

OUR NEXT GENERATION

Young People in Lochaber,
Skye and Wester Ross:
Attitudes and aspirations.
Research report
September 2015



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1 Introduction

1.1 This report presents the findings of a wide-ranging study to explore the attitudes and aspirations of young people aged 15-30 in relation to the Highlands and Islands (H&I) of Scotland, with a particular focus on young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross. Overall, a total of 4,409 young people from within and outwith the H&I participated in the research, sharing their views on the region as a place to live, work and study. This summary report analyses the views of 421 young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross who contributed to the research.

1.2 The report presents findings for Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross as a whole, providing comparisons with the results for the wider H&I. Where possible, analysis is also provided for young people living in the sub-areas of Lochaber, Skye and Lochalsh and Wester Ross, highlighting where their views differ from one another.

Approach

1.3 The approach made extensive use of social media, through which young people were invited to complete an online survey. Six high schools in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross participated in the study. An online discussion portal allowed young people to provide further insight on their views. The study also gathered perspectives from stakeholders from both within and outwith the H&I region, including representatives from public sector and other organisations.

Study Context

1.4 The H&I have a deficit of young people, and there has traditionally been an outflow of young people from the region. This has also been the case in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross. There are a wide range of factors that impact on the choices and aspirations of young people, including educational and employment opportunities, the cost of living, transport, housing, cultural and connectivity issues. There are also strong local factors affecting decision-making, including close community ties for many young people in the region.

1.5 There are a range of policies and strategic interventions that have been, and are being, implemented, both locally within Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, across the H&I region and nationally. These have a varying level of explicit focus and degree of impact on young people in the region.

The Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross Context

Population and Impact of Geography

1.6 Census data from 2011 highlights the 'deficit' of young people that exists across the H&I. In 2011, there were 5,493 young people aged 15-29 recorded as living in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, 14% of the total population, lower than the 16% across the H&I and 20% across Scotland.¹ Although there was a small increase of 2% in the 15-29 year old population from 2001-2011, this is considerably lower than the H&I average growth rate of 10% and just

¹ Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2014) *Young People in the Highlands and Islands: Socio-economic Profile*. May 2014, p.17

1% of the total 15-29 year old population increase across the H&I.² Between 2010 and 2012, Highland Council (including Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross) had a low level net out-migration of 194 young people, lower than the rest of the H&I for people aged 15-29 years. Within the 17-20 year age group, there was net out-migration of 585 young people, although this was partially offset by other age groups. Even so, its young population is expected to decrease 13% by 2037, according to 2012-based projections.³

1.7 While Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross has experienced strong population growth in the last 30 years this has been driven by older people, and it is the area of Scotland with the highest proportion of young people leaving to go to university. This highlights challenges relating to a lack of further and higher education in the area, a relatively narrow economic base, and issues related to having an ageing population.⁴

1.8 Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross covers a geographic area of approximately 10,000km² and, with a total population of 39,107 at the time of the 2011 Census, has a very low population density of approximately four inhabitants per sq. km.⁵ The population is very sparse in some areas, with a number of extremely remote communities in HIE's fragile areas. In some areas, population density is amongst the lowest in Scotland.⁶ The largest population centres are Fort William (Lochaber), Ullapool (Wester Ross), Portree and Broadford (Skye and Lochalsh). Much of Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross is less economically and socially connected to the rest of Scotland than other areas in the H&I. While some of the area is on the mainland and accessible by train or bus, Skye is less accessible, currently reachable by ferry or car. This presents a number of infrastructure and connectivity issues that have a bearing on potential growth opportunities, at least to some extent.

Key policies and strategies

1.9 Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross hosts some of Scotland's most beautiful scenery and, accordingly, the local economy is dominated by tourism, accounting for 25% of local employment. Other recent (and partially related) growth sectors have been the outdoor activity sector and higher-end food and accommodation markets, with high quality natural produce, and the Creative industries.⁷ Consequently, the area has experienced an increase in year-round visitors, reducing the seasonality of employment. The fragile areas are also home to a range of "small-scale music studios and arts and crafts businesses," helping to bring associated opportunities.⁸

1.10 The largest employment sectors in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are accommodation and food services; wholesale and retail trade, motor repairs; construction; and the largely public sector services of health and social work and education.⁹ Compared to the

² Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2014) *Young People in the Highlands and Islands: Socio-economic Profile*. May 2014, p.16

³ Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2014) *Young People in the Highlands and Islands: Socio-economic Profile*. May 2014, p.18. Please note these figures are only available at the Highland Council level due to data availability limitations.

⁴ <http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/area-information/lochaber-skye-and-wester-ross/overview.html>

⁵ Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2014) *Area Profile for Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross*, p.1

⁶ <http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/area-information/lochaber-skye-and-wester-ross/overview.html>

⁷ <http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/area-information/lochaber-skye-and-wester-ross/key-sectors.html>

⁸ <http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/area-information/lochaber-skye-and-wester-ross/key-sectors.html>

⁹ Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2014) *Area Profile for Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross*, p.6

H&I overall, there is also a larger proportion of employment in the agriculture, forestry and fishing, transport and storage industries.¹⁰

1.11 Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, as part of the Highland Council area, is covered by the Highland Economic Development Action Plan, developed by the Highland Economic Forum. This outlines key interventions, across the Highland area, that will be taken to help stimulate the economy. The main priorities are:

- *“To stimulate and support indigenous business growth (including new business formation, diversification, internationalisation and collaborations);*
- *To help maximise the impacts of the UHI and attract national and international research funding into the area;*
- *To ensure that the workforce, sector by sector, has the skills to enable the region and its businesses to capitalise on opportunities;*
- *To address the growing problem, shared with other parts of the UK, of youth unemployment, and to attract back those with family connections with the region to help fill new job opportunities in renewables, tourism, life sciences, IT, etc.;*
- *To focus on job creation that will help raise the region’s relatively low average earnings in the private sector;*
- *Whilst creating jobs in the short term to compensate for public sector cuts and maintain the region’s growth momentum, to take a long term strategic approach to growing the business base and creating career opportunities.”¹¹*

1.12 This vision fits well with HIE’s Operating Plan (2015-2018) priorities: to help support businesses and local enterprises to shape and realise their growth aspirations; strengthen communities and areas at risk of exclusion; helping to stimulate development in the key growth sectors; and also developing the conditions for a competitive and low carbon economy.¹²

1.13 Two of the most relevant outcomes for young people in Highland Council’s Community Planning Partnership’s Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) are *“to increase the number of people in areas of deprivation engaged in activities that strengthen the skills and confidence of those communities to take effective action on community issues”* and *“to improve access to services for hard to reach and disadvantaged communities”*.¹³ These are significant commitments that will help to negate the perceived geographical disadvantages of not being in a central or urbanised area.

1.14 At a regional level, the Highlands and Islands Regional Skills Investment Plan¹⁴ (RSIP), developed by Skills Development Scotland (SDS), identifies skills challenges. It cites the greatest challenge for the H&I as the retention and attraction of working age people. Out-migration is also identified as a major skills challenge, with net out-migration evident for all ages

¹⁰ <http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/area-information/lochaber-skye-and-wester-ross/economic-profile.html>

¹¹ Highland Economic Forum (2012) An Action Plan for Economic Development in Highland. 14 March 2012, p.1

¹² Highlands and Islands Enterprise (2015) *Operating Plan 2015-2018*, p.4

¹³ Highland Community Planning Partnership & Scottish Government (2013) Single Outcome Agreement

¹⁴ SDS (2014) Highlands and Islands Skills Investment Plan

from 15-39. The plan identifies growth opportunities for the area, including Energy and the Creative Industries.

Key Investments

1.15 HIE, Highland Council and other partners are responding to the opportunities and challenges in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross through key investments. HIE is investing in key sector development, particularly in tourism, outdoor activity and higher-end food and drink markets, *“promoting collaboration between businesses whilst also identifying opportunities to develop sectors that are less strongly represented.”* This has included support towards Glencoe Mountain, Nevis Range, Sonas Hospitality and The Torridon Hotels. In Food and drink, Torabhaig Distillery, Scothatch Limited (scallop ranching), and Isle of Ewe Smokehouse have all had support and investment towards their business growth.

1.16 Although sectors such as Life sciences and Financial and businesses services are currently less significant in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, *“HIE is taking every opportunity to recognise and exploit potential developments”*. The importance of supporting the diversification of the Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross economy is recognised and demonstrated by investments made in BSW Sawmills Ltd (the largest sawmilling business in the UK), Ferguson Transport (one of the largest transport shipping and logistic companies in the H&I), and Kishorn Port Ltd (aiming to help the company re-establish this significant asset for the whole area).

1.17 Community Enterprise has also received significant investment across Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, with many remote communities taking a strong leadership role in the acquisition of land and assets to support social business opportunities and affordable housing solutions.

1.18 The University of the Highlands and Island’s West Highland College and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in Sleat, Isle of Skye (Scotland’s National Centre for Gaelic Language and Culture), are the area’s principal institutes of higher learning and will continue to support local industry with research, innovation, and overall skills development in line with community, regional and national priorities.¹⁵ Investment towards infrastructure development at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig and supporting the ‘Kilbeg Community Campus’ will facilitate new business developments and enable young people to stay in affordable homes close to education and employment opportunities.

1.19 Additional investments include more wide-scale infrastructure, such as the Next Generation Broadband Access (NGA) roll-out and Community Broadband Scotland (CBS), providing improvements to digital access and communication. In addition to connectivity, the Highland Council has also made housing a priority, in recognition of the fact that *“housing is crucial to the growth of Highland’s economy and the sustainability of its communities.”*¹⁶ Further housing investment is expected for the 2015-2020 period under the Highland Council’s Strategic Housing Investment Plan. As the main report demonstrates, the affordability and availability of housing is a key concern for young people.¹⁷

¹⁵ <http://www.uhi.ac.uk/en>

¹⁷ <http://www.hie.co.uk/common/handlers/download-document.ashx?id=4bc4a1d2-3377-4bdd-9248-8448bebe0bff>

2 Staying and Leaving

2.1 This section of the report considers whether respondents are likely to stay in or leave the H&I (and whether this is out of choice or out of necessity, real or perceived), and how respondents view the choices of others.

Self-identification

2.2 Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are less likely to want to stay in their local area than is the case across the H&I as a whole. In all, 35% describe themselves as **committed stayers**, compared to 43% for the H&I as a whole, and over four in 10 (43%), regard themselves as **committed leavers**, above the regional average of 40%. However, a larger proportion than regionally also describe themselves as **reluctant leavers** (17% compared to 13%), reflecting a shortage of appropriate opportunities for young people in the area.

Table 2.1

Which of the following best describes you? <i>Expressed in terms of % of total excluding potential returners, new residents and none of the above</i>	Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross (n=406)	Highlands & Islands (n=3,607)
	%	%
Committed stayer: <i>I live in the H&I and I plan on living and working here</i>	35	43
Reluctant stayer: <i>I live in the H&I; I would prefer to leave but I don't think I will be able to</i>	5	5
Reluctant leaver: <i>I live in the H&I; I would prefer to stay but I don't think I will be able to live and work here</i>	17	13
Committed leaver: <i>I live in the H&I, but I plan to leave, and live and work elsewhere</i>	43	40

Geographic variations

2.3 Young people from Lochaber are slightly more likely to describe themselves as **committed stayers** although, at 36%, this is still well below the H&I average. They are also more likely to classify themselves as **committed leavers** (45%, compared to 42% in Wester Ross and 40% in Skye and Lochalsh). The proportion of **reluctant leavers** is highest in Wester Ross and at 20% is above both the Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross and H&I averages (and compares to 18% in Skye and Lochalsh and 15% in Lochaber), suggesting fewer opportunities for young people there.

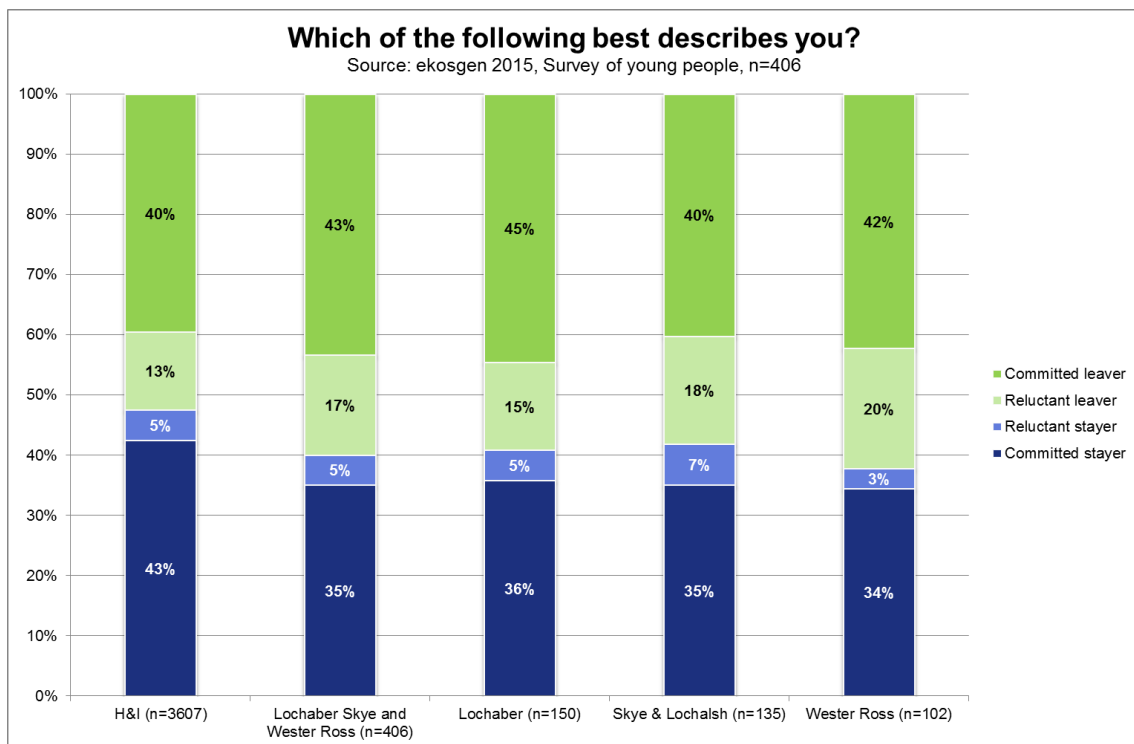
Variation by age and status

2.4 Those aged 15-18 are most likely to see themselves as **committed leavers** (58%), above the regional average for this age group of 52%. This is highest amongst young people in Lochaber (59%), but is also above the regional average in Wester Ross (57%) and Skye and Lochalsh (56%). The proportion of **reluctant leavers** is highest amongst 19-24 year olds (27%), linked to perceptions of more limited local HE opportunities, falling to 15% for 25-30 year olds and 14% for 15-18 year olds.

2.5 In all, 72% of 25-30 year olds identify as **committed stayers**, compared to 46% of 19-24 year olds and 23% of 15-18 year olds. Amongst the 25-30 year old age group, those in Skye and Lochalsh (83%) and in Wester Ross (80%) are most likely to be committed stayers, (compared to 60% in Lochaber). The proportion of 25-30 year olds that are **committed leavers** is low in all sub-areas, suggesting that those in this age group who are able to stay locally are happy to do so.

2.6 In keeping with the regional picture, school pupils in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are most likely to see themselves as **committed leavers** (63%). Those in employment/ self-employment most commonly describe themselves as **committed stayers** (70%), while 16% are **reluctant leavers**. For university/ college students, they are most typically **committed stayers** (37%), although a considerable proportion are **reluctant leavers** (29%) or **committed leavers** (29%).

Figure 2.1



Perceptions of stayers and leavers

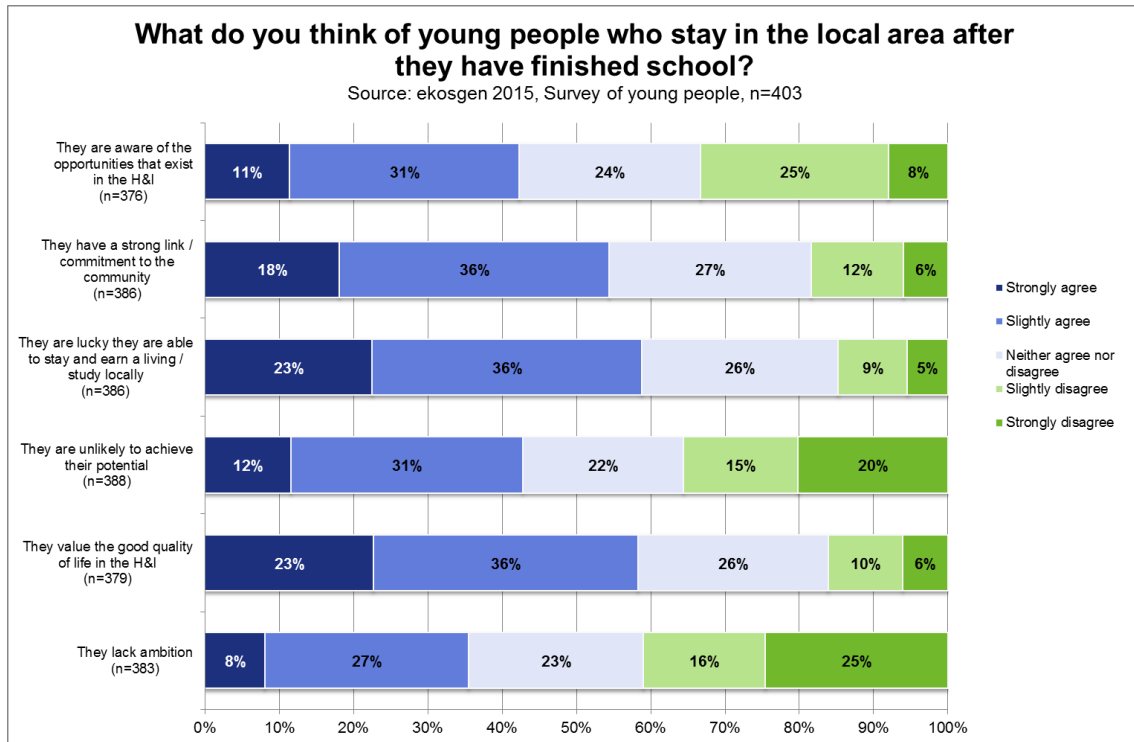
Views on those who stay

2.7 Perceptions of those who stay in the local area once they have finished school are broadly similar to those across the H&I overall. Nearly six in 10 consider those able to stay and earn a living/ study locally to be lucky (59%), compared to 61% regionally. A similar proportion agree that those who stay value the good quality of life in the H&I, over half (54%) that they have a strong link/ commitment to the community (both in line with the regional average), and 42% that they are aware of the opportunities that exist in the H&I (46% regionally).

2.8 More negative perceptions of the decision to stay in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are slightly above the regional average. Over four in 10 (43%) agree that stayers limit their potential (39% regionally), while nearly 36% agree that they lack ambition, also above the regional average (34%).

2.9 Young people in Wester Ross are more likely to agree that those who stay value the good quality of life (66%) (61% in Skye and Lochalsh and 50% in Lochaber), or that they have a strong link/ commitment to the community (60% in Wester Ross compared to 59% in Skye and Lochalsh and 46% in Lochaber). However, a lower proportion in Lochaber (35%) think stayers are unlikely to achieve their potential, which rises to 44% in Wester Ross and 53% in Skye and Lochalsh.

Figure 2.2



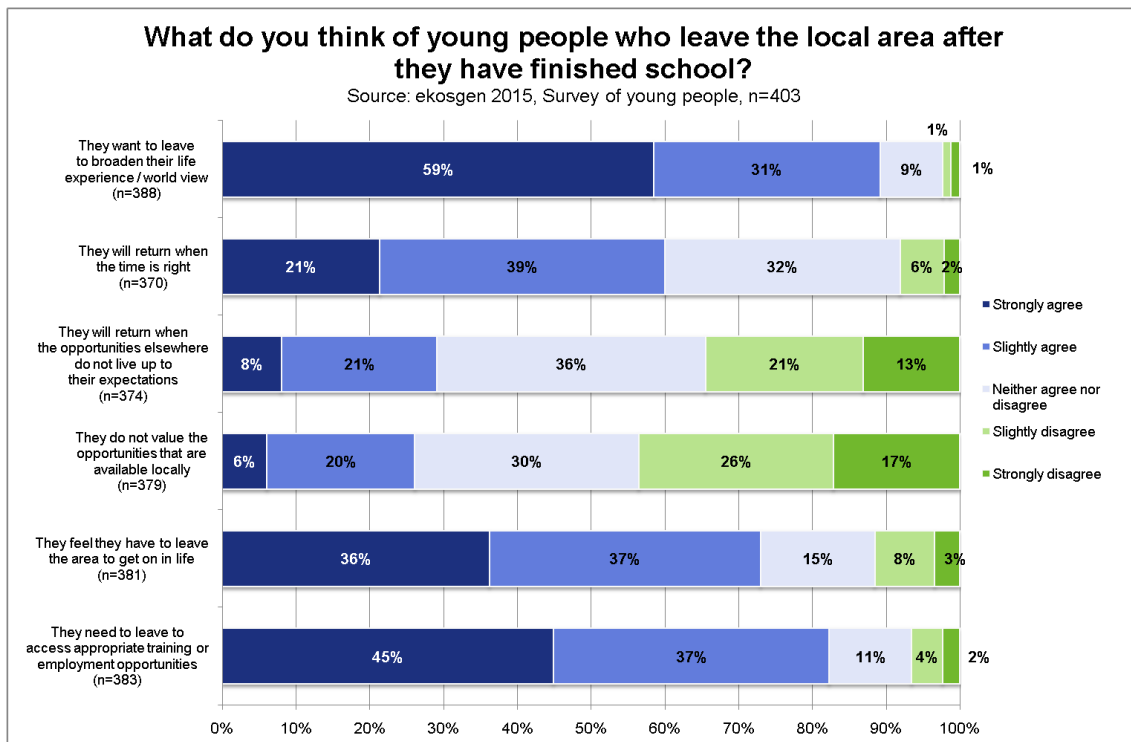
Views on those who leave

2.10 Around nine in 10 young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross agree that leavers do so to broaden their world view, even higher than the regional average (87%). Over eight in 10 (82%) think that leavers do so to access appropriate training or employment opportunities, again above the H&I average (78%), and 73% that they have to leave to get on in life (71% in the H&I). Six in 10 consider that leavers will return when the time is right, slightly above the 56% across the H&I.

2.11 Young people in Wester Ross (88%) and in Skye and Lochalsh (85%) are more likely to agree that leavers have to do so to access appropriate training or employment opportunities, than in Lochaber (76%). Those in Wester Ross are also most likely to think leavers do so to broaden their life experience (94%), compared to 90% in Lochaber and 84% in Skye and Lochalsh.

2.12 Young people in Skye and Lochalsh are least optimistic about leavers returning: 55% agree that they will return when the time is right, compared to 62% in both Wester Ross and Lochaber. In Lochaber, young people are less likely to agree that others leave to access appropriate training or employment opportunities or to get on in life (70%, increasing to 73% in Wester Ross and 76% in Skye and Lochalsh).

Figure 2.3

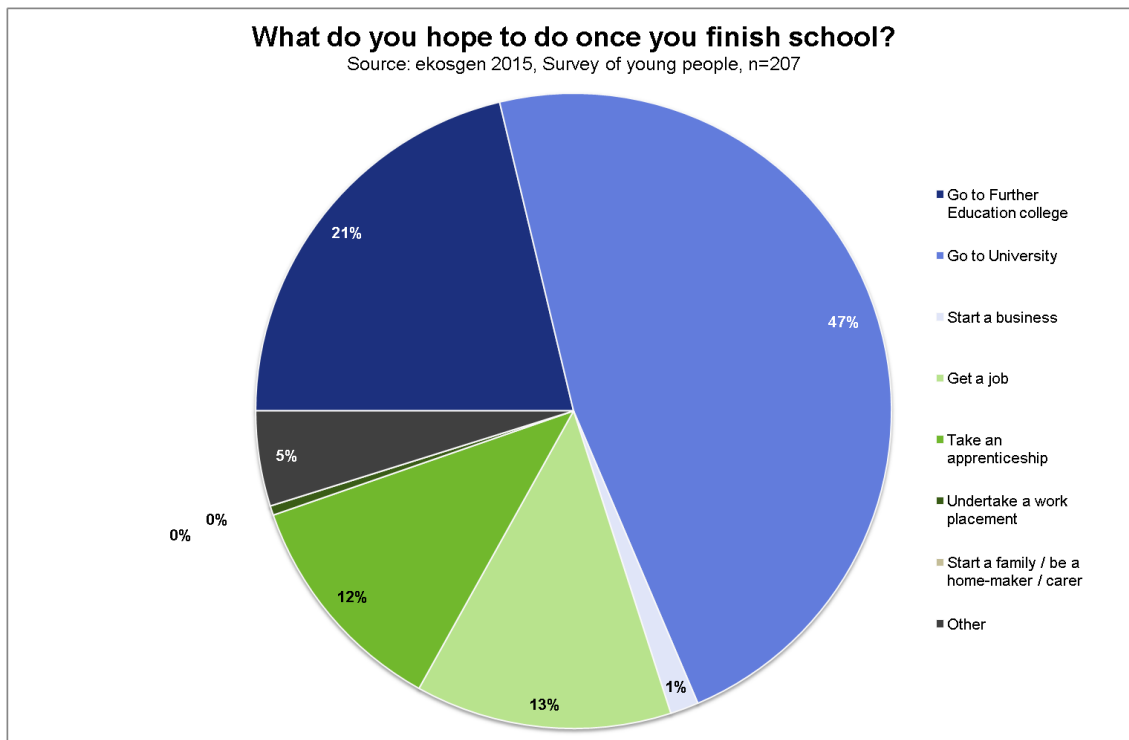


Aspirations of school leavers

2.13 Just under seven in 10 school pupils in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross wish to go to university or undertake further education after leaving school (68%), slightly below the H&I average overall (72%). The majority of these (47%) wish to attend university. Around a quarter would like to either get a job (13%) or start an apprenticeship (12%).

2.14 In Skye and Lochalsh, nearly three quarters (72%) wish to go to university (52%) or to further education college (20%), higher than the other parts of the area. This falls to 69% in Lochaber, where just 26% wish to go university and where a higher proportion of 43% wish to go to further education, and to 61% in Wester Ross, where the lowest proportion wish to go to university (17%) and where 44% aspire to further education.

Figure 2.4



2.15 Across Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, over one fifth of young people want to either stay locally (12%) or elsewhere in the H&I (10%). The most popular destinations for post-school activity are the Central Belt (24%, compared to 19% in the H&I), elsewhere in the world (20%, slightly above the regional average of 18%) and elsewhere in Scotland (18%, 22% in the H&I).

2.16 The proportion wishing to stay locally is highest in Lochaber (17%), falling to 14% in Skye and Lochalsh and to just 6% in Wester Ross, compared to the regional average of 14%. The proportion wanting to go somewhere in the H&I is highest in Wester Ross (11%), which includes Inverness, falling to 9% in Lochaber and just 6% in Skye and Lochalsh, both of which are below the regional average of 10%.

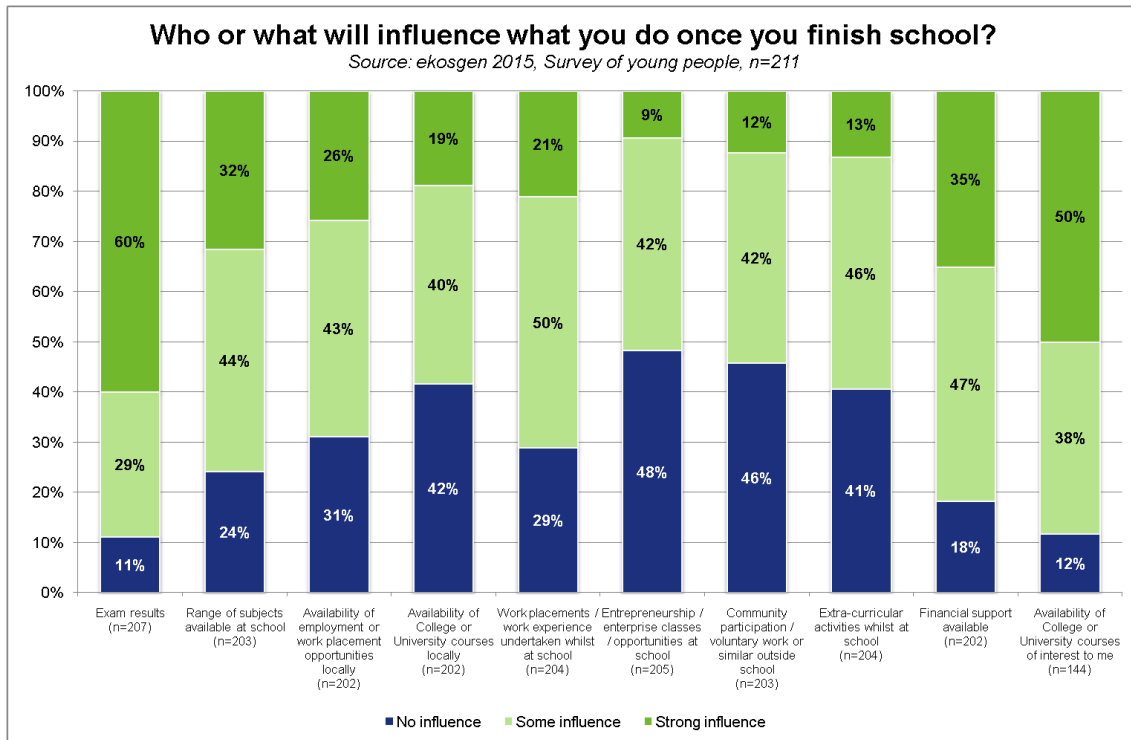
Factors influencing decisions after leaving school

2.17 Factors influencing post-school decisions generally are similar for young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross as they are for the H&I as a whole.

2.18 Almost nine in 10 (89%) consider that exam results have at least some influence, with 60% stating that these are strongly influential (compared to 91% and 62% in the H&I overall). Further, 88% think (50% strongly so) that interesting college or university courses are influential. Other important factors are the financial support available (of some influence to 82% and strongly so for 35%); the range of subjects available at school (of some influence for 76%, strongly so for 32%); and the availability of employment or work placement opportunities locally (of some influence for 69% and of strong influence for 26%).

2.19 The *availability* of college or university courses locally is of some influence for just under 60% in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, below the 69% on average across the H&I. Community participation/ voluntary work or similar outside school is an influence for 54%, compared to 61% across the H&I); and the availability of employment or work placement opportunities locally is an influence for 69%, compared to 75% across the H&I.

Figure 2.5



2.20 Within Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, it is those living in Lochaber who are significantly more likely to be *strongly* influenced by the availability of employment or work placement opportunities locally (32%, falling to 26% in Skye and Lochalsh and 18% in Wester Ross) and by community participation/ voluntary work or similar outside school (17%, falling to 13% and 5% respectively). Those in Lochaber are also more influenced by work placements/ work experience undertaken at school, entrepreneurship/ enterprise classes/ opportunities at school, extra-curricular activities at school and by the financial support available.

2.21 In contrast, in Skye and Lochalsh young people place a comparatively high value on the range of subjects at school (37% strongly so, falling to 35% in Lochaber and 22% in Wester Ross); the availability of college or university courses locally (25%, compared to 16% and 19% respectively); and the availability of college/ university courses of interest (53%, in contrast to 50% and 51%). In Wester Ross, the only factor more strongly influential than the other sub-areas is exam results, and this is slight; 60% consider this a strong influence, compared to 58% for both Lochaber and Skye and Lochalsh.

3 Learning in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross

3.1 This chapter explores attitudes and aspirations evident in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross in relation to learning; covering Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE), and related matters such as graduate placements and the opportunities presented in terms of routes into employment from FE and HE.

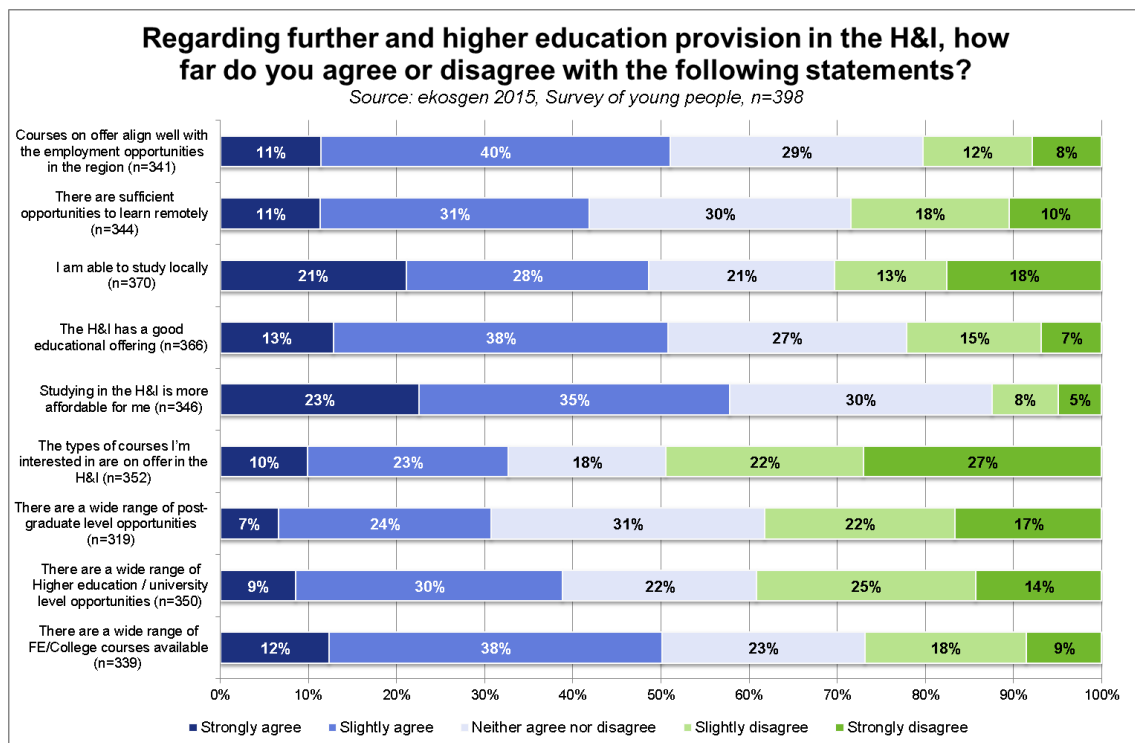
Further and higher education provision

3.2 Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross generally view the educational offering in the H&I less favourably than respondents across the region. Around half (51%) think there is a good educational offering in the H&I, lower than the 56% regionally, and they are less positive about the quality and availability of HE and FE. In particular, this is true for those thinking they are able to study locally (49%, compared to 57% in the H&I); in relation to sufficient opportunities to learn remotely (42%, compared 49% in the H&I); and that the H&I has courses of interest (33%, compared to 40% in the H&I).

3.3 Young people in Wester Ross are most likely to agree that there is a wide range of FE/ college courses available (58%, compared to 53% in Skye and Lochalsh and 42% in Lochaber). Similarly, they are more positive about the availability of higher education/ university level opportunities (46%, compared to 36% in both other sub-areas) and about the range of post-graduate level opportunities (34%, compared to 28% elsewhere).

3.4 In Lochaber, it is the availability of courses of interest that is rated comparatively favourably, 36% thinking this is good, compared to 31% in Skye and Lochalsh and 28% in Wester Ross. More young people in Skye and Lochalsh rate the educational offer overall as good, as well as the ability to study locally and opportunities for learning remotely, although these are not typically higher than the H&I regional average.

Figure 3.1



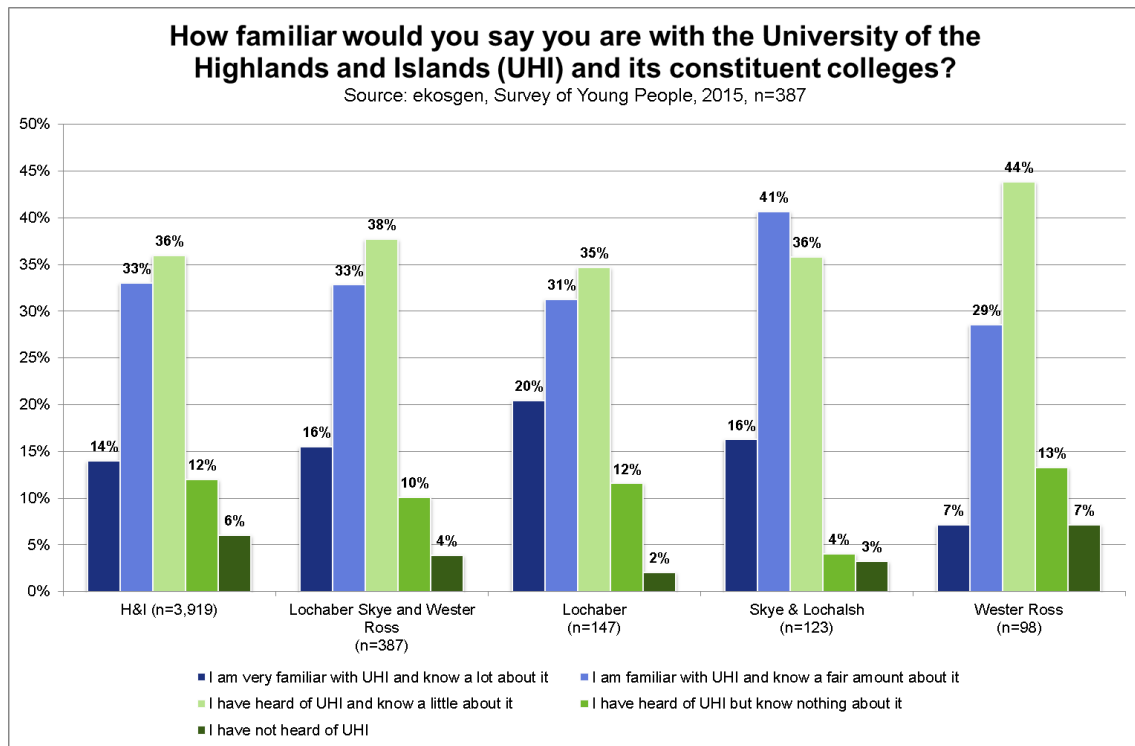
3.5 In Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, it is generally young people aged 25-30 who are more likely to think more highly of the educational offering; this is particularly the case for the range of higher education/ university level opportunities available (49%, compared to 37% amongst 15-18 year olds and 35% for those aged 19-24) and for opportunities for learning remotely (48%, compared to 42% of 15-18 year olds and 37% amongst 19-24 year olds).

Awareness of UHI and its offer

3.6 Awareness of UHI is higher in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross than it is in the H&I overall; nearly nine in 10 (87%) know at least a little about UHI, compared to 83% across the region. This is particularly high in Skye and Lochalsh (93%), and also above the regional average in Lochaber (86%). The proportion falls slightly below average in Wester Ross (80%).

3.7 Awareness of UHI is highest amongst students (98% know at least a little about UHI), compared to 92% of young people in employment/ self-employment and 79% of school pupils.

Figure 3.2

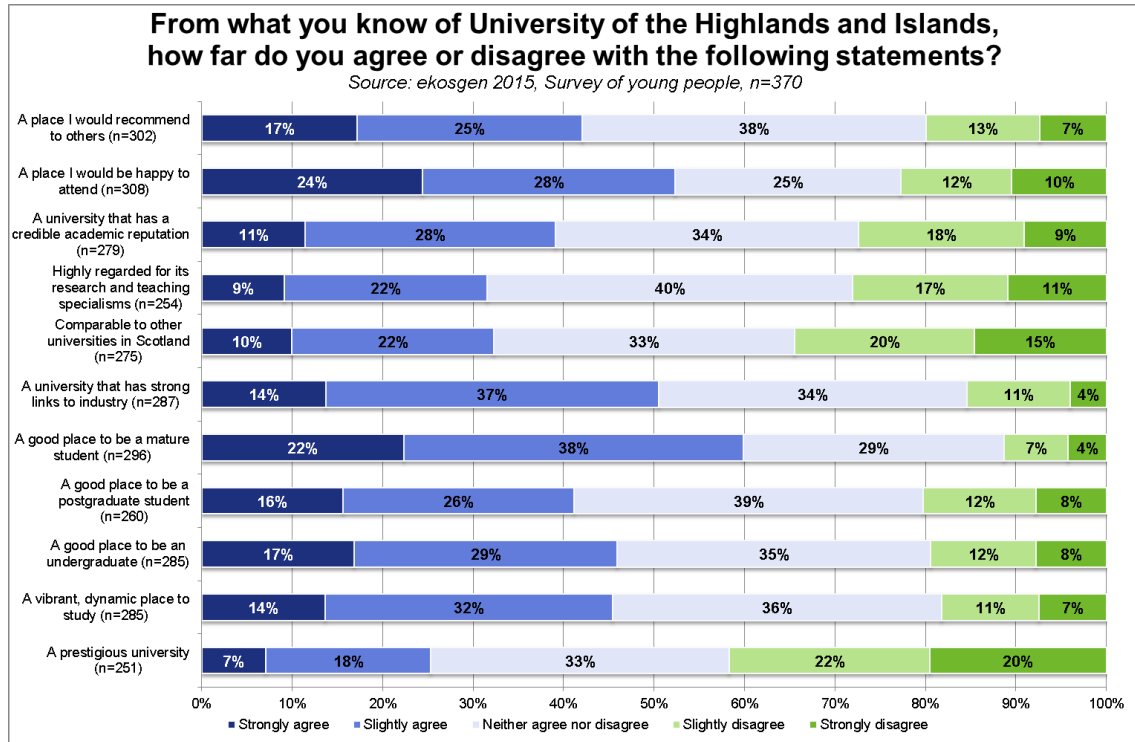


3.8 In general, young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross have slightly less positive views on UHI than others across the H&I. A lower proportion see it as a good place to be a mature student (60% compared to 64% regionally) or an undergraduate (46% versus 48%), while in contrast, a slightly higher proportion view UHI as a good place to be a postgraduate student (42% compared to 43% regionally).

3.9 Positive views on UHI's credibility and reputation are also lower than the regional average. In all, 39% agree that UHI has a credible academic reputation (42% regionally); and some three in 10 that it is highly regarded for its research and teaching specialisms (36% regionally). In all, just under a third (32%) think UHI is comparable to other universities in Scotland (35% across the H&I); and a quarter (25%) that it is a prestigious university (26% across the H&I).

3.10 Just over half of young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross would be happy to attend UHI (52%), below the H&I average of 57%, and 42% would recommend it to others (48% across the H&I). In line with the regional average, almost half agree that it is a vibrant, dynamic place to study. Young people aged 25-30 years are generally the most positive of the age groups.

Figure 3.3

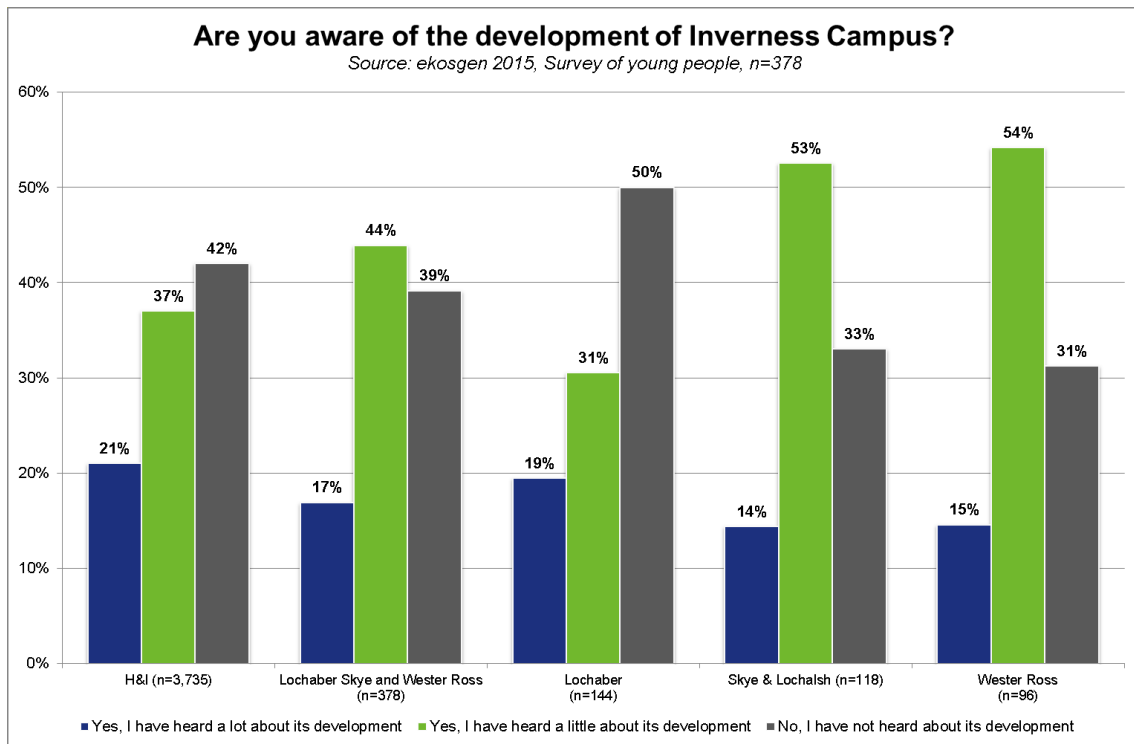


Inverness Campus

3.11 Inverness Campus, which will see Inverness College UHI co-located with centres for business and research, opened in May 2015. Awareness of Inverness Campus is slightly higher in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross than across the H&I (61%, compared to 58%) - particularly in Wester Ross and Skye and Lochalsh where 69% and 67% respectively have heard at least a little about the campus. The proportion is much lower in Lochaber, at 50%.

3.12 Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are most positive about Inverness Campus offering a 'city university' experience, although at 55% this is still below the regional average of 60%. They are also positive about the links between education, business and research at the campus and the opportunities they offer for young people embarking on their careers (54%, although again below the regional average 60%). However, they are less optimistic about the campus's ability to help them realise their career aspirations (40% think so, versus 46% in the H&I). In all, just over half (51%) would be happy to attend Inverness Campus (compared to 57% regionally) and 47% would recommend to others (52% across the H&I).

Figure 3.4



Graduate placements

3.13 Views on graduate placements are broadly in line with those across the regional as a whole. Whilst more than half (54%) consider that undertaking a graduate placement would improve their chances of securing employment in the region, fewer consider that the range of graduate placement opportunities is appealing (30%), that there are a wide range of placement opportunities (28%), or that there are sufficient placement opportunities in more rural areas (26%). A significant proportion of young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross seemingly have little knowledge of the graduate placement offer, with a quarter who do not know about the range of placements or their appeal.

3.14 Awareness of the ScotGrad programme is also in line with the regional average (where around eight in 10 have not heard of it). The ScotGrad programme provides graduate and summer placements, and is designed to support business innovation, knowledge transfer and growth in the Highlands and Islands by assisting graduates with their career progression, and encouraging young people to stay in the H&I. It aims to help overcome market failures around graduate recruitment and innovation, which tend to be particularly severe in remote rural areas.

4 Working in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross

4.1 This section identifies what young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross think about local employment and career progression opportunities, their ideal location to work, familiarity with and interest in H&I growth sectors, and characteristics valued most in employers. Again it seeks to draw out sub-area variations where these exist.

Employment-Related Factors in the Local Area

Apprenticeships

4.2 Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross view opportunities for apprenticeships in H&I most positively of all the employment-related factors, although at 39% this is significantly lower than the H&I average (49%). Those in Lochaber are most positive (46%, slightly lower than the H&I average), but perceptions of their availability are lower in Skye and Lochalsh (38%) and in Wester Ross (30%). Within Lochaber, there are significant differences between those in Fort William (with 56% rating opportunities favourably) and the rest of Lochaber (38%). As elsewhere in the H&I, positive perceptions about apprenticeship opportunities decreases with age (47% for those aged 15-18 years, falling to 28% amongst 19-24 year olds and 25% for 25-30 year olds).

Self-Employment Opportunities

4.3 Just over four in 10 (41%) young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross rate self-employment opportunities positively, and this is just above the H&I overall (39%). Those in Skye and Lochalsh (47%) are particularly positive compared to those in Lochaber and Wester Ross (both with 39%). Again, there are significant differences within Lochaber, where 47% in Fort William thinking there are good opportunities, compared to 31% for the rest of Lochaber.

4.4 Optimism regarding self-employment opportunities is highest amongst 19-24 year olds (48%) and 25-30 year olds (47%) and lower amongst 15-18 year olds (40%). Of the different status groups, it is university/ college students that are the most optimistic (44%), compared to 41% of those in employment/ self-employment and 40% of school pupils.

Opportunities for Personal Development Locally

4.5 Just over three in 10 (31%) rate opportunities for personal development as quite or very good, below the H&I average of 37%. Those in Lochaber are slightly more positive (33%) than those in Wester Ross (31%) and Skye and Lochalsh (30%). Young people aged 15-18 are most positive about local personal development opportunities, with 36% rating these favourably, compared to 24% aged 25-30 and 23% of 19-24 year olds.

Local Employment Opportunities

4.6 Fewer than three in 10 young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross rate local opportunities for employment positively (29%), well below the H&I average of 35%. Those in Lochaber are slightly more positive (32%); however this falls to 30% in Skye and Lochalsh and 27% in Wester Ross. Similar to the regional pattern, respondents become less optimistic about employment opportunities with age (and life stage), with 35% of those aged 15-18 rating these as quite or very good, compared to 26% of 19-24 year olds and 17% of 25-30 year olds.

Pay Levels

4.7 Fewer still, 25%, view pay levels positively, below the regional average of 27%. For Skye and Lochalsh, the proportion is 28%, however this reduces to 24% in Lochaber and to 22% in Wester Ross. Again, optimism generally reduces with age and life stage, with 31% of school pupils rating pay levels favourably, falling to 19% amongst university/ college students and just 16% of those in employment/ self-employment.

Diversity of Employment Opportunities

4.8 Views on the diversity of employment opportunities are particularly negative with less than one in five (19%) rating these favourably. This is considerably below the H&I average of 29% and the second lowest across the region after Caithness and Sutherland (17%). This is highest in Skye and Lochalsh, but at 22% this remains well below the regional average, and lowest in Wester Ross (18%) and Lochaber (17%). Within Lochaber, young people outside Fort William regard diversity of local opportunity to be particularly low, where just 13% rate these positively, in contrast to the 21% in Fort William itself.

4.9 School pupils are the most optimistic about the diversity of employment opportunities, with just under a quarter (23%) rating these as quite or very good, compared to 15% amongst both university/ college students and those in employment/ self-employment.

Career Progression Locally

4.10 Opportunities for career progression are rated least favourably amongst all of the employment-related factors, at 17%, this is well below the regional average of 29%. This is slightly higher in Lochaber (21%) and in Skye and Lochalsh (19%), than it is in Wester Ross (15%) where perceptions are particularly weak. School pupils and those aged 15-18 years are most optimistic (with 22% and 21% respectively), while 19-24 year olds and those in employment/ self-employment are least positive (each 12%).

Figure 4.1

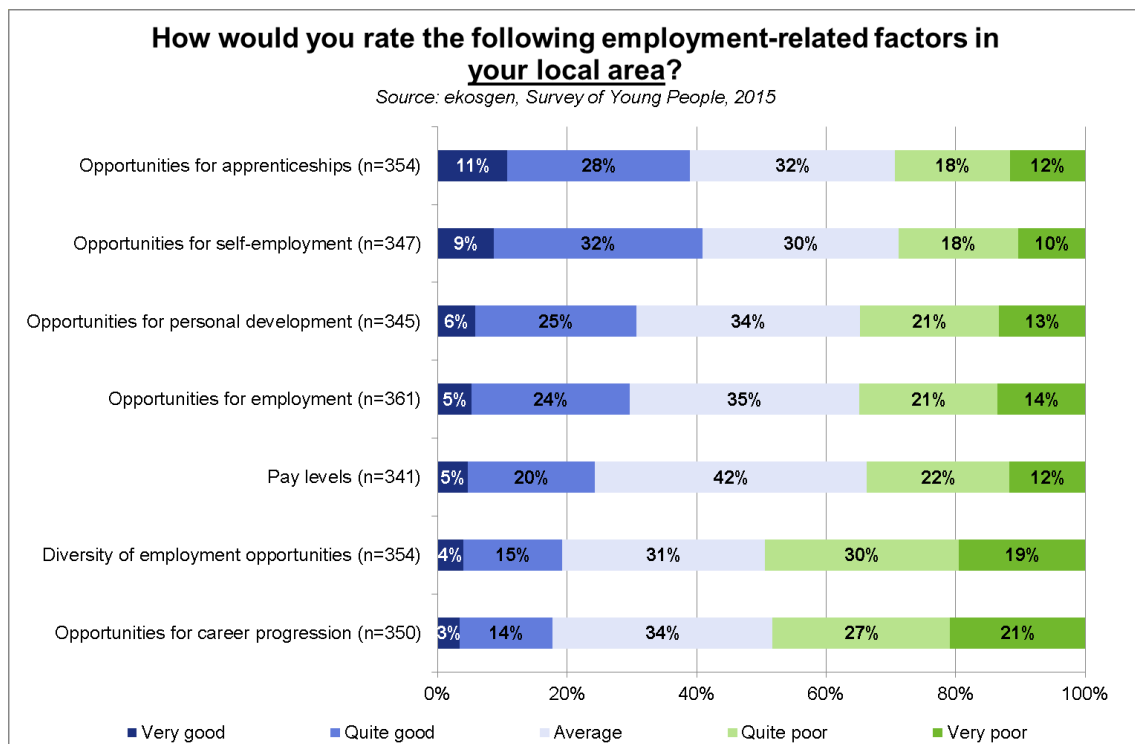
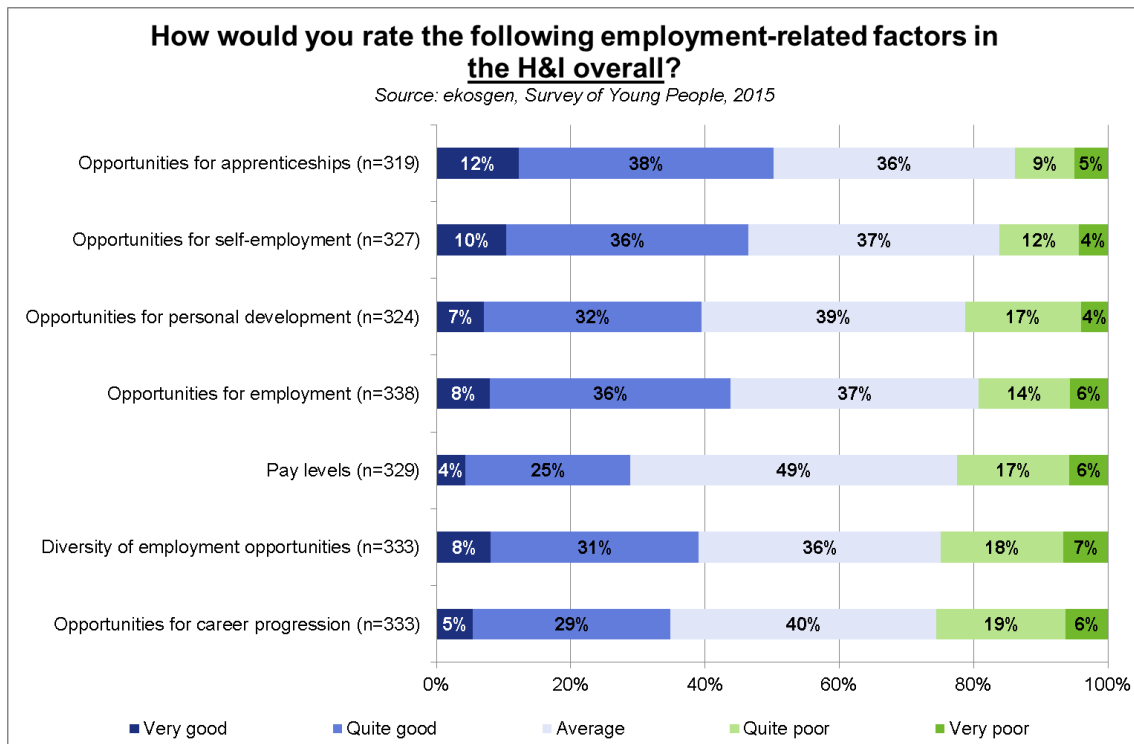


Figure 4.2



Employment Related-Factors in the H&I

4.11 Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross rate all the employment-related factors more positively in the H&I overall than in their local area. This is most pronounced for the diversity of employment opportunities (a 20 percentage point difference, where 39% think there are diverse opportunities available in the region compared to 19% who think so about the local area), opportunities for career progression (a 17 percentage point difference) and opportunities for employment (just under 15 percentage point difference). The difference is less pronounced for pay levels and opportunities for self-employment.

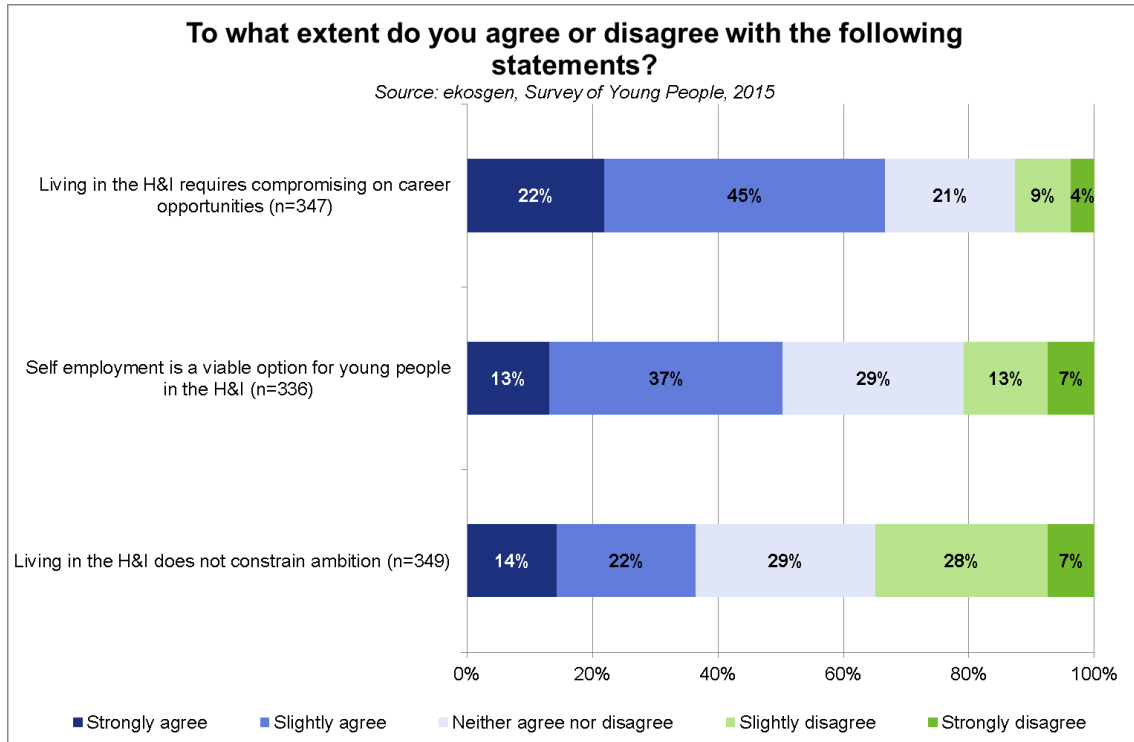
4.12 Locally, self-employment opportunities are rated most favourably, followed by apprenticeships; for regional opportunities, these switch places. It is opportunities for career progression and the diversity of employment opportunities that are perceived least available locally, and this is the case regionally.

4.13 In all, over two thirds of young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross either strongly (22%) or slightly (45%) agree that living in the H&I requires compromising on career opportunities, which at 67% combined is notably above the regional average of 60%. This is highest in Skye and Lochalsh (71%) followed by Wester Ross (70%), and lower than average in Lochaber (59%). Agreement with this statement is especially high amongst those aged 25-30 (79%), falling to 77% for 19-24 year olds and 59% for 15-18 year olds.

4.14 Half of all young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross agree that self-employment is a viable option for young people in the H&I, with 37% slightly and 13% strongly agreeing, slightly above the regional average (46%). This is higher in Skye and Lochalsh (58%), than in Wester Ross (49%) and Lochaber (45%). Young people aged 19-24 years are most likely to agree (54%), falling to 52% for 25-30 year olds and 48% for those aged 15-18.

4.15 Just over two thirds (36%) agree that living in the H&I does not constrain ambition, just below the 39% across the H&I. This is higher in Wester Ross (42%) and Lochaber (40%) than in Skye and Lochalsh (27%). The percentage agreeing is highest amongst 19-24 year olds (41%), with 38% of 15-18 and 25% of 25-30 year olds saying so.

Figure 4.3



Ideal place to work

4.16 In all, 40% of young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross would like to work in the H&I, just below the 44% for the region overall. Of these, 26% wish to work locally, compared to 29% regionally, and 14% elsewhere in the H&I, just below the regional average of 15%.

4.17 Just over a quarter (26%) would like to work in Scotland but outside the H&I (13% in the Central Belt, 2% in Aberdeen and 11% elsewhere in Scotland). Similar to the H&I overall, 6% would like to live elsewhere in the UK and 23% would like to work elsewhere in the world (compared to 20% across the H&I).

4.18 Table 4.1 shows where young people would ideally like to work by sub-area. Those in Skye and Lochalsh have the strongest connection to their local area, with 31% wishing to work locally, followed by 28% in Lochaber, and 21% in Wester Ross. Those in Skye and Lochalsh are more likely to want to work in the Central Belt (19%, compared to a Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross average of 13%), while young people in Lochaber are more likely to want to work elsewhere in the UK (9%, compared to 6% across the area). Young people in Wester Ross are significantly more likely to want to work elsewhere in the world (34%, compared to 23% across Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross).

Table 4.1: Desired Place to Work by Sub-Area

	Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross (n=367)	Lochaber (n=139)	Skye and Lochalsh (n=118)	Wester Ross (n=92)
Local area*	26%	28%	31%	21%
Somewhere in the H&I	14%	13%	13%	17%
Central Belt	13%	10%	19%	11%
Aberdeen	2%	2%	3%	0%
Elsewhere in Scotland	11%	12%	11%	10%
Elsewhere in the UK	6%	9%	3%	5%
Elsewhere in the world	23%	23%	17%	34%
Other	3%	4%	3%	2%

Source: *ekosgen, Survey of Young People, 2015*; * current home town/village

Please note, percentages may not sum due to rounding.

4.19 Over two-thirds of young people in employment or self-employment would like to work either locally (53%) or elsewhere in the H&I (15%). In keeping with the regional picture, school pupils are least likely to want to do so (14% and 9% respectively) and are most likely to want to work elsewhere in the UK (10%) or elsewhere in the world (32%).

4.20 Across Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, the local area tends to become a more attractive place to work with age/ life stage, a pattern common across the H&I. Nearly two thirds (63%) of 25-30 year olds would like to work locally, and 14% elsewhere in the H&I; this decreases to 28% and 21% amongst 19-24 year olds; and further still to 15% and 12% amongst 15-18 year olds.

4.21 Table 4.2 compares the proportion wishing to work locally with the proportion thinking there is a good *diversity* of local opportunity, indicating perceived supply of diverse jobs versus demand. In Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, those wishing to work locally (26%) is seven percentage points higher than those rating diversity of employment opportunities as good (19%). The differential is greater in Lochaber and in Skye and Lochalsh (both eleven points), than Wester Ross (3 percentage points difference), where a lower proportion want to stay in their local area.

4.22 Comparing the proportion wishing to work locally to the proportion that perceive local employment opportunities *overall* as good, the differentials are lower, +4 percentage points for Lochaber, -1 for Skye and Lochalsh and +6 for Wester Ross. This suggests there are perceived to be slightly better opportunities to access employment locally in these areas than there are the jobs of choice.

Table 4.2

Inner Moray Firth sub-area	Those ideally liking to work in their local area	Those rating diversity of employment opp's as quite or very good	Percentage point (pp) difference
Lochaber	28%	17%	-11
Skye and Lochalsh	31%	22%	-11
Wester Ross	21%	18%	-3
Overall Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross average	26%	19%	-7

Source: *ekosgen, Survey of Young People, 2015*.

Views on H&I Growth Sectors

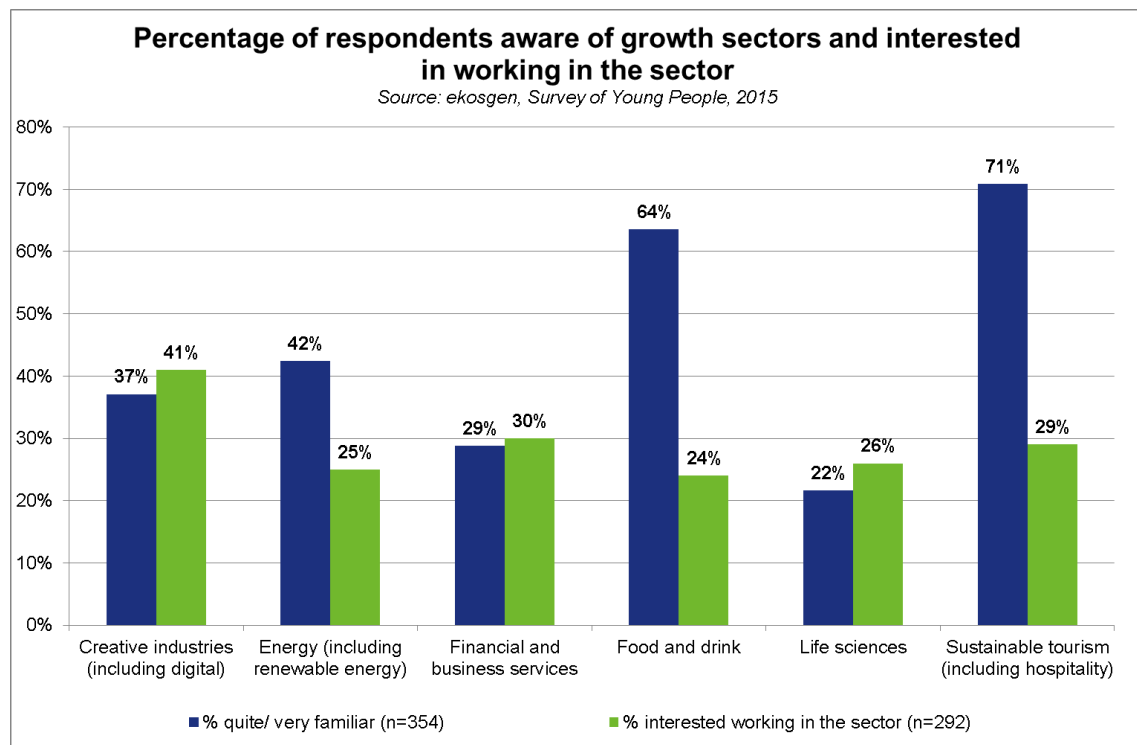
4.23 HIE's Operating Plan recognises that the region's natural assets, ambition, skills base and cultural background provide a range of opportunities to develop a vibrant sectoral economy.¹⁸ HIE's growth sectors - *Financial and business services; Creative industries (including digital); Sustainable tourism (including hospitality); Food and drink; Life sciences; and Energy (including renewable energy)* are aligned to the key sectors identified in the Scotland's Economic Strategy, but with key regional specialisms under each sector.

4.24 In Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross the most well-known growth sectors are Sustainable tourism (71%, compared to 60% regionally), given its importance to the area, followed by Food and drink (64%, compared to 62% regionally). Some, 42% are aware of the Energy sector (versus 45% regionally). Awareness of the Creative industries is slightly lower than the regional average (37%, versus 38%); this is also true for Financial and business services (29%, 32% regionally) and Life sciences (22%, 29% regionally).

4.25 The Creative industries is the most desirable sector to work in for young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, with more than four in 10 expressing interest in working in the sector, higher than the proportion that are aware of the sector. This is followed by interest in Financial and business services (30%), Sustainable tourism (29%) and Life sciences (26%). Around a quarter are interested in working in Energy (25%) or Food and drink (24%).

4.26 Figure 4.4 compares levels of young people's awareness of growth sectors in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross with interest in working in the sector. The greatest disparities are in Sustainable tourism (71% versus 29%) and Food and drink (64% versus 24%). There was little variation in sector interest amongst the sub-areas within Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross.

Figure 4.4



¹⁸ HIE (2014) Building Our Future: Operating Plan 2014-2017

Desired Qualities in Employers

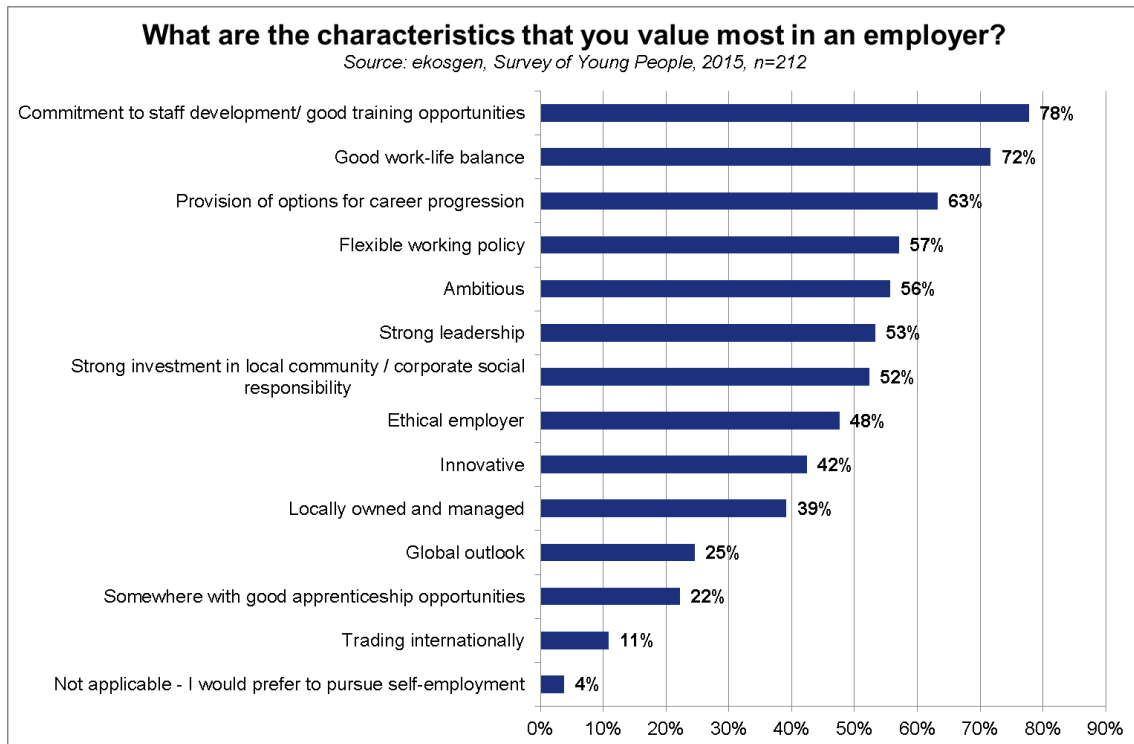
4.27 Views on what young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross value in employers are broadly comparable to those across the H&I, with the most important being a commitment to staff development and training (important to 78, just above the regional average – 76%). Also highly valued is a good work-life balance (72%, compared to 74%), and a provision for career progression, which at 63% is higher than for H&I overall (58%). As is the case regionally, young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross value flexible working (57%, compared to 56% regionally), an employer with an ambitious nature (56%, in line with the regional average) and strong leadership (although at 53%, this is lower than the 57% regionally).

4.28 Ethical business practices are relatively highly valued by young people in the area, with 52% regarding a strong investment in the local community/ corporate social responsibility as important (significantly higher than the 44% regionally), 48% valuing an ethical employer (higher than the 44% regionally) and 39% a locally owned and managed business (again above the regional average of 27%).

4.29 Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross's views are slightly above the regional average when it comes to a global outlook (25%, compared to 22% regionally) and international activities (11%, compared to 12% regionally). Few therefore see the benefits of trading outside Scotland.

4.30 Young people in Lochaber are most likely to value an ethical employer (51%, falling to 49% in Wester Ross and 44% in Skye and Lochalsh); a good work-life balance (75%, compared to 64% and 73% respectively); flexible working policies (66%, compared to 49% and 55%); and a commitment to staff development/ good training opportunities (81%, compared to 73% and 79%). In contrast, it is the provision of options for career progression (69%), strong leadership (60%) and a strong investment in the local community (59%) that are comparatively more highly valued in Skye and Lochalsh. In Wester Ross, in comparative terms, it is good apprenticeship opportunities (29%) and an international outlook (16%).

Figure 4.5



5 Life aspirations in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross

5.1 There are a range of other factors, beyond education and employment, which affect a young person's decision on whether to stay or leave Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross. These include housing, transport, digital connectivity, arts, leisure and culture and the strength of the local community. This chapter explores these issues and their relative importance. Significant variations within Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are outlined in the analysis.

Housing

5.2 As the overall H&I report shows, the lack of available and affordable housing is a significant issue for young people¹⁹ and one that has risen in importance since 2009, relative to other factors. Whilst market conditions mean that housing has likely become an issue for young people more generally, housing availability and affordability are clear concerns for those in the H&I. This is particularly true for young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross where many perceive the problem to be severe.

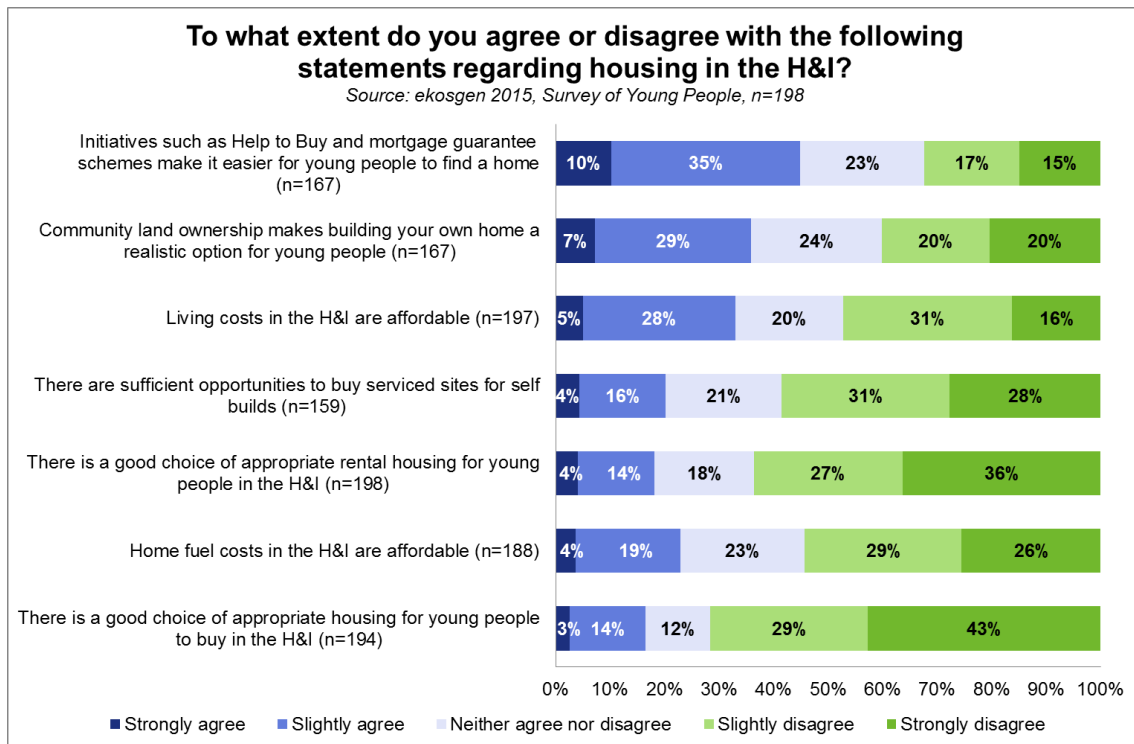
5.3 In all, fewer than one in five young people (17%) agree that there is a good choice of appropriate housing to buy in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross and this is significantly below the regional average of 26%. Seven in 10 (72%) disagree (57% regionally). Similarly, only 18% perceive there to be an appropriate choice of housing to rent (compared to 29% across H&I), whilst nearly two-thirds disagree. Views across all sub areas within Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are below the regional averages, although perceptions of appropriate housing supply are particularly negative in Lochaber, which includes Fort William, with just 10% believing there is an appropriate supply of housing to buy and 16% to rent. This compared to 20% from both Skye and Lochalsh and Wester Ross agreeing that there is a good supply of housing to buy and 20% (Skye and Lochalsh) and 19% (Wester Ross) believing there is an appropriate rental supply.

5.4 Further, only a third of respondents (33%, compared to 41% regionally) think that the cost of living in the H&Is is affordable, whilst almost half (47%) disagree. This is felt most acutely in Wester Ross, where only a quarter (27%) regard living costs as affordable, with over half (56%) reporting they are not.

5.5 At the same time, more than a third (36%) of young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross feel that community land ownership makes building your home a more realistic option; higher than the regional average (28%). However, just 20% feel there are sufficient opportunities to buy serviced sites for self-build (compared to 25% across H&I) and this is lowest in Wester Ross (17%).

¹⁹ The Housing questions were only asked to those respondents via the main online survey, i.e. they were not asked in the schools paper and online surveys.

Figure 5.1



Transport

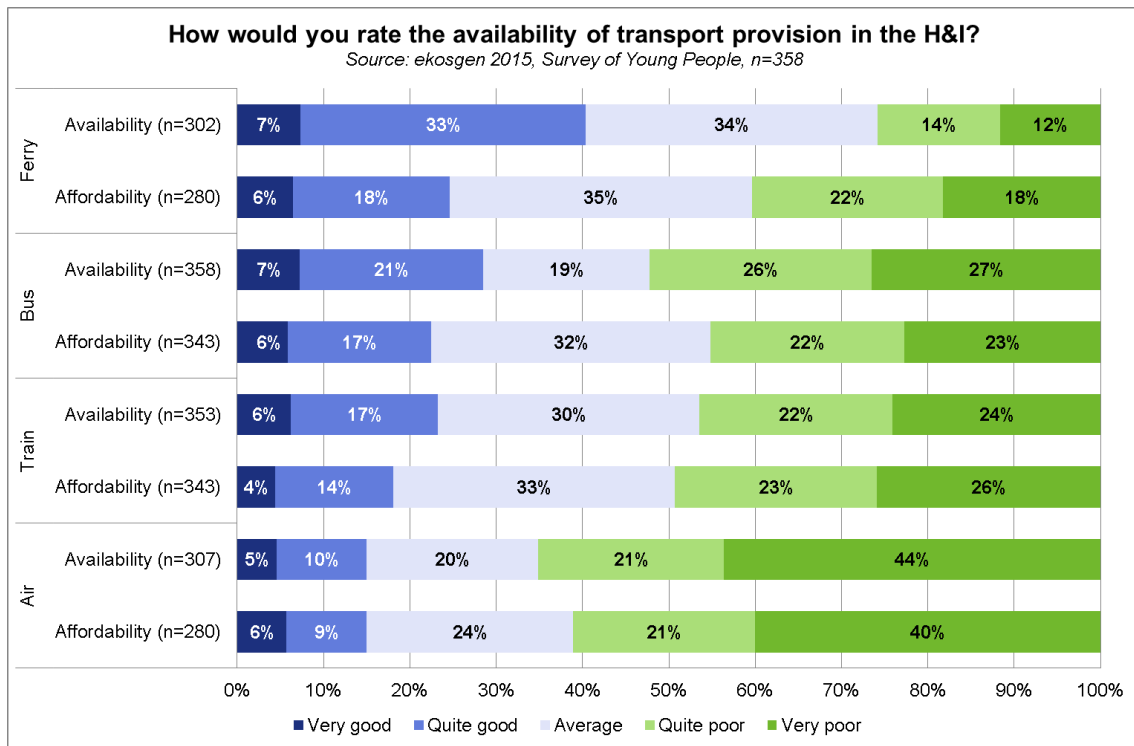
5.6 As is the case across the H&I, transport is a key issue for young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, with less than half of survey respondents rating any mode of transport availability or affordability positively.

5.7 **Ferry travel** is the most positively rated mode of transport in terms of availability, however this is the case for just 40% of young people who rate availability as 'quite' or 'very good' (compared to 42% across H&I). This is lower in Skye and Lochalsh (35%), and across Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross only a quarter perceive ferry travel as affordable.

5.8 The availability of **bus travel** is rated positively by only 28% of young people (below the regional average of 40%) and, again, affordability of travel is an issue, with just over one in five (23%) rating bus travel as affordable (compared to 34% regionally). Young people in Lochaber rate bus services the most positively, with 31% rating availability as at least 'quite good'.

5.9 **Train travel** and **air travel** are viewed least positively in terms of their availability. Just 23% rate train travel availability as good with an even smaller proportion for air travel availability (15%). These are significantly below the averages across the H&I of 35% and 32% respectively. In particular, train travel is rated poorly by those in Lochaber, with just 20% rating availability as good and almost half (48%) rating it as poor. Both are considered less affordable than the regional averages.

Figure 5.2

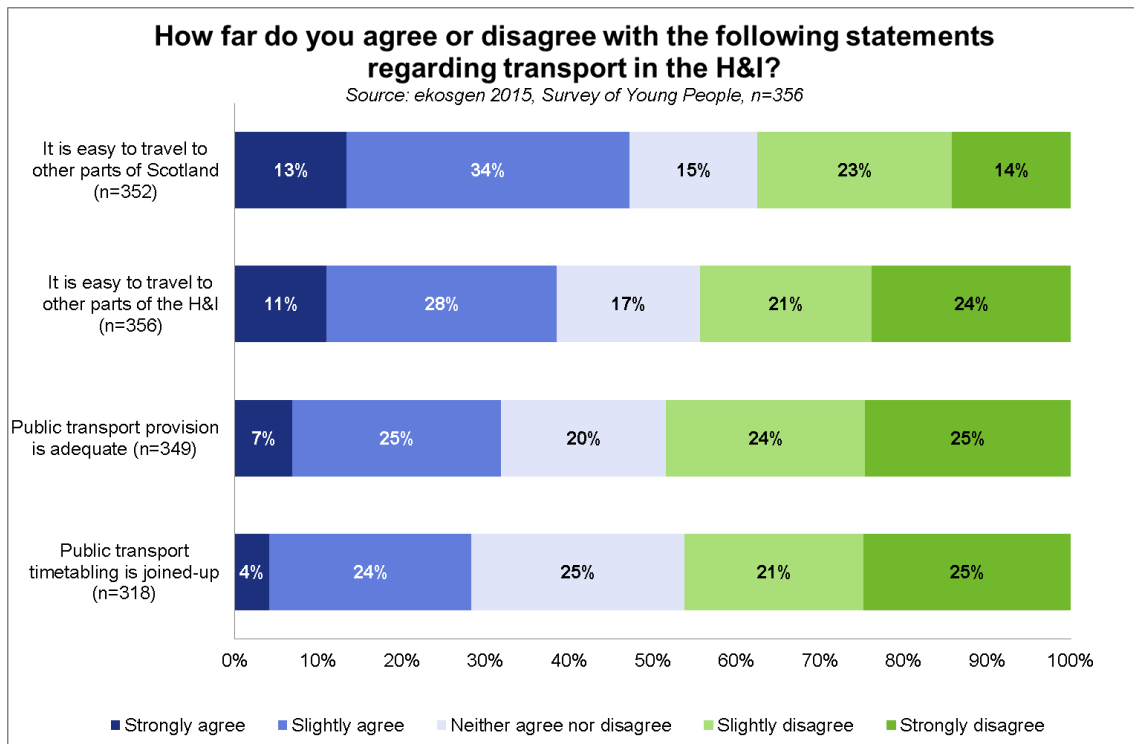


5.10 There is a disconnect between young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross and the rest of the country. Less than half agree that it is easy to travel to other parts of Scotland from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross (47% compared to 56% regionally), and just under one in four report that it is easy to travel to other parts of the H&I, (49% regionally). This indicates poor north south and east west links to and from the area to other parts of the H&I. Those from Skye and Lochalsh perceive transport links to be poorest.

5.11 The timetabling of public transport is also perceived as poor, with less than three in 10 (28%) reporting that public transport timetabling is joined-up. Particularly low levels of satisfaction are expressed by young people from Skye and Lochalsh (with just 20% rating this positively).

5.12 Overall, approximately a third of young people rated transport provision as adequate in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, and this is below the regional average of 40%. Again, satisfaction is particularly low amongst young people in Skye and Lochalsh (23% rating it as adequate) compared to Lochaber (40%) and Wester Ross (32%).

Figure 5.3



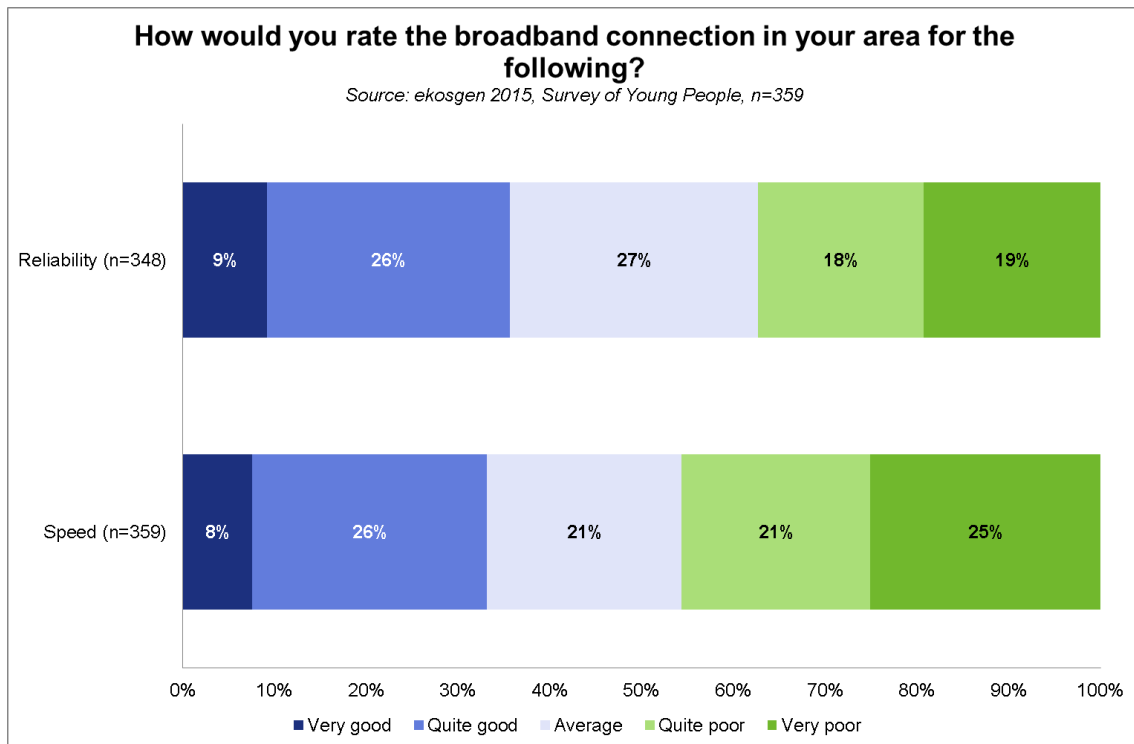
Digital Connectivity

5.13 In line with the regional average, 96% of young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross had access to broadband internet (standard broadband or NGA broadband), although the majority of this is standard broadband. Just under one tenth (9%) had access to NGA broadband at the time of the survey (April 2015), compared to 14% across the H&I, although this is set to rise in the next 12-18 months.

5.14 Across the region there is fairly limited awareness of the forthcoming NGA broadband roll out and within Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross awareness is even lower, with only 52% of young people having heard about the roll out (below the 56% regionally). Awareness of the roll out is highest in Wester Ross (with 60% awareness) and lowest in Skye and Lochalsh, where just 45% of young people have heard about it.

5.15 Broadband *reliability* and *speed* are rated less positively by young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross than elsewhere in the H&I. Just over a third rate both as good compared to the regional averages of 43% and 38% respectively. Satisfaction is varied across the sub-areas, with higher levels in Lochaber (43% reliability/ 41% speed) and Wester Ross (39% reliability and 34% speed) than in Skye and Lochalsh (24% reliability and 23% speed).

Figure 5.4

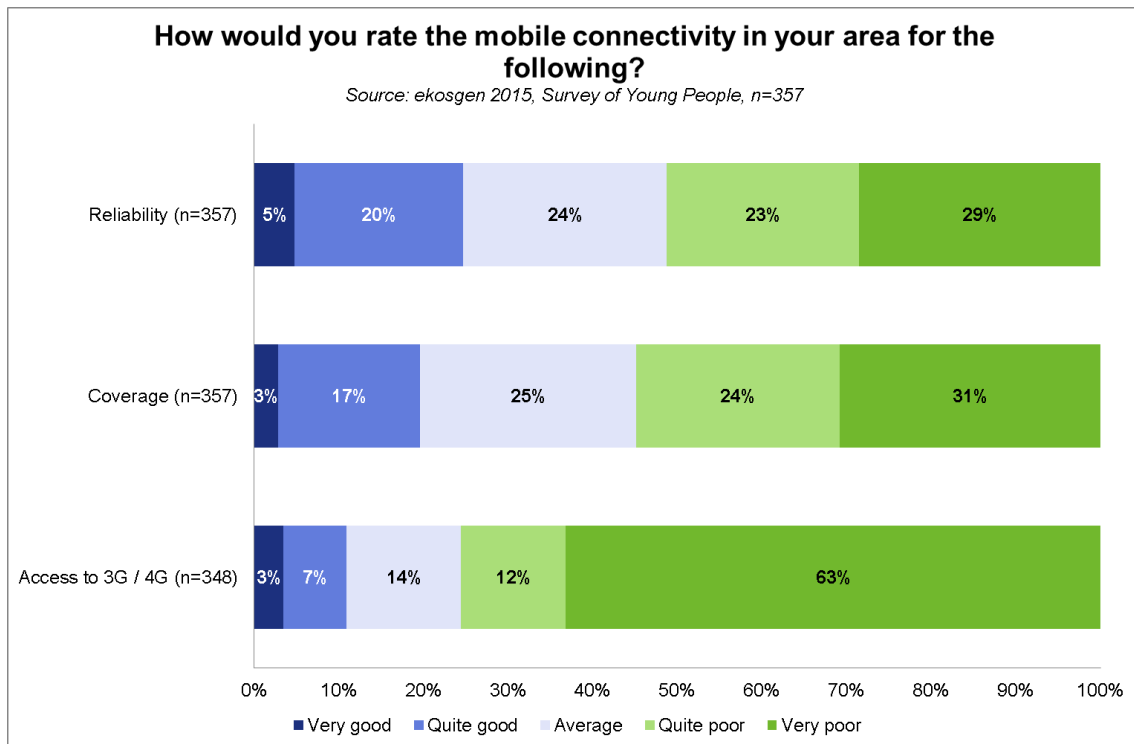


5.16 The top three key benefits of NGA broadband reported by young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are the same as for those across the H&I, namely: 1) better music, film and entertainment streaming 2) improved communication with family and friends and 3) better access to education and learning materials.

5.17 Mobile connectivity is regarded as a greater issue than broadband for young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, and it is rated more poorly than the regional average. Just a quarter (25%) rate mobile *reliability* as good (compared to 35% across H&I) and one fifth rate mobile *coverage* positively, compared to around three in 10 regionally. Mobile reliability is rated most poorly by those living in Skye and Lochalsh, and most positively by those in Lochaber.

5.18 Around three-quarters of young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross rate access to 3G/4G as 'poor' or 'very poor', far exceeding the regional average of 65%. Again, access is rated most poorly by those in Skye and Lochalsh.

Figure 5.5



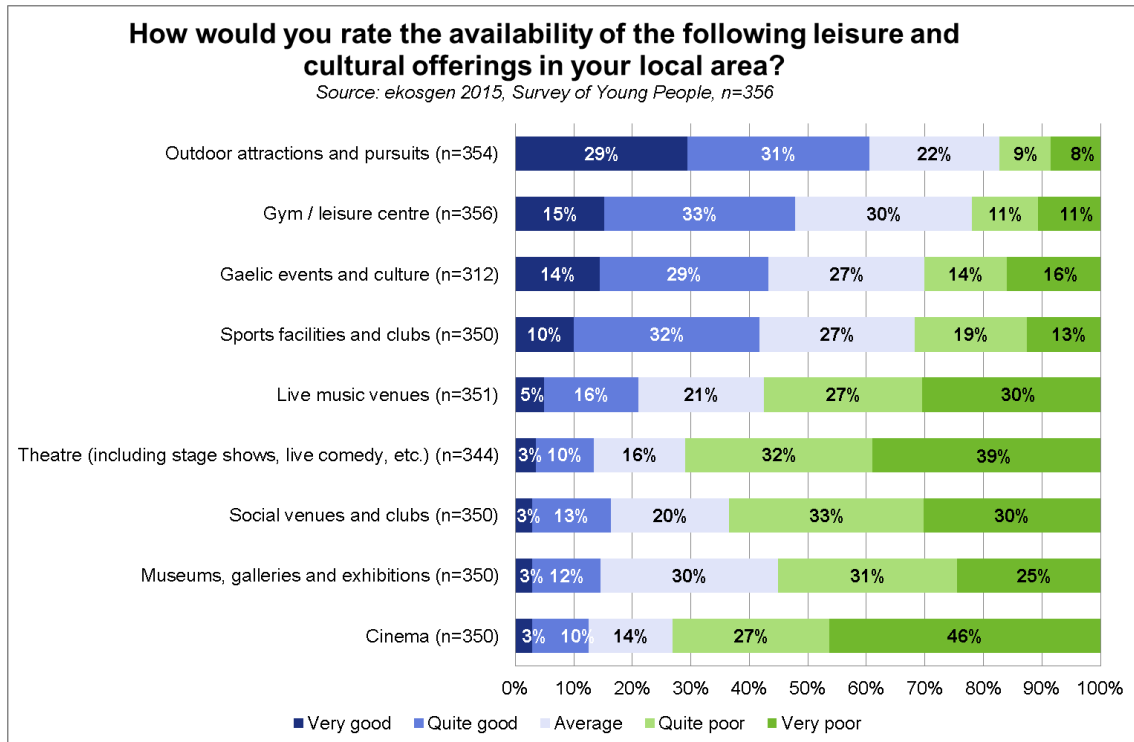
Arts, Leisure and Culture

5.19 As with the H&I as a whole, there is a mixed picture on the perceived availability and strength of the arts, leisure and cultural offer in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross. In general terms, however, the offer is perceived to be below the average for the H&I region.

5.20 The only two activities which are rated above the regional averages by young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are outdoor attractions and pursuits (60% rating this as good compared to 52% across H&I) and Gaelic events and culture (43% compared to 34% across H&I), a result of the quality of the outdoor environment and long-standing Gaelic heritage. Along with gym and leisure centres (which is perceived to be less available than the H&I average), these are the top three most available activities in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross.

5.21 All other offers are perceived to be less available than average, including access to sports facilities and clubs, cinema, theatre, live music venues, museums, galleries and exhibitions and social venues and clubs. Young people from Lochaber and Wester Ross tend to view the offer as more available than those from Skye and Lochalsh.

Figure 5.6



5.22 There is a significant mismatch between the importance and availability of cultural offerings in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, with a higher proportion rating access to various activities as important in comparison to availability, in line with the regional pattern. This is most prominent in relation to social venues and clubs (where 77% rate the offer important and just 16% rate it as available), live music venues (76%, compared to 21%) and cinema (where 66% rate this as important while just 13% rate the offer as available).

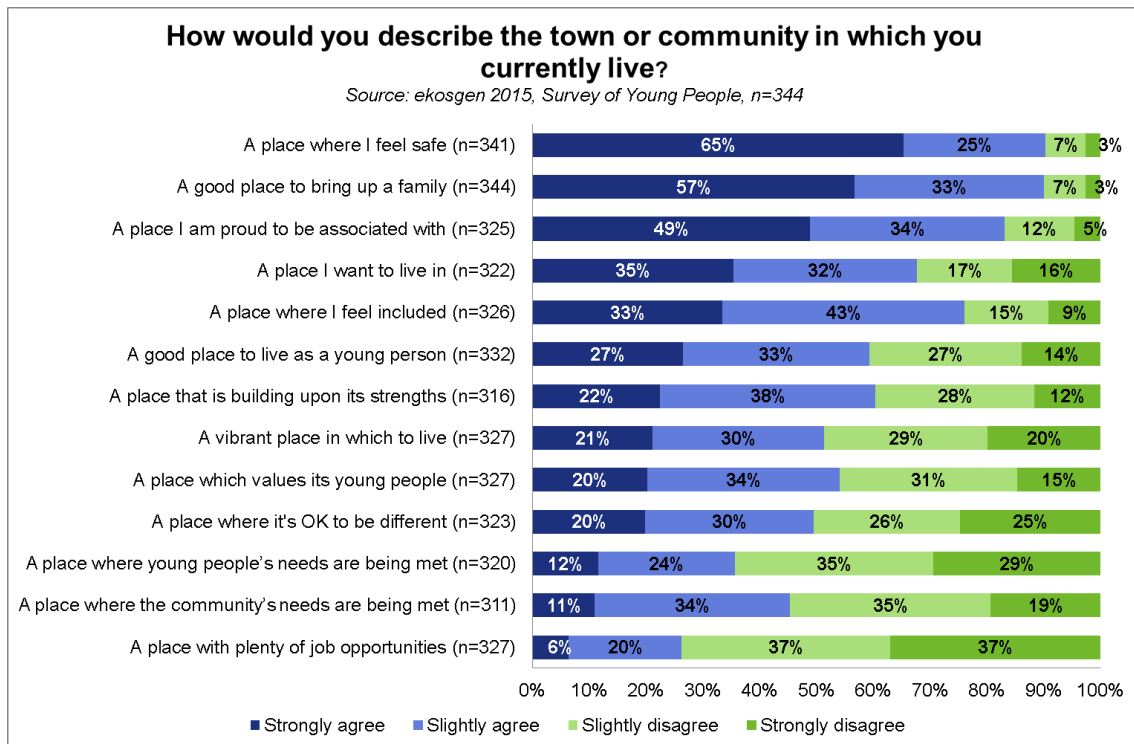
5.23 On the whole, access to the various cultural offers was rated as most important by young people in Lochaber.

Community

5.24 There are some very strong and positive feelings amongst young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross about the place in which they live. In all, 83% are proud to be associated with their local community, above the regional average of 78%, and this is particularly prevalent in Skye and Lochalsh (89%) and Wester Ross (86%).

5.25 The vast majority of young people feel safe in their local community (90%) and agree that it is a good place to bring up a family (also 90%), both exceeding the regional average (87% for both). Two thirds think the local area to be a place where they want to live and where they feel included in the local community (76%, 67% regionally).

Figure 5.7



5.26 Further, young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross tend to be more engaged with their local community than across the H&I overall. Over half (54%) attend community events (45% for H&I as a whole), while 36% are members of local youth groups or clubs (32% regionally) and a similar proportion (33%) undertake volunteer work for the community (again above the 31% for the H&I). Only a quarter (26%) do not participate in the community in any of these ways, and this is below the average for the H&I as a whole (29%).

5.27 Whilst around six in 10 reported that Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross is a good place to live as a young person, broadly in line with the regional average, only 36% felt that young people's needs were being met, compared to the regional average of 41%. This is likely a reflection of the lack of job and career opportunities available, three quarters disagree that there are plenty of job opportunities in the local area. Young people living in Skye and Lochalsh tend to perceive their local community more positively than those living in Wester Ross and, to a lesser extent, Lochaber.

6 Future aspirations of Young People in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross

6.1 The previous chapters have explored the education, employment, and other lifestyle factors that affect a young person's decision as to whether they stay in or leave Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross. This chapter looks at the relative importance of these various factors, as well as examining the future aspirations of young people living in the area.

Making the Highlands and Islands an Attractive Place to Live

6.2 The top six most important themes for young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are the same as for the H&I as a whole, with the most important being the availability of high quality jobs, rated as important by 66% and of particular importance to young people in Skye and Lochalsh (70%).

6.3 This is followed by career progression opportunities, good access to housing and affordable transport links, all ranked as important by 62% of respondents and important to young people across all three sub areas.

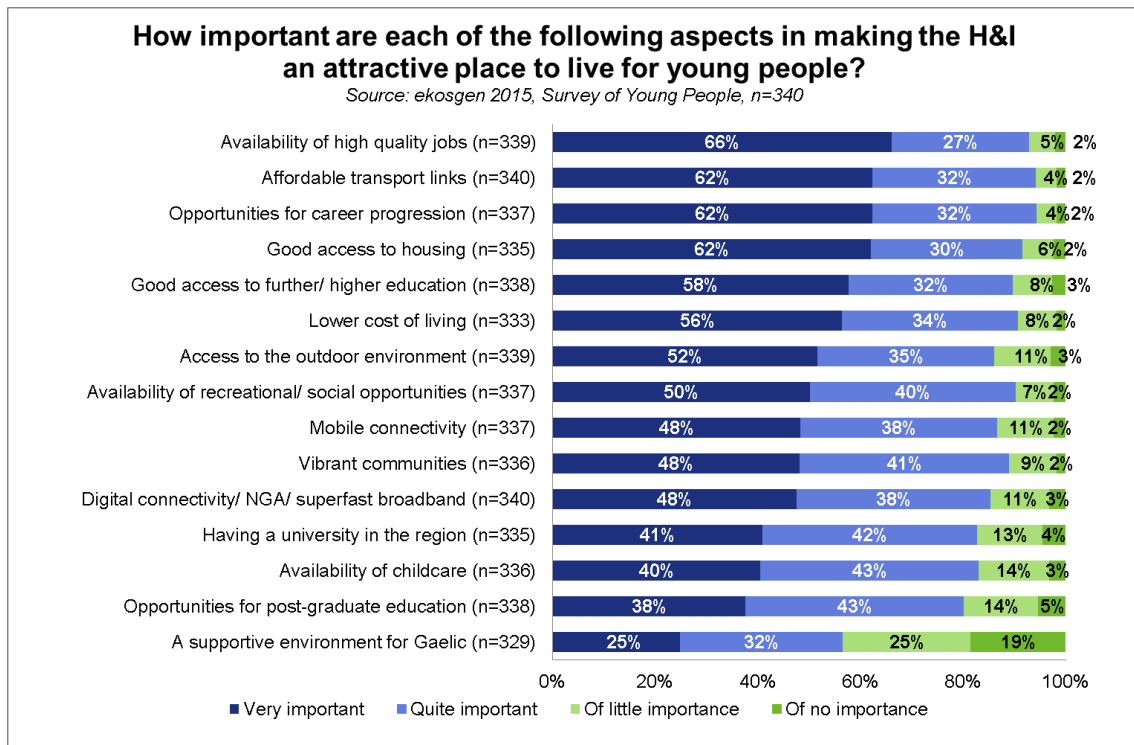
6.4 Access to further and higher education is also rated highly important by young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, with 58% rating this as very important in making the H&I a more attractive place to live. In relative terms, this is not as important as housing and transport, in contrast to the H&I rankings. A lower cost of living was rated as the sixth most important factor for young people in the area, with 56% rating this as very important.

6.5 Of the 15 themes explored in the survey, all were reported as important for at least 80% of young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, and very important for at least 38%, with the exception of a supportive environment for Gaelic, deemed of little or no importance by almost half, although this is more important to young people here than on average across the H&I.

Table 6.1

Theme	% 'Very Important'	LSWR Ranking	H&I Ranking
Availability of high quality jobs	66	1	1
Opportunities for career progression	62	2=	2
Affordable transport links	62	2=	4=
Good access to housing	62	2=	3
Good access to FE/HE	58	5	4=
Lower cost of living	56	6	6
Access to the outdoor environment	52	7	=9
Availability of recreational/ social opportunities	50	8	8
Mobile connectivity	48	9=	7
Vibrant communities	48	9=	12
Digital connectivity	48	9=	=9
Having a university in the region	41	12	=9
Availability of childcare	40	13	14
Opportunities for post-graduate education	38	14	13
A supportive environment for Gaelic	25	15	15

Figure 6.1

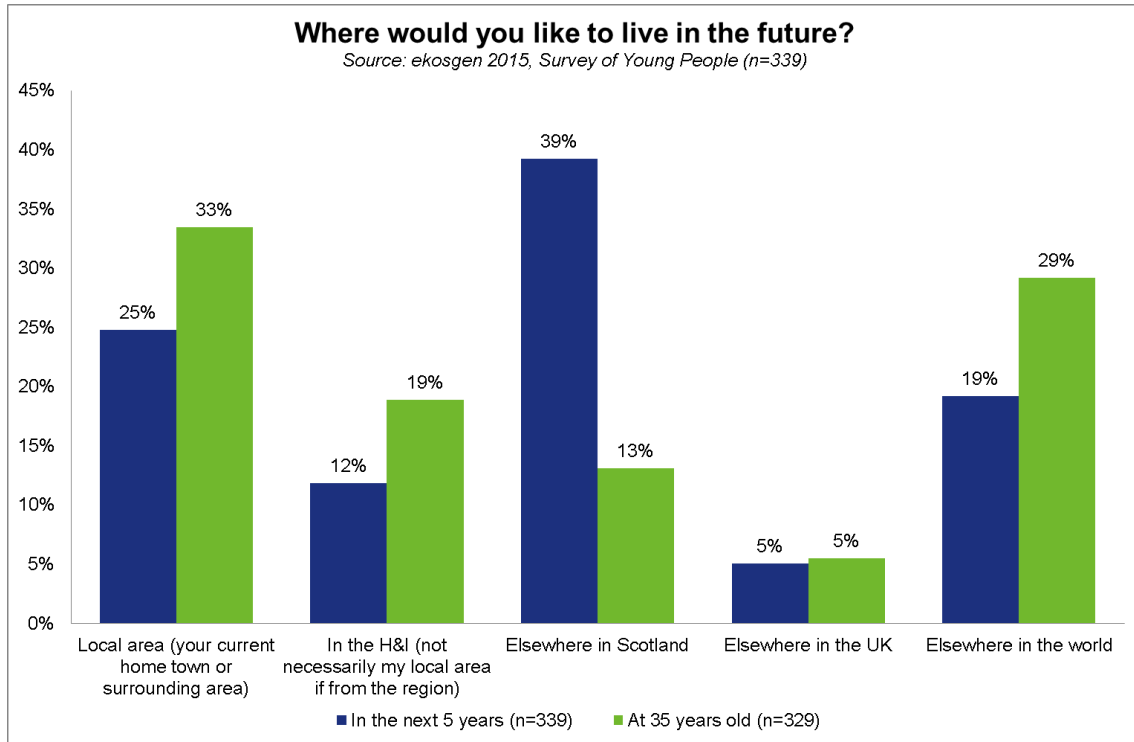


Future Aspirations

6.6 Overall just a quarter of young people report they would like to be living in their local area in five years' time (well below the regional average of 36%). A third (33%) would however like to be doing so at 35 years old (which is in line with the regional average). A significant proportion of young people would like to be living elsewhere in Scotland in five years (39% compared to the H&I average of 31%) and 12% hope to be living elsewhere in the H&I (as is the case regionally).

6.7 Future aspirations vary by geography, with young people in Lochaber and Skye and Lochalsh more likely to want to stay within their local area for the next five years, and over the longer term, compared to Wester Ross, where more young people aspire to leave and stay away.

Figure 6.2



6.8 Approximately nine in 10 young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross either want to be in employment (46%) or studying/furthering their education (41%) in the next five years. The desire to be in employment at 35 years old rises to 60%, below the average for the H&I region as a whole (66%).

6.9 A small but significant proportion of young people (9%) wish to be running their own business in five years' time, rising to around a quarter (26%) at 35 years old, just above the H&I average. This shows a certain appetite for self-employment within Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, as discussed in Chapter 4 of this report, with a higher proportion than regionally viewing self-employment as a viable option

6.10 Young people in Wester Ross are the most likely to want to be in further education in the next five years (43% compared to 40% in the other two sub areas) and, at 35 years old, they are more likely to want to be in employment (73%, compared 56% in Skye and Lochalsh and 55% in Lochaber).

How the H&I has changed

6.11 Despite a relatively large proportion of young people with aspirations to leave Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross in the future, 43% believe that the H&I is a better place to live now than it was five years ago. However, this is lower than the H&I average of 51%. Only 19% feel that the H&I is *not* a better place to live now than it was five years ago, although this is above the regional average of 15%, and over a third (37%) were unsure. Higher proportions (a quarter) in

both Skye and Lochalsh and in Wester Ross believe that the H&I is not a better place to live now than five years ago.

6.12 Young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are reasonably positive about the future of the H&I, with 41% believing that the region will be a better place to live in five years' time, although again this is lower than the regional average of 46%. Those from Lochaber are the most optimistic about the future of the Highlands and Islands.

7 Conclusions

7.1 Some 421 young people across Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross have given their views on their local area and the H&I. This is a very good evidence base of what young people are thinking in relation to a whole range of issues. Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross have strong pride in their local community, and a number want to stay or return to live and work in the area, however there are considerable barriers to them being able to do so.

7.2 In particular, there is a general lack of local employment opportunity, with limited employment choice and chance for progression. This is the case across the area, but especially in Wester Ross, and only the centre of Fort William in Lochaber offers slightly more opportunity. There are also significant infrastructure constraints, and there is an expectation that many young people will leave to meet their aspirations, especially in relation to Higher Education.

Key Summary Findings

Staying and Leaving

- Some 43% of young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross see themselves as committed leavers, above the regional average of 40%. Far fewer are committed stayers, which at 35%, is eight percentage points below the average. Some 17% say they will leave reluctantly, linked to a lack of local opportunity, more acute here than in many parts of the H&I.
- The highest proportion of reluctant leavers is in Wester Ross, where almost one in five say they will leave reluctantly, well above the regional average of 13%. The issue is evident, but less pronounced, in Lochaber. Almost four in 10 of those aged 19-24 from Skye and Lochalsh are reluctant leavers, linked to a lack of local HE provision.
- Almost six in 10 aged 15-18 are committed leavers, and whilst this age group is most likely to see themselves as such, this is higher than the regional average for this group. Those aged 25-30 are most likely to be committed stayers, and more so than average, suggesting those that are able to stay want to do so.
- Young people think others that stay are lucky to be able to do so, which at 59% is broadly in line with the proportion regionally. Two thirds in Wester Ross think stayers value the quality of life. Overall, however, more than four in 10 say those who stay lack ambition.
- Aspiration to go to university is high for those from Skye and Lochalsh (52%), and many want to go to the Central Belt to study. HE aspiration falls to 26% in Lochaber and 17% in Wester Ross, where this level of aspiration for HE is well *below* the regional average. Rather, for Lochaber and Wester Ross, the main aspiration is to go to FE, and more than four in 10 would like to do so.
- Interesting college or university courses are a big influence on post-school decisions relative to other areas, particularly for those in Skye and Lochalsh, where local availability and the range of subjects at school also have a strong influence. Just 6% from Skye and Lochalsh want to stay locally after school, well below the 14% average.

Education

- In all, 51% consider there to be a good educational offer, below the regional average (56%). Less than half think they are able to study locally, again below the regional average, and fewer feel the H&I has courses of interest to them.
- Those in Wester Ross are more positive about the FE offer, where almost six in 10 think there is a good range of FE/college courses, positive given the higher levels of aspiration to FE there. Only around a third of those from Skye and Lochalsh and from Lochaber consider there to be good HE level opportunities, and fewer still consider there to be good post-graduate opportunity, in part reflecting the higher levels of aspiration in young people.
- Awareness of UHI is higher than the regional average, and highest in Skye and Lochalsh and Lochaber, although a slightly lower than average proportion rates it highly as a place to be an postgraduate or undergraduate, 42% and 46% respectively. Young people generally see UHI as slightly less prestigious or comparable to other universities than others in the region.
- There is a good awareness of Inverness Campus, although this is lower in Lochaber. Views are largely positive, and 55% think it will offer a city-university experience, although this is below the regional average (60%).
- Overall, education is important to young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross – although in relative terms there are more important factors for them in making the place a more attractive place to live and work, including jobs, housing and transport.

Employment

- Fewer than one in three thinks there are good local employment opportunities, which at 29% is below the regional average (35%). Those in Lochaber are slightly more positive, though still below average, and those from Wester Ross are least positive.
- Even fewer regard there to be a *diverse* range of employment opportunities, less than one in five thinks so (19%) well below the 29% regional average. Diversity is considered marginally higher in Skye and Lochalsh and in Fort William, however in the remainder of Lochaber the proportion falls to just 13%.
- The lack of local opportunity is reflected in poor prospects for career progression. Just 17% think career progression opportunities are good (compared to the regional average of 29%), and even in Lochaber, where perceptions are slightly more positive, this is no higher than 21%. More than two thirds think staying requires compromising on one's career.
- Pay levels are perceived to be relatively poor, and just one in four thinks these are good, although this is close to the regional average. The proportion is lowest in Wester Ross (22%).
- In all, 26% would like to work locally, compared to 29% regionally. This is highest in Skye and Lochalsh 31% - above the regional average – and in Lochaber (28%), but much lower in Wester Ross (21%). In both Skye and Lochalsh and in Lochaber far more wish to work locally than consider there to be a diversity of opportunity to do so.

- The Sustainable tourism and Food and drink sectors are the most well-known to young people, in line with the picture regionally, although fewer than one in three are interested in working in these sectors. The Creative industries attract the most interest.
- Young people value employers with a commitment to staff development and those who value a good work-life balance. They also want employers to provide options for career development, as those across the region do. Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross value ethical business practices, more so than the case across the region.

Housing

- Housing is a particular issue for young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross. Just 17% think there is a good choice of housing to buy and 18% a good choice to rent, far below the 26% and 29% regionally. The issue of housing is especially acute in Fort William.
- Poor housing availability and affordability also contribute to higher living costs, and just a third think costs are affordable, most severe in Wester Ross. More (36%) agree that community land ownership makes building your own home a more realistic option – above the 28% regionally.

Transport

- Transport is an issue for young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, with less than half viewing any mode of transport availability or affordability as good. Ferry affordability – where just one in four say this is good – and bus travel, which was rated as available by only 28% and affordable by less than a quarter are particular issues. Train and air travel availability was also rated as poor by 46% and 65% of young people respectively.
- Across Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, just under four in 10 think it easy to travel to other parts of the H&I, well below the regional average, and less than half think it easy to travel to other parts of Scotland outside H&I (also lower than the regional average of 56%). This indicates poor north south and east west links to and from the area to other parts of the H&I and Scotland.
- Those from Skye and Lochalsh perceive transport links to be poorest – including poor timetabling – and are also the lowest proportion in the area that believe public transport provision to be adequate, although satisfaction is below the regional average across the area.

Digital Connectivity

- Mobile connectivity is an issue for young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, where only a quarter rate reliability good and a fifth rate coverage as good, both below the regional average. The issue is most pronounced in Skye and Lochalsh. Three quarters of young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross think access to 3G/4G is poor.
- Broadband speed and reliability is also rated more poorly than the regional average. Satisfaction levels are highest in Lochaber and lowest in Skye and Lochalsh.

Arts, Culture and Leisure

- The arts, culture and leisure offer is perceived to be less available in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross than for the region as a whole, and this is the case across all parts of the offer.

As is the case across the region, the offer is seen as more important than it is available. Here the greatest mismatches are for social venues and clubs (where 77% rate the offer important while just 16% rate it as available), and for live music venues and cinema.

- Only two activities are perceived to be more available than the regional average: outdoor attractions and pursuits and Gaelic events and culture, reflecting the outstanding quality of the outdoor environment and its Gaelic heritage.

Community

- Some 83% are proud to be associated with their community, higher than the 78% regionally, and this is particularly high in Skye and Lochalsh, 89%. Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross feel safe and see it as a good place to bring up a family. Two thirds say their town or community is a place they want to live.
- More young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are engaged and involved in their community than regionally. Over half attend community events and a third volunteer. Only a quarter do not participate in the community in any of these ways, below the average for the H&I as a whole (29%).

Future Aspirations

- In all, a quarter wish to be living in their local area in five years' time, below the regional average, partly related to HE aspirations. A third would like to be doing so at 35, in line with the regional average. Those from Wester Ross are more likely to want to live away in both the short and longer-term.
- Just over four in 10 think the H&I to be a better place to live now than five years ago, and this is highest in Lochaber. A similar proportion think it will be better in the next five years, with those in Lochaber again most positive.

Concluding Remarks

7.3 Young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are positive about their local community and there are strong levels of pride, especially in Skye and Lochalsh and Wester Ross, yet the majority expect to be living away from their local area in five years' time and at 35 years old, particularly those from Wester Ross. In the main this relates to the lack of employment opportunities locally, as well as other constraints, including the high costs of housing and poor transport and digital connectivity (particularly in Skye and Lochalsh). Along with career progression opportunities and the availability of high quality jobs, housing and transport are cited by Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross young people as two of the most important factors in making the region a more attractive place to live.

7.4 The challenge to create more diverse employment opportunities is a significant one, since opportunities for employment, career progression and diverse roles are perceived to be limited, and indeed more limited than regionally. Those in Skye and Lochalsh have higher aspirations to attend HE and young people expect to leave the area to realise these aspirations. There is a need to continue to develop the FE and HE offer locally, and to improve physical and digital connectivity to overcome issues of remoteness and peripherality. There are some indications that Fort William in Lochaber is beginning to provide a wider range of employment and educational opportunities, and this is positively impacting upon young persons' perceptions, although this is placing further pressure on housing availability.

A. Annex 1: survey response profile

This chapter provides an overview of survey respondents by age, gender, geography and status.

Number of Respondents

In all, 421 young people from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross responded to the survey (either online or through a paper version). This represents just below 10% of the total survey sample and a strong confidence level of 95% with a +/-5% margin of error, based on an estimated 15-30 year old Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross population of 5,910.²⁰ This provides a robust survey sample and high reliability in the findings.²¹

Age

Overall, 249 (59%) of those responding were aged 15-18 years, 96 (23%) were aged 19-24 and 76 (18%) were aged 25-30 at the time of completing the survey. Again, this provides a robust confidence level of at least 95% with a margin of error between +/-6% and +/-12%.

Survey responses have a much higher level of representation for those aged 15-18 as a result of the high response rate amongst school pupils. These additional school responses were the product of a targeted approach to gathering data from this age group, a crucial age at which young people make decisions about their future. As a consequence, the survey sample is slightly less representative of those aged 19-30.

Table 4.1: Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross Survey Response by Age and Representativeness

Age group	Total (survey)	%	Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross (%)	+/-
15-18	249	59%	30%	+29%
19-24	96	23%	34%	-11%
25-30	76	18%	36%	-18%
Total	421	100%		N/A

Source: *ekosgen, 2015, Survey of Young People; Census 2011.*

Gender

In all, 63% of respondents from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross (257) were female, compared to 48% across the region. Nearly 36% were male (148) (compared to 52% across the region), while 1% (4) preferred not to say.²²

²⁰ Census (2011) – area office breakdown provided by Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

²¹ Please note that a small proportion of young people did not provide answers to all socio-demographic questions. So, while these young people are included in the overall responses, it was not possible to attribute them to all status categories; thus, not all of the categories sum to the full 421 responses received.

²² Please note, it is not possible to compare the representativeness by gender with the area office average, as this data is only available at local authority (Highland) level.

Geography

Respondents were asked to choose the area in which they live – the location of their current family home rather than a temporary residence used for study or short-term contracts. Within Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross, almost four in 10 respondents (155 – 39%) were from Lochaber (split into 75 from Fort William and 80 from the rest of Lochaber), just over one third (140 – 35%) were from Skye and Lochalsh, and just over a quarter (105 – 26%) were from Wester Ross.²³

Status

Over half of respondents (53% - 220) were school pupils. More than a quarter (27%) were in employment or self-employment (110). A further 16% were university/college students at the time of responding (65).

A small number of young people had finished education, but were not currently in employment but not unemployed (2% - 7). Young people undertaking an apprenticeship or who were unemployed represented 1%, or 5 respondents each. One was a carer or home maker.

In comparison to the wider sample, respondents from Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross are more commonly school pupils, and slightly less likely to be in employment/ self-employment or university/ college students.

Summary

In all, a good number of responses were received from young people in Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross across the area and its sub-areas. These responses provide good confidence in the results by age, geography and gender, providing a robust data-set for analysis.

²³ Please note, this is based on the respondents' postcode. There were 21 individuals that it was not possible to determine the sub-area for.

