnicity and religion.

There was a spread of participants from across the borough; whilst responses from Kingston Town were much more likely to have come through online, the outreach has a greater number of participants from Chessington.

We predominantly heard from older people, with around two-thirds of respondents aged 65 or over. Those who took part in the outreach were slightly older with 92% aged 55 and above.

Disability

Since the wording of the question about disability asked online, and in the outreach, differed somewhat, we should be careful with any comparison. However, 28% of those who were engaged in the outreach said they had a limiting physical, mental or learning disability, whilst 41% of respondents to the online survey told us they had a physical, mental or health condition that they expected to last 12 months or more.

Housing and economic activity

People who responded to the online survey were overwhelmingly home owners (91%), with very few private sector renters and social housing tenants. The profile of those who were engaged through the outreach was more diverse, with only 63% home owners.

The economic status of respondents to both the outreach and the online survey were very similar, with 60% retired and around one in five working full time.

Overall, 34% of people were in either full time or part time work; only a very small proportion of people told us that they were looking for work. However, of these, the vast majority felt that they were not getting the support they needed to find a job.

Caring responsibilities

Just less than one in five (18%) of online respondents told us that they had caring responsibilities for a friend, neighbour or family member.

Marital status

Just over half (56%) of online respondents said they were married, which is slightly higher than the 47% Census figures for the borough.

Connection to the area

The extent to which people felt that they were part of the community of Kingston varied considerably between the online and outreach. People we engaged through the outreach were typically far more likely to say they felt 'very much' part of the community (43%), three times the number from online respondents (13%). However, there was no difference in the proportion of people who said they did not feel part of the community – both 14% 'not very much' or 'not at all'.

83% of people we heard from in the outreach felt connected ('very much' or 'quite a lot') and 61% of people who responded online felt similarly.

When asked what the reasons for their answer were, those who said they felt connected, overwhelmingly said this was as a result of having friends, family and being involved in the community, for example through volunteering or work, clubs, activities, arts activities or church. Others referred to the length of time they had lived in the area and a smaller number mentioned that they felt it was because they liked the area itself, and enjoyed particular local amenities.

Those who said they feel less connected referred to a number of reasons for this, including; having lived in the area for a short time only, restricted access such as mobility and digital access limiting their involvement. Poor health was also mentioned as restricting community involvement and some talked about their behaviour changing as a result of covid and that since then they had lost the sense of local connection. A few people told us the lack of community activities and facilities and friends and a social life in the area made them feel less connected.

Previous engagement

Very few people, both from the online survey and the outreach, felt they had been consulted a lot previously. However, those engaged through the outreach were significantly more likely to have said they had never been asked their views before (55% compared with 30% online).

Conclusions

A place to grow older

People feel generally positive about the borough as a place to grow old. Local amenities and shops, the quality of local health services, access to green space, local transport and community safety were all felt to contribute to making it a place where people could happily grow older. However, many of the things that people saw as positive aspects of local life, were also felt by others to be things that could be improved. Healthcare and transport, crime and community safety, public realm (seating and public toilets) were all viewed – to a greater or lesser extent - as barriers to being an age friendly borough. The cost of living was also something which had an adverse effect on older people's quality of life.

These were reflected too in the challenges people face. People's health and wellbeing, their finances and the cost of living and being as active as they wanted to were the things which people felt were the biggest challenges they faced.

Being able to travel around the borough and the provision of parks and green spaces were both viewed positively by a majority of people. However, we repeatedly heard some very specific issues in relation to public realm such as; the maintenance of pavements and footpaths, provision of public toilets and more seating spaces in public areas.

Current behaviours

People overwhelmingly told us that they exercised regularly – with over 80% saying they did so every day or a few times a week. There is however a considerable body of high-quality research evidence to show that people are highly prone to overstating the amount of exercise they do when self-reporting. Issues of recall and response bias – arising from things such as social desirability and poor memory – have been found to cause people to say they exercise more than they actually do. One study¹ found that people over estimated self-reported moderate activity by an average of 42 minutes per day. It is highly likely therefore that the proportion of people who exercise a few times a week or more is rather lower than our findings.

Social desirability bias may also cause an overstating of the proportion of people who said they volunteer, however it's probably reasonable to assume that the split between those who are or would be interested in volunteering and those who would not (approximately 50/50) is broadly accurate.

Accessing information and services

Social sources such as hearing about things from family, friends and work colleagues, through existing groups and networks – both in person and online – are the most common sources of information for the majority of people. The internet too is widely used.

¹ Schaller, A., Rudolf, K., Dejonghe, L., Grieben, C., & Froboese, I. (2016). Influencing Factors on the Overestimation of Self-Reported Physical Activity: A Cross-Sectional Analysis of Low Back Pain Patients and Healthy Controls. *BioMed research international*, 2016, 1497213.

<https://doi.org/10.1155/2016/1497213>

Formal and traditional channels often used by the public sector, such as libraries, the council's website and newsletter, GP and health services etc are generally less effective.

Older people's awareness of available services to support health and wellbeing were generally low and the take-up and use of these services even lower. A majority of people we heard from had never heard of the services which are intended to support them, with the exception of Adult Education classes where 40% were unaware. Whilst a lack of awareness is unlikely to be a panacea for behaviour change, it is a fundamental barrier to people accessing the support these services offer.

Having access to the internet is not a barrier for the majority of people, however, as is known from wider evidence, for a small but significant minority digital exclusion poses a genuine obstacle to accessing information, support and services online. However, support to use technology is not available to a larger proportion of people, underlining the fact that simply having access to the internet is not in itself a solution. Around one quarter of the people we heard from don't have access to support to use technology – which might be a more accurate reflection of digital exclusion than internet access.

Motivations and barriers to being more active

A majority of people said they wanted to be more active, which appears to present a significant opportunity, though again we need to be mindful of possible cognitive bias and the 'value-action gap'². People knowing that they should do more exercise and even stating that they want to do more exercise requires little effort or thought, however wanting to and actually doing more exercise are very different. However, understanding that the primary barriers to exercising are having sufficient time, money and energy to do so can help to understand what might be effective at incentivising people to become more active.

Making Kingston more age-friendly

There are plenty of opportunities to make people feel that Kingston is a better place to grow older, with people suggesting a wide range of ideas. People value convenience -and so the availability of more localised provision, more varied activities, leisure services and community spaces and extended opening hours all make accessing these easier.

Better maintenance of pavements and more public toilets and seating in public spaces were repeatedly mentioned by people (in response to different questions) as being things that would improve the borough and people's daily lives.

Though often mentioned, transport was somewhat contentious and divided opinions, as some expressed a desire for more car-friendly practices, whilst others wanted to see reduced traffic, increased pedestrianisation and better public transport.

People viewed all the themes that we asked them about as high priorities and very few people saw them as low priority. Despite this, community and health services, communications and information and housing were viewed as being important by more people than anything else. It's worth noting too that housing was viewed as a high priority by a substantially higher proportion of people taking part in the outreach – which from our demographic analysis appears to be a more representative group than those who responded online.

² This term refers to the disparity between what people believe or want to be true, their values, and their actions.

Differences in the views of different groups

Older people tended to view the borough as being more age friendly than younger people, their priorities and challenges faced also differed. Our research suggests that health and wellbeing, home adaptation, losing independence and keeping up with technology were all more important for older people. Older people also tended to be somewhat less aware of services and support than those under 55.

We found only occasional and generally modest differences between men and women.

The importance of being more active and people's personal finances and the cost of living remained constant across different groups.

We did find that there were some important differences in the views of those who we engaged through the outreach and those who took part online. Not only were their perspectives of the local area as a good place to grow old and positive regard for parks and green spaces noticeably different, their views of priorities (as mentioned above) and the challenges they faced were also significantly different too.

In seeking to understand these differences, it is worth noting the differences in demographics between the two groups. Those participating online tended to be less ethnically diverse (and more likely to be White), slightly younger and significantly more likely to be women than men. Online respondents were more likely to work in the area but not live there and if they did, were less likely to live in more deprived parts of the borough and significantly more likely to own their own homes than those who were engaged through the outreach.

The demographics from the outreach appear to more closely resemble the local population profile than those from online responses.

The research has uncovered a wide range of evidence and insights of the needs, aspirations, experiences and behaviour of older people in Kingston. Hope these provide the council with a clear, evidence-based, perspective that can guide the next steps in the progress towards becoming more age friendly.

Led by this understanding of the opportunities, the council will need to continue to work with residents and partners on the journey, who clearly share the council's enthusiasm and appetite for leading positive change towards becoming an age friendly borough.

Appendix 1 – Outreach Questionnaire

Royal Borough of Kingston Age Friendly Borough – Community Engagement



- 1. What is your connection to RB Kingston?** *[tick all that apply]* Live Work Business owner
Member of a voluntary/community organisation An elected member Another interest
- 2. To what extent do you feel a part of the community where you live/work in RB Kingston?**
Very much Quite a lot Neither a part of it or not Not very much Not at all
Why do you say that:
- 3. Do you think that RB Kingston is a good place to grow older?**
Definitely Possibly Not sure Not really Not at all
Comment/explain more
- 4. How big a challenge in your life are the following things?** *(rank high / med / low / not)*
Your health and wellbeing _____ Cost of living/finances _____ Being as active as you would like _____
Feelings of loneliness or isolation _____ Keeping up with technology _____
Caring responsibilities _____ Loss of independence _____ Adapting your home _____
Other significant challenges:
- 5. How do you find out about local services, activities, volunteering opportunities and events?** *[tick all that apply]*
From friends/family Through groups I am part of Internet Library
Social media eg WhatsApp/Facebook Local newspaper Connected Kingston website
GP or other health and care services Kingston Council newsletter
Other:
- 6. Do you have internet access and the support you need to use technology (eg help from friends/family)?**
Internet access Yes No Not sure Don't want
Support to use technology Yes No Not sure Don't want
- 7. Are you aware of the following services that are available to support your physical health, mental health and wellbeing?**

The active Kingston discount card	Aware and use <input type="checkbox"/>	Aware but don't use <input type="checkbox"/>	Not aware <input type="checkbox"/>
Walking for health walks	Aware and use <input type="checkbox"/>	Aware but don't use <input type="checkbox"/>	Not aware <input type="checkbox"/>
Connected Kingston website	Aware and use <input type="checkbox"/>	Aware but don't use <input type="checkbox"/>	Not aware <input type="checkbox"/>
Free NHS talking therapies	Aware and use <input type="checkbox"/>	Aware but don't use <input type="checkbox"/>	Not aware <input type="checkbox"/>
Adult Education Classes	Aware and use <input type="checkbox"/>	Aware but don't use <input type="checkbox"/>	Not aware <input type="checkbox"/>
- 8. What kinds of activities do you currently take part in, and what might you be interested in doing?**

Things I am currently doing	Things I would like to do
- 9. How often do you take part in /do physical activities** *(eg exercises, walking, yoga, cycling, gardening)?*
Every day A few times a week A few times a month Rarely Never
- 10. Would you like to be more physically active?** Yes No
- 11. What things get in the way of you being more physically active?** *[tick all that apply]*
Don't have people to go with The cost I am worried about catching covid
Lack of confidence I don't have the energy There aren't things being offered that I am interested in
Caring responsibilities Lack of time Don't have access to the internet
I am not sure what is available There is nothing near my home
Other:
- 12. What could enable and support you to be more physically active?**

- 13. Do you currently volunteer, or would you be interested in volunteering?**
 Yes, currently volunteer No, but I'd be interested No, and not interested
 If interested, what kinds of things might you like to do?
- 14. How easy do you find it to travel around in the borough?**
 Very easy Quite easy Neither easy nor difficult Quite difficult Very difficult N/A
- 15. How do you usually get around RB Kingston for things like shopping, visiting the doctor, visiting friends and family, or other things? (Tick all that apply)**
 Walk Use a special transportation service Drive myself Use public transportation
 Driven by others Ride a bike Take a taxi N/A
 Other: _____
- 16. Overall, how would you rate your local parks and green spaces?**
 Very good Good OK Poor Very poor Don't know
 Comment/explain more about what would make you want to use them more _____
- 17. What ideas do you have for how Royal Borough of Kingston could be a better place to grow older?**
- 18. Kingston Council are going to develop an action plan as part of the process of becoming an Age Friendly Borough. What do you think are the most important things to focus on in the next few years? [rank zero to five, where zero=not a priority and 5= very high priority]**
 Outdoor spaces and buildings _____ Transport _____ Housing _____
 Social Participation (eg leisure, cultural & spiritual activities) _____ Respect and social inclusion _____
 Civic participation and employment _____ Communication and information _____
 Community Support and health services _____
 Comments/other topics you think should be prioritised: _____
- 19. Are you interested in being part of further discussions about how RB Kingston could become a better place to grow older, or receiving feedback from this community research?** Yes No [if yes, complete contact sheet]

ABOUT YOU

- 20. How much have your views been consulted before?**
 A lot Quite a bit A little Not much Not at all
- 21. Age** under 45 45-54 55-64 65-74 75-84 85+ Prefer not to say
- 22. How would you best describe your ethnicity or background?** _____ I'd rather not say
- 23. Are your day to day activities limited due to a physical, mental or learning disability?** Yes No
- 24. Are you:** Female Male Non-binary Prefer not to say Self-describe _____
- 25. a) Which of these best describes what you're doing at present?** Full Time work Part Time work
 Retired Self Employed Zero hours contract work Looking for work
 Unable to work Prefer not to say
- b) If you are looking for work, do you feel you are able to get the jobseeker support you need?** Yes No
- 26. What are the first 4 digits of your postcode?** _____
- 27. How would you describe the home where you live?**
 Your own home Rented - council or housing association Rent - private landlord
 Sheltered accommodation Care home Other _____
- 28. Is there anything else you would like to say?**

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Area: Kingston Town Maldens & Coombe South of Borough Surbiton

LOCATION of Interview _____ Date _____ Interviewer _____
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