

ENABLING THE NEXT GENERATION

Young People and the Highlands and Islands
Maximising Opportunities:
ARGYLL AND THE ISLANDS



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HEADLINE FINDINGS

Staying and leaving

- Argyll and the Islands has a lower proportion of committed stayers (40%) than regionally, although this has increased substantially since 2015. The number of committed leavers remains higher than regionally but has declined markedly. Those in Oban, Lorn and the Isles and Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands are more likely to identify as committed stayers, and those in Cowal and Bute as committed leavers.
- There are some positive views amongst young people in Argyll and the Islands about those who stay in the local area. However, they are more likely than average to think stayers lack ambition and are unlikely to achieve their potential, and that young people have to leave to get on in life.

Education

- Perceptions of the FE and HE provision in the Highlands and Islands have greatly improved since 2015, albeit slightly less so than reported regionally. Those in Argyll and the Islands are notably less positive in relation to the affordability of study and the range of FE and HE opportunities. Those from Oban, Lorn and the Isles tend to be more positive about the FE and HE offering than those elsewhere in the area.
- Young people in Argyll and the Islands are more likely than average to feel that there is good alignment between the courses on offer and employment opportunities in the region and that there are colleges/universities that specialise in their chosen subject.
- Although awareness of the range of apprenticeships available is higher in Argyll and the Islands, fewer see modern apprenticeships as an effective route into employment or foundation apprenticeships as accessible.

Employment

- Young people in Argyll and the Islands have similar long-term employment goals to those across the region overall. However, they perceive barriers to reaching these to be greater, particularly the lack of local opportunities, housing, transport and digital/mobile connectivity.
- While a similar proportion as regionally aspire to self-employment, they are more likely than elsewhere to feel they have the interest, ideas, knowledge and confidence to do so. But access to finance is a barrier for them.
- Compared with overall, fewer young people from Argyll and the Islands (particularly from Cowal and Bute) want to work in the region in future, although the proportion that do has increased since 2015. These young people are less likely to feel that the employment factors they seek, such as a steady job and work-life balance, are available locally or in the region overall.

Community and culture

- There is a higher than average rate of community participation amongst young people in Argyll and the Islands, and this is especially high in Cowal and Bute and Oban, Lorn and the Isles.
- Though views of their local towns/communities are very positive and have improved since 2015, they are lower than observed regionally. They are less likely to feel that their needs are being met, and this is most prevalent for those in Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands. However, young people in Argyll and the Islands feel included in, and proud of their communities, and these perceptions have improved significantly since 2015

Maximising opportunities

- Compromises are regarded as a necessary part of life, especially for those in Cowal and Bute. Transport and job opportunities were cited most frequently, with digital connectivity and accommodation more prevalent for those in Argyll and the Islands than elsewhere.
- Reflecting the regional picture, employment-related aspects and a low cost of living are the most important economic aspects for regional attractiveness. Affordable, reliable and well-scheduled transport was of greater importance to those in Argyll and the Islands than regionally.
- Affordable housing, quality of life and good healthcare are the most essential social factors required to make the region attractive to young people. Access to outdoor activities and a sense of community were of more importance to those in Argyll and the Islands than overall.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 In 2018, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) commissioned ekosgen to undertake a major research study focused on the changing attitudes and aspirations of young people aged between 15 and 30, in relation to living in the Highlands and Islands. The study builds on similar research undertaken by HIE in 2015 and explores how opportunities in the region can be maximised for all young people to live, work and study in the Highlands and Islands¹.

1.2 This report presents the findings of young people from Argyll and the Islands who participated in the research. It provides comparisons with the results for the Highlands and Islands overall and findings from the 2015 study. Where possible, analysis is provided on the differences between the views of those living in Oban, Lorn and the Isles; Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands; and Cowal and Bute.

RESEARCH STUDY APPROACH

1.3 The research study consisted of an in-depth survey of young people both within and outwith the Highlands and Islands, coupled with a programme of online focus groups with young people. These were supported by a social media engagement campaign to foster interest and engagement in the research. A broad programme of consultation with stakeholders across the region was undertaken to explore the perspectives of employers, policy-makers and key groups in relation to the study. Additionally, desk research around regional and national policy aimed at population growth and talent attraction was carried out alongside socio-economic profiling and data analysis of young people in the Highlands and Islands and its sub-regions.

1.4 In total 239 young people from Argyll and the Islands participated in the research, of which, where known, 42% (93) live in Oban, Lorn and the Isles; 27% (59) live in Cowal and Bute; 26% (56) live in Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands; and 5% (11) live in Arran and the Cumbraes. Twenty respondents did not give a postcode therefore their local area could not be determined. In terms of age, 28% of the respondents from Argyll and the Islands are 15-18 years old, 34% are 19-24 and 38% are aged 25-30. The majority of respondents from Argyll and the Islands (65%) are female, whilst 35% are male.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.5 The study has two principal aims. The first is to provide an overview of the evolving attitudes and aspirations of young people in the Highlands and Islands and how these have changed since 2015. The second is to identify gaps in the current provision of education, training and employment opportunities and points to consider so that opportunities can be maximised for all young people. The research was designed to address the following objectives:

- Provide a socio-economic profile of young people in the Highlands and Islands overall, and of its sub-regions;
- Provide a brief overview of key regional and national policy initiatives designed to support population growth and talent attraction strategies;
- Track how the attitudes and aspirations of young people have changed, if at all, since the previous study was undertaken in 2015;
- Explore provision of and attitudes to education, training and employment opportunities across the region, identifying gaps, areas of inequality, and good practice examples; and
- Identify areas and specific points for consideration in terms of how to better position the Highlands and Islands as a place where young people want to live, work and study. Further policy interventions may be required to support this.

¹ The 2015 research is available at www.hie.co.uk/young-people-research and 2018 findings at www.hie.co.uk/yp-research

2 THE ARGYLL AND THE ISLANDS CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

2.1 This chapter provides an overview of the social and economic context of Argyll and the Islands. It includes a general overview of the area, population and migration trends, the educational offer and employment trends. The HIE area office geography differs from that of the local authority (Argyll and Bute) as it excludes Helensburgh and Lomond but includes Arran and the Cumbraes from the North Ayrshire council area. Where data is only available at local authority level, it is presented for Argyll and Bute.

OVERVIEW OF ARGYLL AND THE ISLANDS

2.2 Argyll and the Islands covers a large geographic area of approximately 7,000km² and, with a total population of 66,295 in 2018, has a very low population density of around 10 people per km². This presents a number of infrastructure and connectivity challenges. There is no single large population centre; rather there are five principal towns: Campbeltown, Oban, Rothesay, Dunoon and Lochgilphead.

2.3 Some parts of Argyll and the Islands are economically and socially more connected to the Central Belt than others, notably Arran and the Cumbraes and parts of Cowal and Bute. Other parts, such as Oban, Lorn and the Isles, have more in common culturally with other parts of the Highlands and Islands. Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands are home to the administrative centre of Lochgilphead.

2.4 Given the fragmented geography of the area, and the large number of inhabited islands, much of Argyll and the Islands suffers from connectivity and transport challenges. Main road routes are trunk roads, including the A83 and A82 which connect Campbeltown and Lochgilphead to Loch Lomond and Glasgow, and the A85 from Oban to Perth (meeting the A82 at Crianlarich). A rail service runs between Glasgow and Oban. Flights also connect with the Central belt, with daily return flights from Campbeltown, Tiree and Islay to Glasgow. Oban airport offers flights to Coll, Colonsay and Tiree.

2.5 The area has a large number of ferry services, mainly connecting islands with the mainland although there are some inter-island sailings. Most of the ferry services are operated by CalMac, although there are a number of other operators, including Argyll and Bute Council, Argyll Ferries and Western Ferries, the latter two linking Cowal and Inverclyde.

2.6 Tourism is a prominent sector in Argyll and the Islands, employing around 4,000 people. The sector is particularly important in the island communities such as Islay, Jura and Mull, where there is a distinct tourism offer of whisky distilleries and golf. Although relatively small in numbers employed, the area also has concentrations of employment in the electricity, gas, mining and quarrying sectors.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

Population and migration trends²

2.7 Population estimates highlight the 'deficit' of young people across the Highlands and Islands. In 2018 there were an estimated 9,635 young people aged 15-30 living in Argyll and the Islands, 15% of the area's total population. This is below both the proportion regionally (16%) and nationally (20%). From 2011 to 2018 the number of 15-30-year-olds declined by 8%, whilst the total population fell by 3%.

2.8 Migration data is only available at the local authority level for this geography. Across Argyll and Bute, there was a total net out-migration in 2017-18. The area also had the highest level of out-migration of young people aged 15-29 of all areas in the Highlands and Islands. The number of 15-30-year-olds

² Data in this section is from the following National Records of Scotland (NRS) publications: Small Area Mid-Year Population Estimates 2011 and 2018, Migration to and from Scotland 2017-18 and Sub-National Population Projections (2016 based).

in Argyll and Bute is projected to fall by 26% between 2018 and 2041, the highest expected decline of all areas in the Highlands and Islands.

Education

2.9 School leaver attainment in Argyll and Bute tends to be above both the regional and national averages. The vast majority (95%) of school leavers in Argyll and Bute in 2017-18 went on to positive destinations. This is in line with the regional average, and above the national average of 94%. As across the region overall (34%), school leavers in Argyll and the Islands were much more likely to go into employment (37%) than nationally (23%) and were less likely to go into further education (20% and 21% regionally compared to 27% nationally). A similar proportion as nationally went onto higher education in 2017-18 (both 41%), higher than the regional average (36%)³.

2.10 Further and Higher Education (FE and HE) provision in Argyll and the Islands is delivered through Argyll College and the Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS). Argyll College is based across 10 college centres and provides a variety of courses across a range of subjects including postgraduate and undergraduate degrees, HNDs, HNCs and SVQ courses.

2.11 In 2017-18 there were around 2,700 HE and 4,600 FE students from Argyll and Bute studying at universities or colleges in Scotland. HE students from Argyll and Bute were the most likely across the region to enrol at institutions outside the Highlands and Islands (69% did compared to the regional average of 54%). A higher proportion also chose to study through the Open University (16% compared to 12% regionally). The vast majority of HE students from Argyll and Bute aged 16-19 (83%) and 20-24 (85%) were studying outwith the region. This falls to 42% amongst those aged 25+, with this age group also showing a strong prevalence for Open University learning (35%)⁴.

2.12 While more than half (54%) of FE students from Argyll and Bute were studying locally (45%) or elsewhere within the Highlands and Islands (9%), this was significantly lower than the average regionally (80%). Conversely, the proportion of FE students enrolling at institutions outside the Highlands and Islands (46%) was significantly higher than the regional average (20%). FE students from Argyll and Bute aged 20-24 were least likely to be enrolled at colleges in the council area (21% were compared to 32% of 16-19-year olds and 44% of those aged 25+).

Employment and economic activity

2.13 Employment and economic activity rates in Argyll and the Islands tend to be below the Highlands and Islands average, but higher than the Scottish average. In 2018, the employment rate in Argyll and the Islands was 75.6% compared to 78.9% regionally and 74.1% nationally, while the economic activity rate was 78.3% versus 81.3% regionally and 77.4% for Scotland overall. This pattern is reflected for young people in the area - the youth (16-24) employment (61.9%) and economic activity (69.2%) rates were both lower than the regional levels (67.1% and 71.6% respectively) but above the national averages (57.2% and 63.3% respectively).

2.14 Reflecting this, the economic inactivity rate for 16-24-year olds in 2018 was higher than the average across the Highlands and Islands (30.8% compared to 28.4%), but lower than the national average (36.7%). The overall economic inactivity rate was 21.7% compared to 18.7% regionally and 22.6% nationally. Data on the unemployment rate is not available for Argyll and the Islands, but regionally, the Highlands and Islands had lower rates of unemployment (2.9%) and youth (16-24) unemployment (6.3%) than Scotland (4.3% and 9.6% respectively) in 2018.

³ Scottish Government School leaver attainment and initial destinations: statistics, 2017-18

⁴ Analysis is based on data for Argyll and Bute from the Scottish Funding Council for 2017-18.

3 KEY FINDINGS FOR ARGYLL AND THE ISLANDS

INTRODUCTION

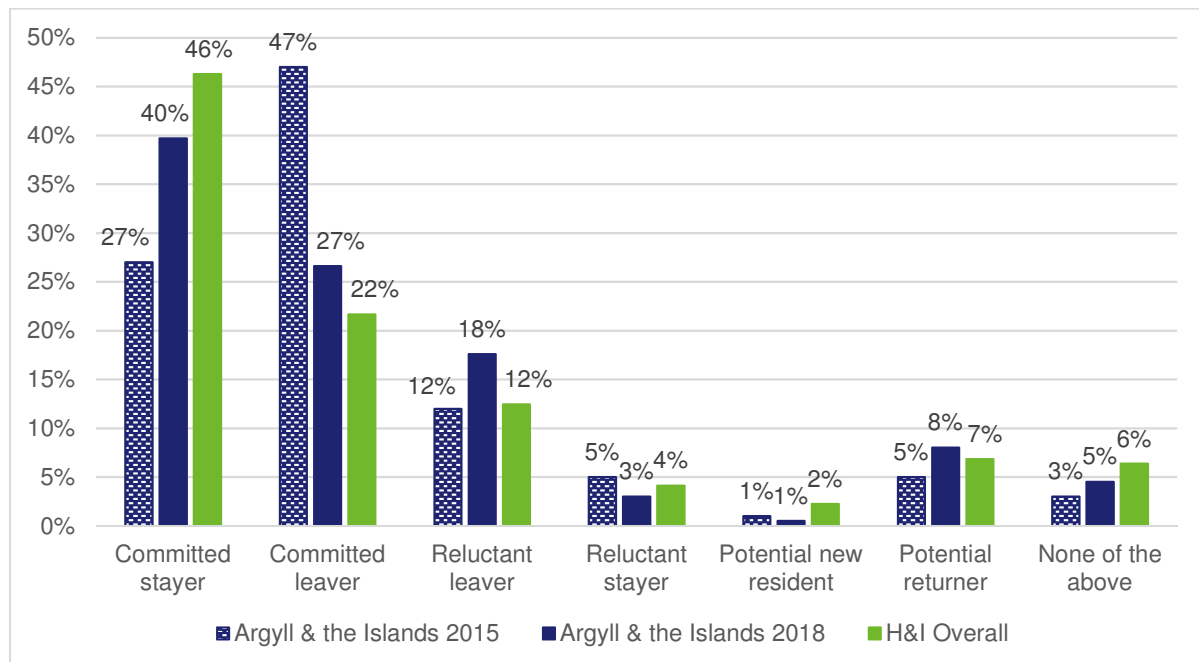
3.1 This chapter provides the key findings from the survey of young people from Argyll and the Islands. As with the region-wide report it looks at attitudes around staying and leaving, education, employment, community and culture and maximising opportunities. It focuses mainly on where there are differences in the views of young people from Argyll and the Islands compared to the regional average, and variations between those living in different parts of Argyll and the Islands.

STAYING AND LEAVING

3.2 Young people in Argyll and the Islands are less likely to identify as committed stayers than young people across the Highlands and Islands as a whole – 40% do compared to 46% regionally, an increase of 13 percentage points since 2015 (Figure 3.1). A further 18% are reluctant leavers compared to 12% across the Highlands and Islands. This suggests that overall, a similar proportion of young people in Argyll and the Islands as regionally (both 58%) would like to remain in their local area, but fewer feel able to do so.

3.3 There is a greater share of young people who are committed leavers in Argyll and the Islands (27%) than across the region overall (22%). However, this has fallen substantially since 2015 (by 20 percentage points).

Figure 3.1: Self-identification of young people



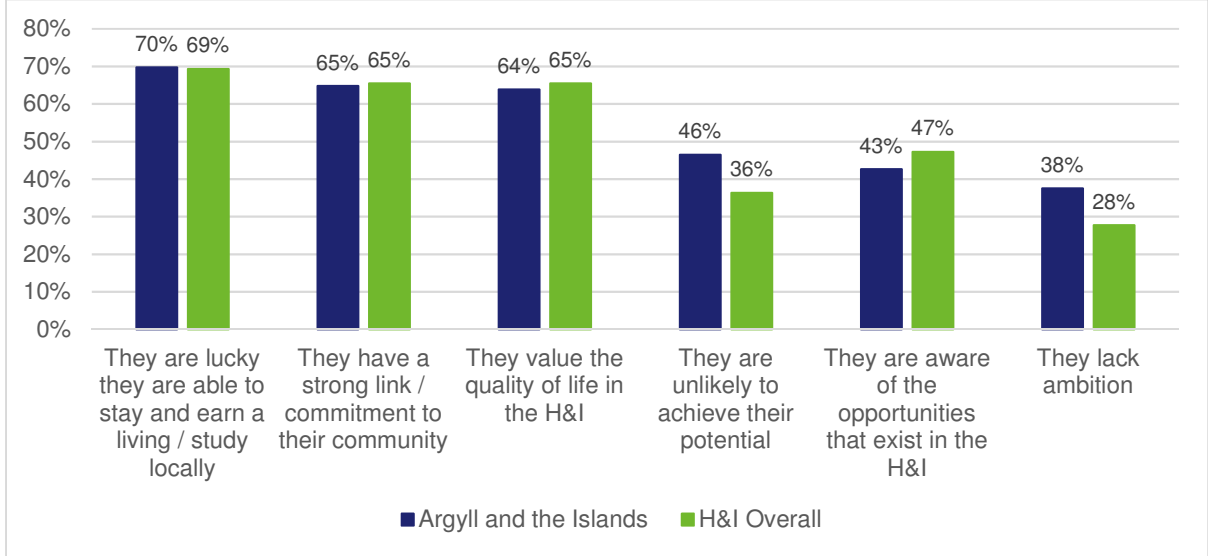
Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018* (H&I overall n=2,539, Argyll and the Islands n=199)

3.4 There are wide variations across the area. The proportion of committed stayers is significantly higher in Oban, Lorn and the Isles (49%) and Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands (48%) than in Cowal and Bute (19%). By contrast, those in Cowal and Bute (46%) are more likely to identify as committed leavers than those in Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands (28%) and Oban, Lorn and the Isles (15%).

3.5 Reflecting the high proportion of committed leavers, young people from Argyll and the Islands are less likely than average to see themselves living in their local area in 10 years' time (25% versus 32% regionally). This was considerably low for those in Cowal and Bute (10%). Just under a quarter (23%) see themselves living elsewhere in the Highlands and Islands, in line with the regional average.

3.6 Most young people in Argyll and the Islands and in the region overall agree that those who stay in the local area are lucky to be able to do so (70% and 69% respectively), have strong links/commitment to their community (both 65%) and value the quality of life in the region (64% and 65%) (Figure 3.2). However, young people in Argyll and the Islands are more likely than average to feel that those who stay are unlikely to achieve their potential (46% versus 36%) or lack ambition (38% versus 28%).

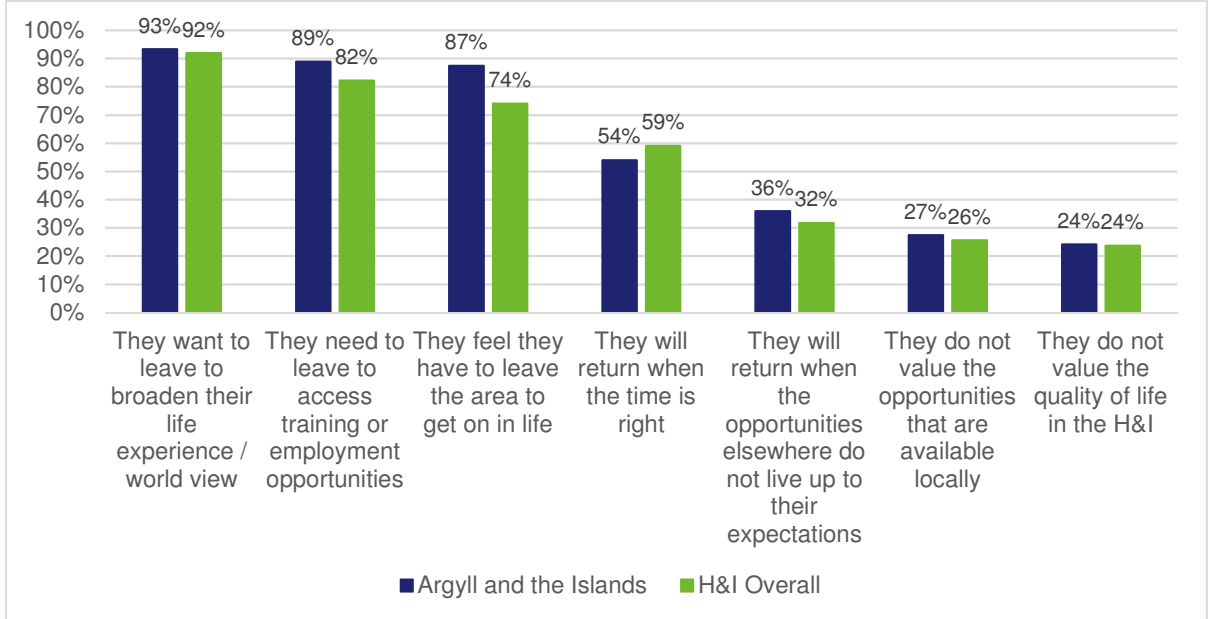
Figure 3.2: Perceptions about young people who stay in the local area (% who agree/strongly agree)



Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (H&I overall n=2,527, Argyll and the Islands n=199)

3.7 Those who leave their local area are assumed to be looking to broaden their life experiences and worldview (by 93% compared to 92% regionally). However, there is still a feeling, more so amongst young people from Argyll and the Islands, that those who leave must do so to access training or employment opportunities (89% versus 82% regionally) or to get on in life (87% compared to 74% overall). Young people from Argyll and the Islands are also less likely to think that those who leave will return when the time is right (54% versus to 59% regionally) (Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Perceptions about young people who leave the local area (% who agree/strongly agree)



Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (H&I overall n=2,523, Argyll and the Islands n=193)

3.8 The majority (65%) of participating school pupils from Argyll and the Islands want to continue their education after school, most at university (54%) and fewer at college (11%). This is slightly below the regional averages where 59% want to go to university and 15% college. In contrast, around a quarter (24%) want to go into job related activities (a job, apprenticeship, work placement or self-employment) higher than the 19% regionally.

3.9 The experience they get outside of school and good advice from family and friends are the most influential factors for school pupils in Argyll and the Islands and across the region overall when deciding what to do after school. Positively, those in Argyll and the Islands are much more likely than average to say they have a good understanding of the types of jobs available in their local area (74% agree vs 61%) and the types of jobs that industries in the Highlands and Islands need (46% versus 38%). They are also more likely to say they have all the information needed to help them decide what to do after school (55% vs 44%), and these factors are influencing their post-school decisions.

3.10 The range of subjects available at school are perceived more positively by school pupils in Argyll and the Islands than those across the region overall – 80% feel there is a good/very good range compared to 71% regionally. Correspondingly, they are less likely to agree that the choice of subjects available will limit their post-school options (41% agree and 36% disagree compared to 46% and 34% respectively regionally).

EDUCATION

3.11 Young people in Argyll and the Islands perceive the FE and HE provision in the region as having greatly improved since 2015 (Figure 3.4). This is true across all the indicators explored, most notably the alignment of courses with employment opportunities (66% agree compared to 44% in 2015), and opportunities to learn remotely (58%, up from 41% in 2015). Views on the range of post-graduate, FE and HE opportunities have also improved substantially (up 14, 12 and 10 percentage points respectively).

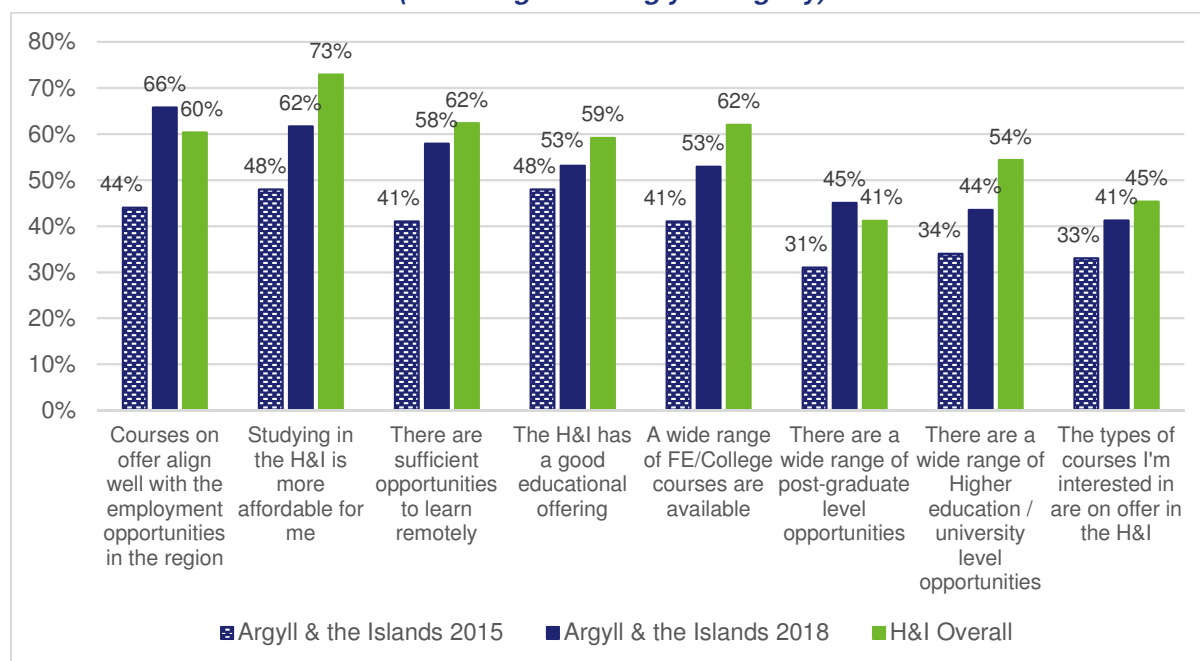
3.12 While perceptions on post-school education have generally improved, young people from Argyll and the Islands still tend to be more negative about FE and HE provision in the region than their counterparts in the rest of the region (Figure 3.4). This is most marked in terms of the affordability of study (62% agreed that studying in the region is affordable compared to 73% of all respondents) and the range of FE and HE opportunities - 53% and 44% agree that there is a wide range of FE and HE courses respectively, compared to 62% and 54% regionally.

3.13 However, young people in Argyll and the Islands are more positive than their peers in other parts of the Highlands and Islands about the alignment of courses in the region with employment opportunities (66% agree this is happening compared to 60% regionally) and the range of post-graduate opportunities (45% agree compared to 41% overall).

3.14 There are some variations by sub-area. Perceptions tend to be least positive amongst those in Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands – 43% agree that the Highlands and Islands has a good educational offering compared to 60% of those in Oban, Lorn and the Isles and 53% of those in Cowal and Bute. However, they are more likely than those in Oban, Lorn and the Isles and Cowal and Bute to feel that studying in the region is affordable to them (76% agree compared to 52% and 64% respectively) and that courses on offer align well with employment opportunities in the region (71% versus 66% and 62% respectively).

3.15 Young people in Oban, Lorn and the Isles are most likely to agree that the courses they want to study are available in the region (55% compared to 34% of those in Cowal and Bute and 27% of those in Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands). Those in Cowal and Bute are most positive about the range of post-graduate level opportunities (53% versus 47% in Oban, Lorn and the Isles and 30% of young people in Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands).

Figure 3.4: Qualities and characteristics of FE and HE in the Highlands and Islands (% who agree strongly or slightly)



Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (H&I overall n=2,262, Argyll and the Islands n=178)*

3.16 When choosing which FE or HE institution to attend, offering and specialising in their course of choice and having a good academic reputation are the most important factors influencing the decisions of young people both in Argyll and the Islands, and across the region overall. Those in Argyll and the Islands are more likely to feel that there are colleges and universities in the region that specialise in their chosen subject (58% agree compared to 52% regionally).

3.17 While the majority (80%) of young people in Argyll and the Islands feel that they can study locally, this is lower than in other parts of the region (86%). Additionally, they are less likely to identify this as an important factor in choosing where to study (42% do compared to 52% overall), suggesting a lower appetite to study locally.

3.18 There is greater awareness of modern, graduate and foundation apprenticeships amongst young people in Argyll and the Islands than there is regionally. However, those in Argyll and the Islands are less likely than average to view modern apprenticeships as an effective route into employment (72% compared to 77% overall), and to view foundation apprenticeships (29% versus 33%) and graduate placements (23% versus 27%) as accessible. A similar proportion as regionally view graduate (24% versus 25%) and modern apprenticeships as accessible (47% compared to 48%). More still needs to be done to awareness and accessibility of alternative routes into employment across Argyll and the Islands, and the region overall.

EMPLOYMENT

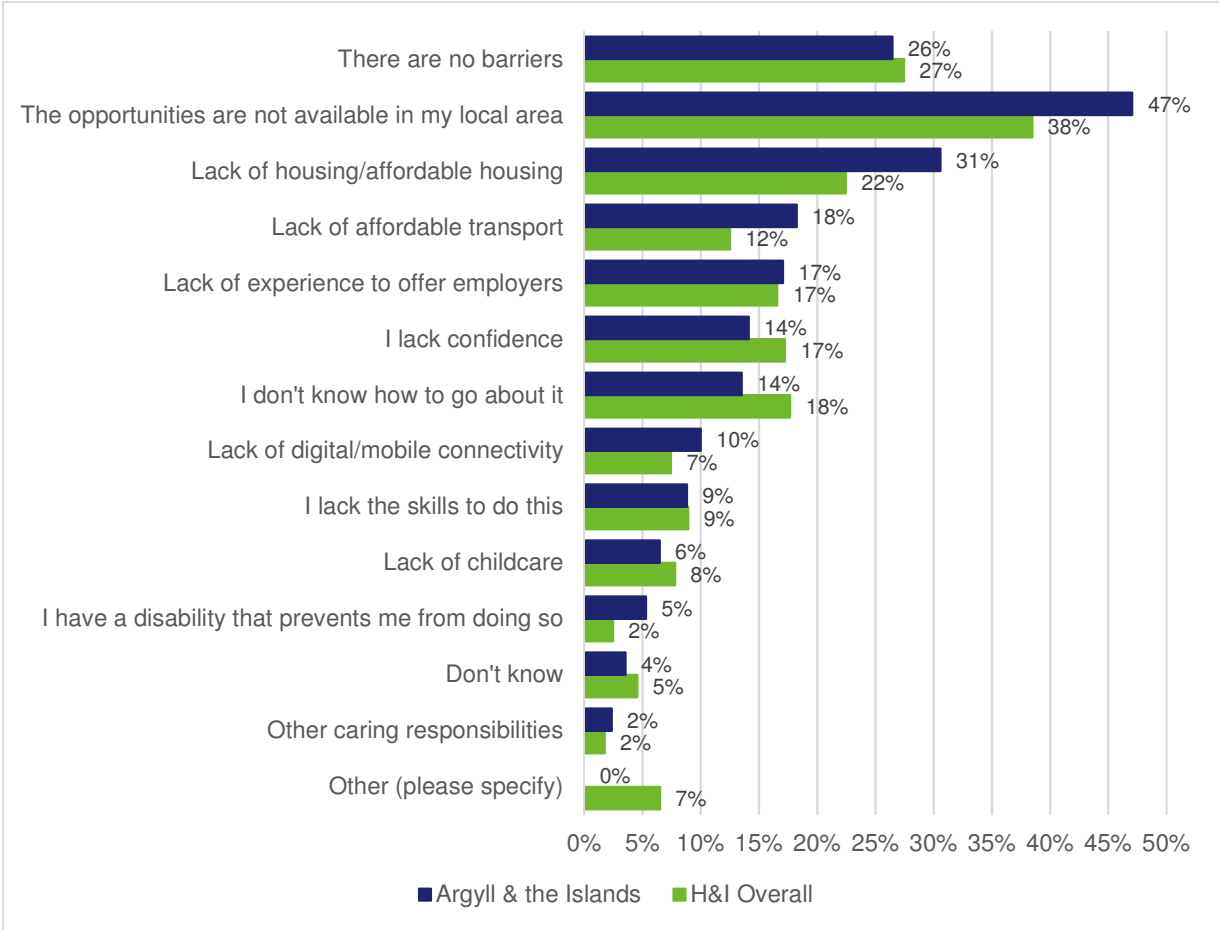
3.19 Young people in Argyll and the Islands have very similar long-term employment goals to young people across the region overall – 72% aspire to full-time employment and 18% to self-employment compared to 71% and 19% respectively regionally.

3.20 Although the long-term aspiration for self-employment (18%) is in line with the regional average (19%), young people in Argyll and the Islands are more likely to state that they have the interest to start up their own business (57% compared to 53% regionally). They are also more likely to feel they have the ideas (50% compared to 44%), knowledge (49% versus 37%) and confidence (44% versus 36%) to do so. However, access to finance acts as a barrier – only 22% feel they can access the necessary finance to start their own businesses, 17% regionally.

3.21 Young people from Argyll and the Islands are more likely than average to cite barriers in achieving employment goals (Figure 3.5). Higher proportions than regionally perceive a lack of local opportunities (47% do compared to 38% regionally), affordable housing (31% versus 22%), affordable transport (18% versus 12%) and digital or mobile connectivity (10% compared to 7%) as barriers.

3.22 These young people are less likely than their counterparts across the region to identify their own confidence (14% do compared to 17% regionally) or know-how (14% versus 18%) as barriers to achieving their employment goals.

Figure 3.5: Barriers to achieving employment goals
(% citing each as a barrier)



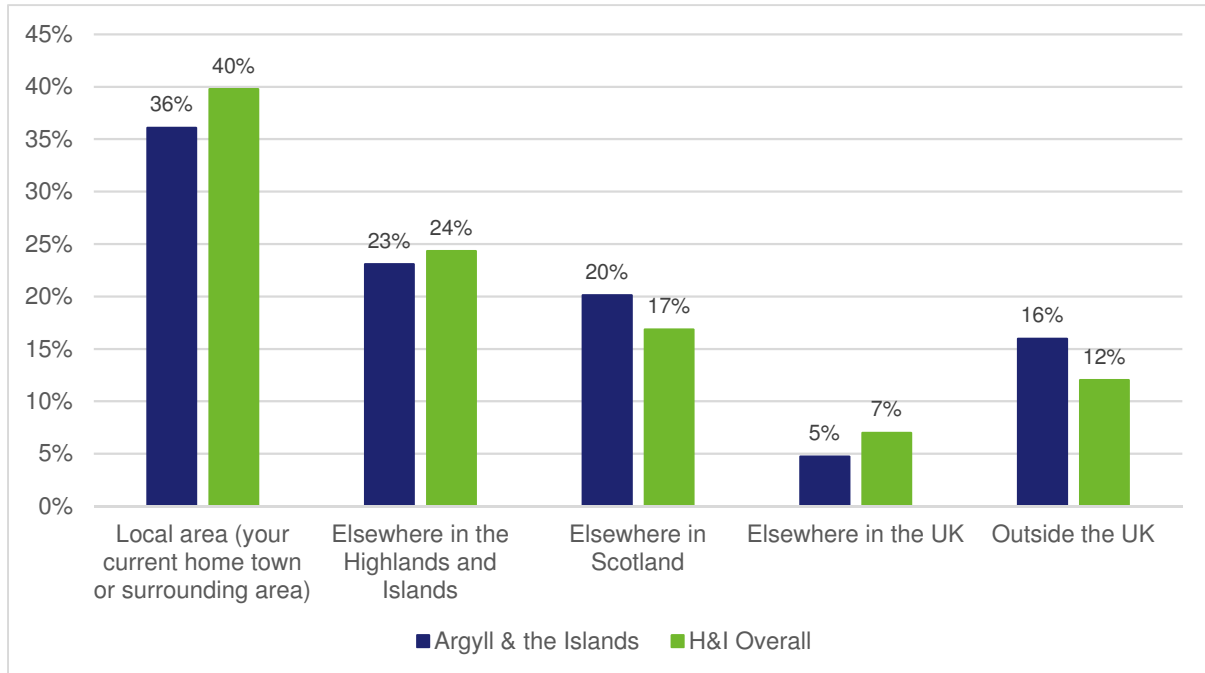
Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (H&I overall n=2,262, Argyll and the Islands n=178)*

3.23 In line with the regional trend, there has been a marked increase in the proportion of young people in Argyll and the Islands who want to work somewhere in the Highlands and Islands in future – 59% do, up from 36% in 2015. This compares to an increase of 20 percentage points regionally, from 44% in 2015 to 64%.

3.24 Within this, young people in Argyll and the Islands are less likely than their counterparts across the region overall to want to work in their local area (36% compared to 40% regionally), while a similar proportion would work elsewhere in the region (23% versus 24% overall) (Figure 3.6).

3.25 Around two-fifths (41%) of young people in Argyll and the Islands want to work outside of the region compared to 36% overall. Those from Cowal and Bute are more likely to want to do so – more than two-thirds (67%) do, compared to around a third of those in Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands (34%) and Oban, Lorne and the Isles (32%).

Figure 3.6: Ideal work locations of young people

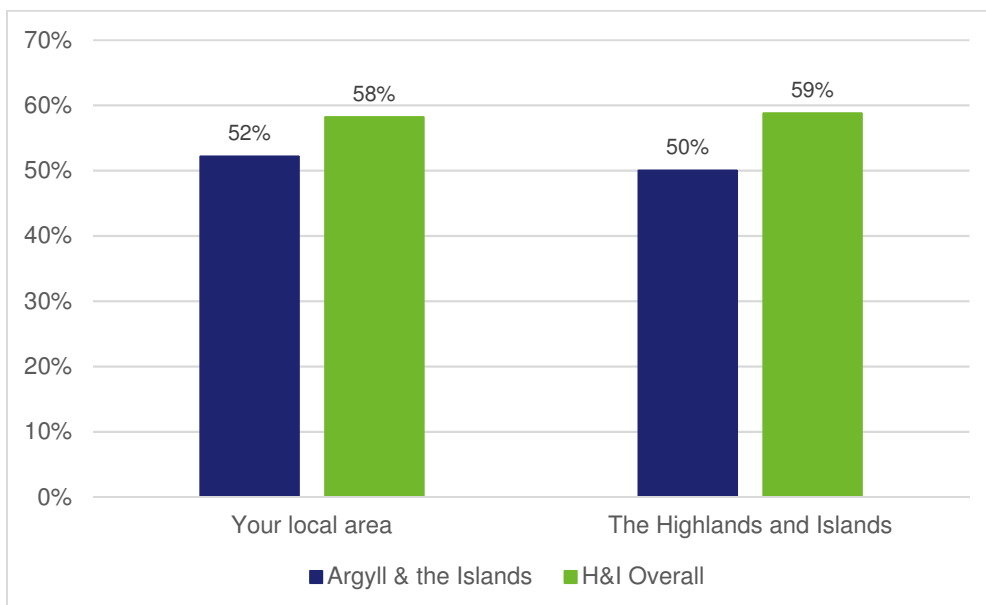


Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (H&I overall n=2,129, Argyll and the Islands n=169)

3.26 Young people in Argyll and the Islands seek similar job qualities to their counterparts across the region overall, most commonly a steady job (72% compared to 71% regionally), a good work-life balance (72% versus 70%), and opportunities to progress (66% versus 61%). However, these young people are more likely than average to view a good salary (61% compared to 56% regionally) and use of their qualifications (43% compared to 35%) as essential factors in a job.

3.27 Jobs encompassing the factors that young people seek are generally felt to be less available to young people from Argyll and the Islands than to those elsewhere in the region (Figure 3.7). Around half agree that what they are looking for in employment is available in their local area and in the region overall. The regional average is close to 60%.

Figure 3.7: Extent to which employment factors sought by young people are available locally and, in the Highlands, and Islands (% who agree to some extent/very much so)



Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (H&I overall n=2,120, Argyll and the Islands n=168)

COMMUNITY AND CULTURE

3.28 Whilst there has been a decline in community participation regionally since 2015 (from 71% to 62%), participation levels amongst young people in Argyll and the Islands have remained consistent at 64% - now slightly higher than the regional average. Participation is higher among those in Cowal and Bute (68%) and Oban, Lorn and the Isles (67%), and lower in Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and the Isles (59%).

3.29 There are positive attitudes amongst young people in Argyll and the Islands regarding the town/community in which they live, and these have generally improved since 2015. However, they do remain below those observed regionally (Figure 3.8).

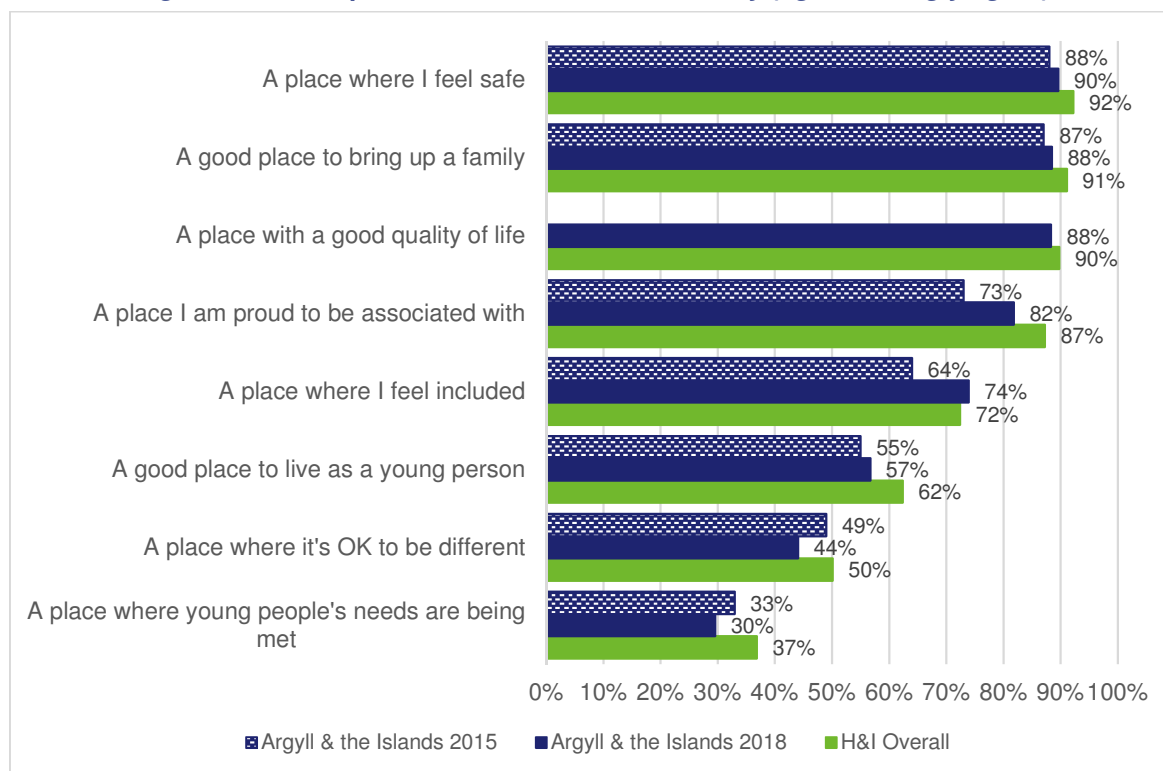
3.30 Most young people in Argyll and the Islands feel that their local town/community offers a good quality of life (88% do compared to 90% regionally) and is a good place to bring up a family (88% versus 91%). More feel included now than in 2015 (74% versus 64%), slightly above the regional average of 72%.

3.31 Levels of pride amongst young people in Argyll and the Islands are also high and have increased in recent years – 82% are proud of their local town/community up from 73% in 2015, though still below the regional average (87%). Levels of pride were notably higher amongst those in Oban, Lorn and the Isles (91%), than in Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the Isles (78%) and Cowal and Bute (67%).

3.32 Young people in Argyll and the Islands are less likely to agree that their local town/community is a good place to live as a young person (57% compared to 62% regionally) and fewer feel that it is a place where it is OK to be different (44% compared to 50% overall).

3.33 They are also less likely to feel that their local community is a place that meets their needs - 30% agree while 32% strongly disagree compared to 37% and 24% respectively regionally – and this has declined since 2015 (by 3 and 4 percentage points respectively). Young people from Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and the Isles are least likely to agree that their needs are being met.

Figure 3.8: Perceptions of the town or community (agree/strongly agree)

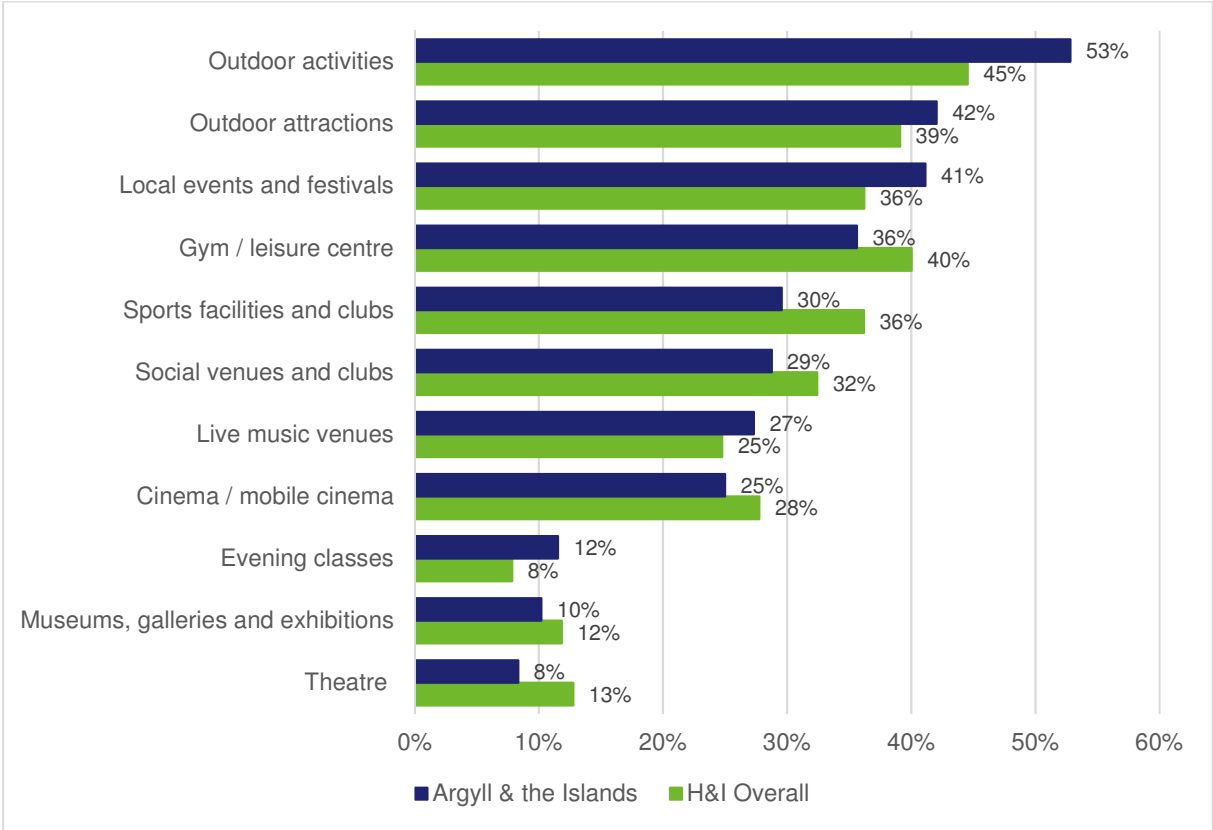


Source: ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (H&I overall n=1,965, Argyll and the Islands n=160)

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

3.34 Levels of participation in arts, leisure and cultural activities among young people in Argyll and the Islands differs to that of others across the broader region. They are more likely than average to participate frequently in outdoor activities (53% compared to 45% regionally), outdoor attractions (42% versus 39%) and local events and festivals (41% versus 36%), and less likely to use sports facilities and clubs (30% compared to 36% regionally) (Figure 3.9).

Figure 3.9: Accessing arts, leisure and culture
(% who use frequently/very frequently)



Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018* (H&I overall n=2,013, Argyll and the Islands n=161)

3.35 Young people in Argyll and the Islands are more likely to cite barriers to accessing arts, leisure and cultural offers than young people elsewhere in the region. They are more likely to report a lack of availability of many offerings, particularly theatre, museum and live music. They are less likely to identify cost as a barrier, particularly in relation to cinemas and theatres.

MAXIMISING OPPORTUNITIES

Compromises

3.36 Young people in Argyll and the Islands are more likely than their counterparts in other parts of the Highlands and Islands to feel that compromises have to be made to live, work or study in the region (90% compared to 87%). This was higher still among young people from Cowal and Bute (94%).

3.37 The most commonly cited compromises reflect the regional picture. They relate to accepting that transport is more difficult and expensive (81% versus 79% overall) and that there are fewer job opportunities (78% and 76% regionally).

3.38 Relative to young people across the region overall, those in Argyll and the Islands are much more likely to identify accommodation (41% compared to 27% overall) and limited digital connectivity (47% versus 37%) as compromises that people generally need to make.

3.39 The proportion of young people seeing housing as a compromise is particularly high in Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands (47%) and Oban, Lorn and the Isles (45%).

3.40 In terms of compromises they have made or would be prepared to make, young people in Argyll and the Islands are markedly more likely to feel that they have already compromised on their accommodation in order to live, work or study in the region (32% have compared to 19% regionally). They are also more likely to feel they have compromised on digital connectivity (45% versus 37%) and on access to services and leisure facilities (52% versus 47%) (Table 3.1).

3.41 The issues which young people living in Argyll and the Islands are most unwilling to compromise are: having fewer opportunities for career progression (41% would not be prepared to compromise on this), having fewer college or university courses on offer (38%) and working below their qualification level (38%). This is similar to the picture across the Highlands and Islands.

3.42 Quality of life is highly regarded by young people in Argyll and the Islands and in the region overall. While 13% feel they have compromised on this (12% regionally), considerably more (42%) do not think it is an area of compromise at all (44% overall).

Table 3.1: Making compromises

	I have already made	I would be prepared to make	I would not be prepared to make	I do not think this compromise exists
Accepting that transport and travel is more difficult and expensive	62%	24%	11%	3%
Having limited access to amenities, events, services and leisure facilities	52%	27%	13%	9%
Having limited mobile connectivity	47%	26%	16%	11%
Having limited digital connectivity	45%	24%	16%	16%
Having fewer job opportunities and choices	39%	19%	34%	8%
Having fewer opportunities for career progression	33%	17%	41%	9%
Living in accommodation that doesn't fully meet my needs	32%	21%	31%	16%
Having fewer courses on offer at college/university	29%	23%	38%	10%
Settling for a lower salary	27%	31%	31%	11%
Working below my qualification and skills level	23%	23%	38%	16%
Having a lower quality of life	13%	10%	35%	42%

Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (H&I Overall n= 1,414, Argyll and the Islands n=128)*

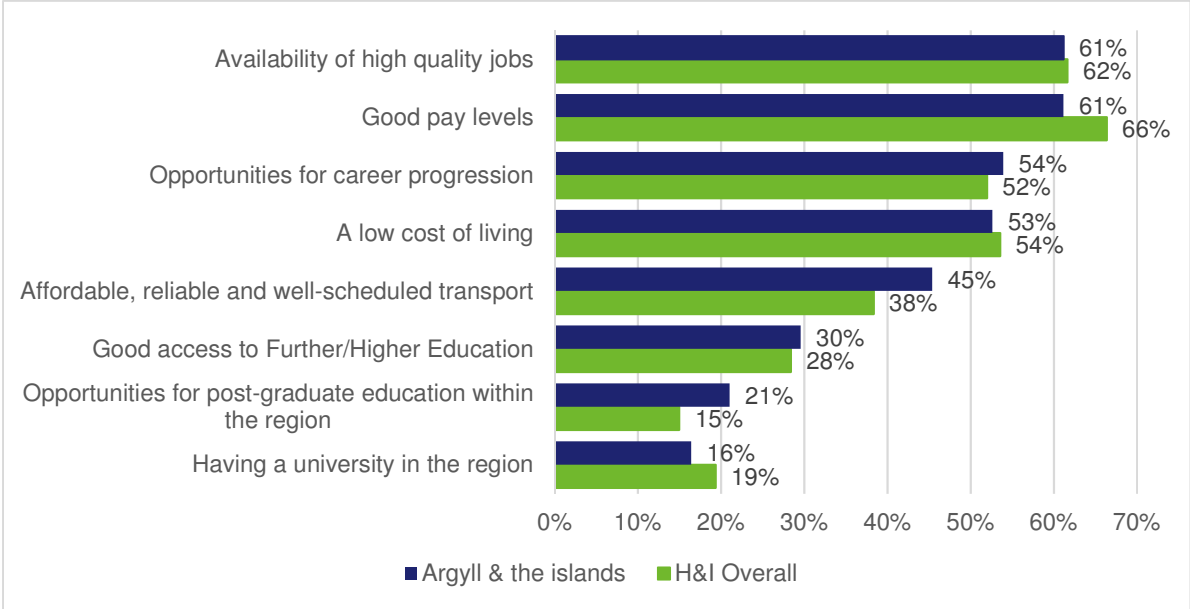
Enabling opportunities

3.43 For young people in Argyll and the Islands, the availability of high quality jobs (68%), opportunities for career progression (66%) and affordable public transport (62%) are the most essential economic factors required to make the region a more attractive place for young people. This is in line with views of respondents across the region overall.

3.44 Reflecting this, employment related aspects were ranked as the most important economic factors by young people in Argyll and the Islands, followed by a low cost of living (Figure 3.10). A higher proportion than average cited transport as important (45% compared to 38% overall).

3.45 Views on educational factors are more mixed. While a lower proportion than average cited good access to FE/HE and having a university as essential (53% and 37% respectively compared to 58% and 46% regionally), similar proportions ranked them as important. Those in Argyll and the Islands are more likely than average to view post-graduate opportunities as important (Figure 3.10).

Figure 3.10: Ranking the importance of economic aspects

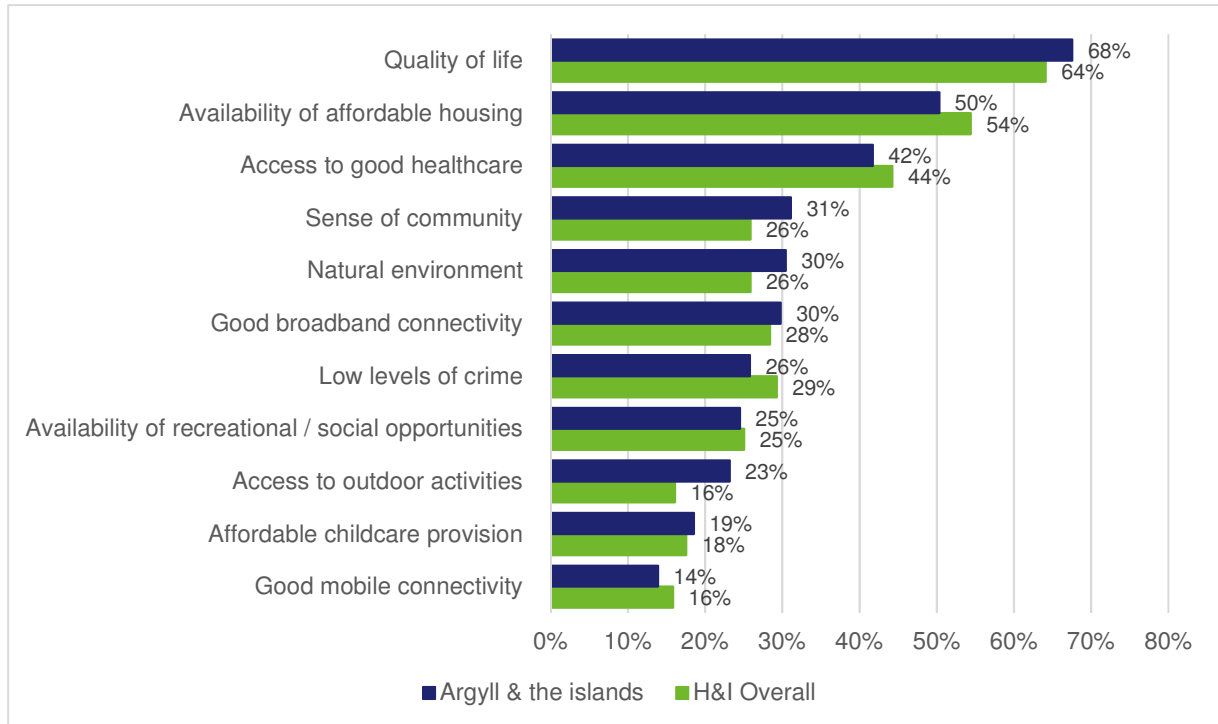


Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (H&I Overall n= 1,838, Argyll and the Islands n=152)*

3.46 In terms of social aspects, having available affordable housing (77%), good quality of life (76%) and access to good healthcare (73%) are the most essential factors in making the Highlands and Islands a more attractive place to live for young people in Argyll and the Islands. They are also ranked as the most important factors (Figure 3.11). These findings were similar to the regional response.

3.47 When ranking the importance of social factors, young people in Argyll and the Islands place a greater importance than their counterparts across the region on access to outdoor activities (23% compared to 16% regionally), a sense of community (31% versus 26%) and the natural environment (30% versus 26%).

Figure 3.11: Ranking the importance of social aspects



Source: *ekosgen survey of young people, 2018 (H&I Overall n= 1,832, Argyll and the Islands n=151)*

3.48 Around half of young people in Argyll and the Islands (49%) think that the region is a better place to live now than it was five years ago. This has increased from 43% in 2015, although it remains lower than the regional average of 54%. In terms of sub-areas, this positive change is felt most by those from Mid-Argyll, Kintyre and the Islands (51%) and least by those in Cowal and Bute (45%).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

3.49 There have been a number of positive changes in the views and perceptions of young people in Argyll and the Islands since 2015. The 2015 research showed that Argyll and the Islands had a much smaller proportion of committed stayers amongst young people than the Highlands and Islands as a whole. By contrast, the area had a much greater number of committed leavers than the region. While this is still the case, the proportion of committed stayers has grown substantially since 2015, while the number of committed leavers has declined dramatically.

3.50 Young people from Argyll and the Islands were less positive than others in the Highlands and Islands about the region’s educational offering in 2015, particularly those in Cowal and Bute. Though still evident to some extent, the perception of FE and HE provision in Argyll and the Islands has greatly improved. Negative views of the labour market in 2015 translated into perceived weaker prospects for career progression locally than in other parts of the Highlands and Islands. Although young people still face employment barriers in Argyll and the Islands today, particularly around the lack of available employment opportunities and housing, more young people now want to stay and work in the area.

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