

Index Insights

Neighbourhood Belonging and Caring



Resident Voice Index™ initiative

[The Resident Voice Index™](#) is a long-term project to gather anonymised survey responses from people living in social housing in the UK. These short surveys are designed to provide policy makers and housing providers with information they can use to improve neighbourhoods and communities.

Cornerstones: Independence, Transparency, Brevity, Anonymity

We are not paid by anyone to perform these surveys and the results are published, for free in a transparent fashion for anyone who may benefit from using them.

The surveys are kept unintrusive and short by focusing on the chosen topics only and we guarantee results will not be traceable back to individual respondents.

The Neighbourhoods & Communities Survey

In this five-minute survey that 3875 self-selected UK social housing residents completed, we explored the availability and importance of local facilities and amenities within neighbourhoods along with perceptions of community belonging, caring and safety. The questions were designed to deliver insights into how neighbourhoods could be adapted to improve these perceptions.

Social connection is one of our fundamental needs that starts at birth and continues throughout our lives. Our immediate environment and the bonds forged with family, friends and neighbourhoods are a primary source of satisfying this need. A sense of belonging has repeatedly been linked to higher levels of individual [happiness and wellbeing](#) and more [recently](#), even to better physical and mental health.

Analysis of the Resident Voice Index™ Neighbourhoods & Communities survey indicated a positive correlation between caring and belonging, whereby individuals who responded positively to one were twice as likely to answer positively for the other attribute.

Research from the [ONS](#) shows a falling sense of belonging across Britons over the last decade, and an [ONS Community Life Survey](#) from 2019/20 reported that 63% of respondents felt they belonged to their neighbourhood. Our finding that less than one third of Social Housing residents in this study feel the same way is a cause for concern and something that policy makers, housing providers and wider society should not ignore.

Illustrated Insights

3875

Self-selected UK social housing residents responded to questions on neighbourhood belonging and caring



We explored the importance of:



Local Facilities and Amenities
Community Belonging | Caring and Safety



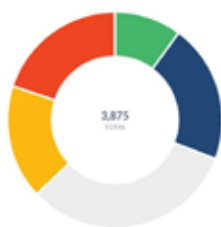
Social connection is a fundamental need and improves wellbeing and mental health

31% 37%

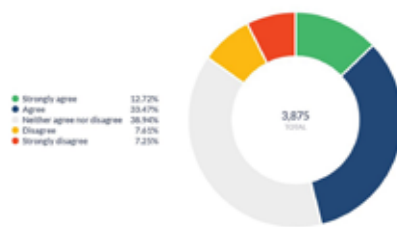
Felt like they belong to their neighbourhood

Felt like they did **not** belong to their neighbourhood

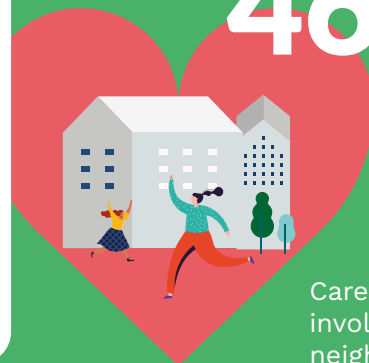
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
"I feel like I belong to this neighbourhood"



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
"I care about being involved with my neighbourhood"



46%



Care about being involved with their neighbourhood

When analysed by age, these results show a significant difference in the level of caring about neighbourhood involvement between the under 35s (40%) and the over 35s (48%). Whilst there was also a difference in belonging that followed the same pattern across the age split, this was not as significant.



The survey showed that those over 35 care more about community involvement than the under 35s.



Applying The Insights

In the context of improving happiness and wellbeing, potential changes to neighbourhoods by social housing providers as well as central and local policymakers should focus on increasing the proportion of residents who feel like they belong to their neighbourhoods.

We should focus on mechanisms to move those who are currently unable to state that they belong to their neighbourhoods to a point where they can commit to this statement. These results provide a proportion of almost 70% of respondents on which to concentrate those efforts.

Allowing for individualists who are unlikely to take the leap, the opportunity is large. Large enough, we anticipate, to shift the 31% of social housing residents that reported to 'belong' in this survey up towards the national levels reported by the ONS. The wealth of suggestions from residents provides some insight as to what could be changed to help convert this opportunity into a reality.

Housing providers and local governments are not the only pieces in the jigsaw but might be the ones that make a difference. This feedback suggests that the provision of communal amenities and spaces, where possible, could be tangible interventions to increase a sense of belonging within local neighbourhoods.

Additionally, those that felt they do not belong to their neighbourhood were frequently unaware of positive contributions by the housing provider. In our analysis "None know"; "None aware"; "Can't think" and "Nothing I know" formed four of the top nine responses from those who 'don't belong'. With reference to MHCLG's [Charter for Social Housing Residents](#) and the importance of communicating key messages to residents, there may be opportunities for Registered Providers simply to communicate their contributions better, in order for the messages to be absorbed by residents and thus help elevate satisfaction and the sense of belonging.

Last Word

Despite the low levels of belonging (31%) exhibited by the respondents, the percentage of social housing residents who care about being involved is much higher, approaching one half. This suggests that for a significant percentage of people, getting involved is just a matter of the right intervention. Furthermore, we are optimistic these results indicate that any inertia associated with not wishing to belong is overshadowed by the appetite for change.

What people who 'belong' like most about their neighbourhood



Green Spaces | Friendly Neighbours
Community Spirit | Open Space
Transport Links | Sense of Community



Positive contributions made by housing providers mentioned by those who 'belong'



Community hubs

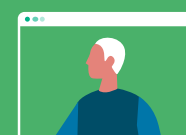
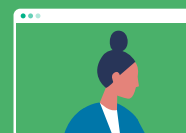


Community centres



Community events

It's important to communicate positive contributions made by housing providers



GETTING COMMUNITIES INVOLVED IS JUST A MATTER OF THE RIGHT INTERVENTION



