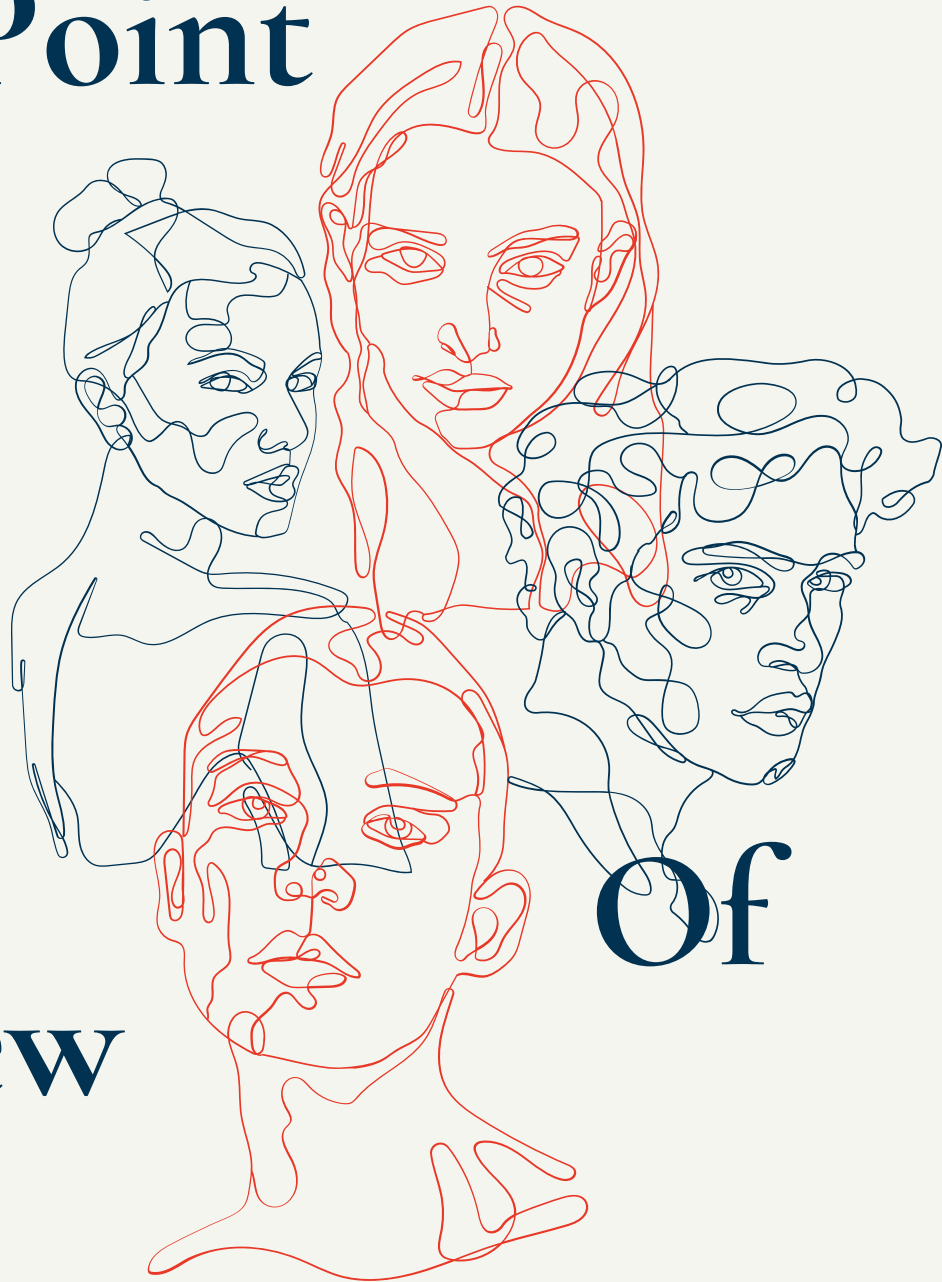


# Point



# View

# Of

P.O.V.  
REPORT

Herefordshire  
Survey



[www.pointofviewrural.com](http://www.pointofviewrural.com)



Point of View (P.O.V.) report

ER Arts CIC

March 2021

## 1. Introduction

The Point of View (P.O.V.) research, consultation and development initiative is seeking to shine a light on the issues that rural young people (YP) are dealing with today. By amplifying the rural youth voice, it is working to lay the building blocks of a much larger 4 year programme, the design and direction to be informed by the findings of this initial inquiry.

This initial phase involved outreach, consultation, engagement and participation of young people aged between 14–25 who live or study in Herefordshire.

### 1.1 Aims of the consultation

- Use specific tone and language in our questions to gather honest and authentic responses from young people.
- For young people to share, in their own words, their attitudes and experiences of living in Herefordshire.
- For young people to share, in their own words, their experiences of living under Covid lockdowns.
- To help stakeholders understand the issues that rural young people are dealing with every day.
- To help Rural Media and the P.O.V. team amplify the views of rural young people.
- To evidence the current reach of the P.O.V. creative consultation and identify engagement gaps.

The consultation & design phase ran from September–November 2020; the online survey was live from December 2020 –January 2021 and delivered alongside 1:1 and group consultations. The P.O.V. project is run by Rural Media, an award winning Hereford based production company and charity that seeks to give voice to disadvantaged and rural communities through participatory engagement with digital arts & media. The research and analysis for this report was undertaken by ER Arts CIC, a Hereford based company that specialises in creative approaches to evaluation. The P.O.V. project is funded by Esmée Fairburn Foundation.



## 1.2 Methodology

The research methodology for the P.O.V. research, consultation and development initiative is based on grounded theory.

## 1.3. Survey Design and Dissemination

- 50+ young people from five young people’s groups involved in the survey design process
- 22 educational institutions invited to promote the survey to students
- 51 partner organisations promoted the survey through their networks
- 675 young people completed the survey

## 1.4 Key Themes

## Key Findings

<p>What do young people think and feel about living in Herefordshire? (See App 1.)</p>	<p>85% reported positively about living in Herefordshire, only 8% felt negatively about living in Herefordshire.</p> <p>46% of YP did not think they would always live in Herefordshire.</p> <p>Only 11% rated their opportunities in Herefordshire as better than that of their peers living in bigger cities.</p> <p>Only 34% of YP identified as rural.</p>
<p>What are the key themes raised by young people when considering their lived experiences in Herefordshire? (see App.2)</p>	<p>Overall responses indicated that although living in a rural county had benefits there were limitations around access, opportunity and prospects.</p> <p>36% wanted more age appropriate activities and events. The most frequently referenced challenge was lack of things to do and available places/spaces for YP.</p>

	<p>27% cited pollution and excess traffic as a negative aspect of their experience. 21% felt that litter was a problem.</p> <p>49% said being in the natural environment was a benefit.</p> <p>Appearance (60%) opinions (59%) and No identifiable reason (51%) were cited as reasons for negative attention from others either online or in person.</p> <p>Only 8% felt their views opinions and needs were represented.</p>
<p>How have the Covid-19 lockdowns impacted young people in Herefordshire? (see App.3)</p>	<p>The effects of lockdowns on YP exacerbated existing social, economic and infrastructural inequalities within Herefordshire particularly lack of access to transport.</p> <p>YP overwhelmingly reported the lockdowns had affected them negatively. The main reported worries were centered on access to education and social isolation.</p>
<p>What do young people feel about access to activities and opportunities for young people in Herefordshire? (see App.4)</p>	<p>93% reported being passionate about equality and social justice however 38% reported never having been involved in volunteering or activism of any kind.</p> <p>79% engage in sporting activity</p> <p>52% felt that they could access hobbies they were interested in.</p> <p>Sports, creative arts and music were most frequently referenced.</p>

	<p>Arts media and digital was the most popular career path (30%) followed by health and wellbeing (28%).</p> <p>85% wanted to be in employment 34% further/higher education in five years' time.</p>
Which young audiences is P.O.V. not yet reaching?	Lower response rates from YP who were: home educated, NEETs, young carers, parents, employed, age 16-25.

## 2. Background & context

Herefordshire has the fourth lowest population density in England, has an older age population profile than both England & Wales (33% higher than the national average) and 16% lower than the national average young people (under 30).<sup>1</sup>

There are significant geographic and demographic variables within the county across access to & availability of services, demographic population and deprivation levels. Hereford City has a much younger profile than the county as a whole whereas the less populated areas have relatively higher levels of older people. Herefordshire experiences below average crime rates, but above average barriers to housing and services. In terms of diversity it is predominantly 'white British'<sup>2</sup>

### 2.1. Context

Research into existing consultations with young people about their lives, views, experiences and issues of concern.

#### Rural realities

The concept or idea of 'rural' often denotes an idealised notions of escapism, however the challenges for those growing up in rural areas are now beginning to be better understood. The issues are numerous and complex; social isolation and a lack of services are often exacerbated by poor transport and hidden poverty compared to peers in more urbanised settings.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://understanding.herefordshire.gov.uk/>

<sup>2</sup> Herefordshire Council (June 2018) The Population of Herefordshire 2018. p34. Data source ONS 2011 Census.

<sup>3</sup> Youth service research needs of rural young people. Education Authority of Northern Ireland, 2019

Mobile and digital communication has never been more integral to young people's social and more recently educational networks than in 2020. Recent research across England has revealed that broadband speeds in rural areas are up to three times slower than in cities; which dramatically increases the risk of social isolation and exclusion for YP in rural communities.<sup>4</sup>

## 2.2 Impact of austerity.

Throughout England, Scotland and Wales the role of public services has changed dramatically in the last ten years. Local Government has moved away from the direct delivery of services to a commissioning model.<sup>5</sup> The fallout of this has hit young people extremely hard; cuts to youth services funding by local authorities in England and Wales has declined by 70% since 2010 with the West Midlands experiencing up to 80% cuts, the deepest regional cuts in England. This has resulted in the loss of more than 4,500 youth work jobs and 760 youth centers closing their doors.<sup>6</sup>

Denise Hatton, Chief Executive of YMCA England & Wales stated in her 2020 report:

*“Youth services exist to provide a sense of belonging, a safe space, and the opportunity for young people to enjoy being young. However, young people's needs continue to be brushed aside by decision makers as unworthy of support. Without drastic action to protect funding and significant reinvestment in youth services, we are condemning young people to become a lonely, lost generation with nowhere to turn.”*

## 2.3 Overview

- Much of the existing research is now outdated due to societal shifts in thinking, rapid advances in digital technology & social networking, economic & social changes
- Many surveys commissioned by local authorities limit consultation to local authority employees rather than YP
- Primary research into YP's experience is limited and varied in context e.g. within schools or focused on YP with a specific needs or issues
- Significant gap in consistent evaluation across youth engagement initiatives.
- Variation in characteristics of sample populations of YP limited definitive conclusions.
- Very few relevant localised impact surveys found.

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<sup>4</sup> Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE)

<sup>5</sup> Unison. The damage, 2015

<sup>6</sup> YMCA, Out of Service, January 2020

### 3. Methodology

The research process: Extensive desk based research was undertaken by ER Arts CIC to establish and consider current material and delivery outputs for youth engagement surveys.

A review of existing relevant literature was undertaken; evidence gathered from these documents and reports has been used to contextualise the final report and recommendations (see reference list).

Focus groups from a number of youth organisations were used to ascertain information on the needs, issues and challenges facing young people locally.

The findings from existing online surveys undertaken by ER Arts in September 2020 were used to generate a topic guide for the focus groups to enable more in-depth exploration of the key issues and challenges.

Focus groups: Action research was undertaken by the PM with young people from Hope Support Services, Close House, Hereford City Youth Council & NO Wrong Door Youth reps to understand potential facilitators and barriers to successful engagement in completing questionnaires.

These information sources were combined to produce a 'long list' of questions and an overall sense of tone and language which was integral in the overall approach. These were then piloted at Fairfield High School with Year 9 & 10 council students. The final survey was informed by feedback from pilot study.

The questionnaire was designed to feel like a conversation with YP not an interrogation, the tone of the survey was carefully considered particularly as it was known that YP would be completing it by themselves at home.

3.1 Survey design: The questionnaire collected a range of qualitative, quantitative, ordinal & nominal data sets. There were 27 questions in total. Eleven questions were check box single answer and 2 were checkbox multiple answer. One question was made mandatory: Are you under 16 or 16-25. The rest were optional. This was done to enable the exploration of potential variables between two age groups. 'Prefer not to say' was given as an option throughout. Fourteen of the questions invited open free text responses. The survey provided an option relevant for YP who do not live in county but access educational institutions or employment within Herefordshire.

3.2 Dissemination: Questionnaires were disseminated across two digital platforms (MS Forms and Survey Monkey) this was done to capitalise on the engagement from educational organisations as well as the wider population of YP. The survey was shared across educational, statutory and third sector networks as well as social media & local business networks including:

- Herefordshire Association of Secondary Heads (H.A.S.H) a schools network, representing 14 secondary schools across the county
- A Steiner School, Special School, private school & Pupil Referral Unit
- Further and Higher Education Colleges
- 42 partner agencies of the No Wrong Door youth service
- Local Authority Speech & Language Therapy Teams
- Arts and creative network organisations such as Encore CIC, Livewire and the Courtyard Centre for the Arts Youth Theatre

This created levels of participation: mandatory (schools set the questionnaire as homework): optional (YP being sent the questionnaire / finding it on social media) and optional-incentivised (utilising a local popular local business promotion competition).

Analysis: The three data sets were merged and underwent extensive thematic analysis to draw out key themes, trends and variables across the sample.

### 3.3 Findings

675 young people took part in the survey, of those:

- 66% were under 16: 34% were 16-25
- 81% currently in an educational pathway
- 15% worked full or part time
- 2% had caring responsibilities
- 2 % NEETS
- 1% apprentice or internship

The P.O.V. consultation successfully achieved all of the desired aims.

Aim	Outcome	Overview
For young people to share, in their own words, their attitudes and experiences of living in Herefordshire.	Achieved	Young people were candid in their responses and painted a vivid and insightful picture of their experience.
For young people to share, in their own words, their experiences of living under Covid lockdowns.*	Achieved	YP articulated a broad range of views on the impact of lockdown.
To help stakeholders understand the issues that rural young people are dealing with every day.	Achieved	Young people gave clear messages about what challenges they face & how that impacts their lives day to day.



To help Rural Media & P.O.V. team amplify the views of rural young people.	Achieved	The P.O.V. research team are working with a Young Leaders Group to further explore the data and devise the next steps for the project.
To evidence the current reach of the P.O.V. consultation and identify engagement gaps.	Achieved	Data identified where further work could be undertaken to engage with groups of YP under-represented in this survey.

### 3.4 Successes

- Time invested in thorough consultation with YP in the early stages paid off; these sessions provided high quality, candid and significant feedback that crucially informed the final survey design.
- Large sample size supported the validity of significant emerging themes.
- The vast majority of YP took questions seriously and spent time giving considered responses.
- The length of the survey risked low rates of completion however most participants responded to all questions.
- There was engagement from schools & colleges despite disruption caused by lockdowns 2 and 3.
- The project manager's experience and skilful approach to engaging with YP in the focus groups and with schools and other organisations was key to the project's success.

### 3.5 Challenges

- Establishing contact with YP not in educational pathways was a challenge; local businesses popular with YP ran incentivised survey promotion however this did not yield high return rates.
- Hampered by lockdown; many of the places YP go to were shut limiting the reach of the survey through recreational channels therefore more emphasis was given to schools and colleges that was originally intended.

### 3.6 Conclusion

Responses were many, rich and insightful, amusing, candid and often inspiring.

The survey provided great insight into the multi-faceted idea of 'rural' and what this means for YP living in Herefordshire. When viewed as a single cohort YP's experiences of Herefordshire often appear to be complex and contradictory. Herefordshire as a county is classed as rural but those living in the city or the market towns have a very different experience to those living in villages, hamlets and unpopulated areas. Many social, economic and environmental factors impact on individual experience. The consultation can be

considered successful in laying the foundations from which the P.O.V team can further explore themes that have been identified by young people in Herefordshire.

### 3.7. Recommendations

Use of a single data collection platform would enable data collected to be analysed within that programme. Merging data sources creates potential for error, takes much longer and does not capitalise on the data collection platforms built in analytics and visualisation tools.

Reducing the length of the survey could yield higher response rates to individual questions and reduce the 'skip rate' of questions as they go on.

Undertake engagement strategies for YP not reached by this survey through liaison with agencies not previously reached out to such as parent groups, HVOSS, local employers, the Job Centre and youth justice services.

Establishing a relationship with the FE educational institution Herefordshire & Ludlow College would vastly increase the potential number of responders and broaden the range of experiences gathered.

Continue liaison with existing schools and other networks to facilitate future surveys. Further follow up study with the same schools & year groups would provide opportunity for a post lockdown longitudinal data gathering.

Considering the wide variation of life experience from 16-25 extending age categorisation would facilitate opportunities for greater insight into YPs experience suggested age categories: 14-17, 18-21, 22-25yrs

Herefordshire Council's Children and Young People's Partnership 2019-24 runs in parallel with the P.O.V. delivery timeline. Referencing intended outcomes being able to evidence if P.O.V. has met aims would strengthen the programme's validity at strategic statutory level.

Utilise findings of Census 2021 as this will provide current data on YP both locally and nationally; use this information with the producers' group to identify next steps.

Identified areas for further exploration by the Young Leaders Group:

- Town & country: there was a distinct variation of experience between those who live in Hereford City & those who live in villages, smaller hamlets or even more rural areas. This has the potential to merit further exploration to better understand the different needs of the urban and rural YP of Herefordshire.
- Advocacy in action: with only 34% of YP indicated that they felt their views, opinions & needs were represented. Such low levels of perceived representation revealed a considerable gap between personal perspectives and any wider action. YP often expressed the view that they simply did not know how to change this.

Explore how the P.O.V. programme can support young people to advocate for themselves on the issues that matter to them at local level.

Challenging negative perceptions of YP and raising expectations: there were repeated referenced to the stereotyping of YP.

In what ways can the P.O.V. programme support young people who have identified a need for their peer group to engage in positive action as a youth led initiative?

Over 90% of YP reported they were most passionate about equality & social justice, this is a significant overall majority and therefore has the potential to yield high engagement levels of YP going forward. The breakdown of issues cited within this category are varied and so gives opportunity to focus on specific areas of exploration at local level. E.g. Youth led awareness raising campaigns on climate change, racism, mental health, LGBTQ+, localised clean up or recycling volunteer groups.

What can the P.O.V. team do to support peer networking between young people across the LGBTQ+ community in market towns, villages & the most rural areas of the Herefordshire? Is there scope for a rural LGBTQ+ network? Does one exist already?

What can be done to expand social connections between young people in Herefordshire?

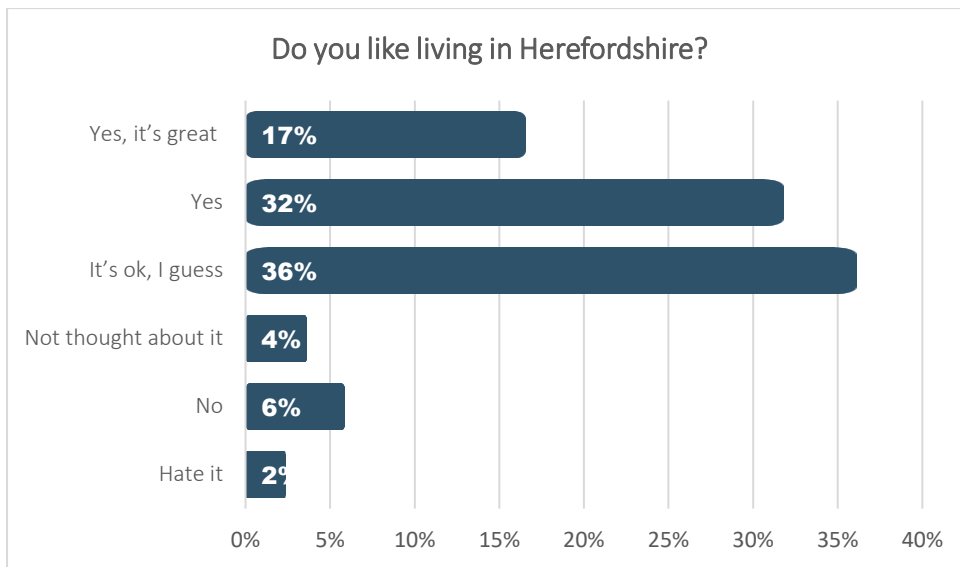
Capitalising on existing relationships with schools networks to increase social connections through externally facilitated initiatives providing opportunities schools working together.

Transitions: young people expressed anxiety about impending exams, transition to college or university. How we can work with young people at different ages and stages to explore these fears? Facilitate a buddy system between college & school, university & colleges?

Life hack lessons: What are the most practical skills would support YP want & need? What do YP wish they had known how to do before leaving home or going to university that they could pass on? E.g. How to change a plug, a bike or car tyre.

## Appendix 1.

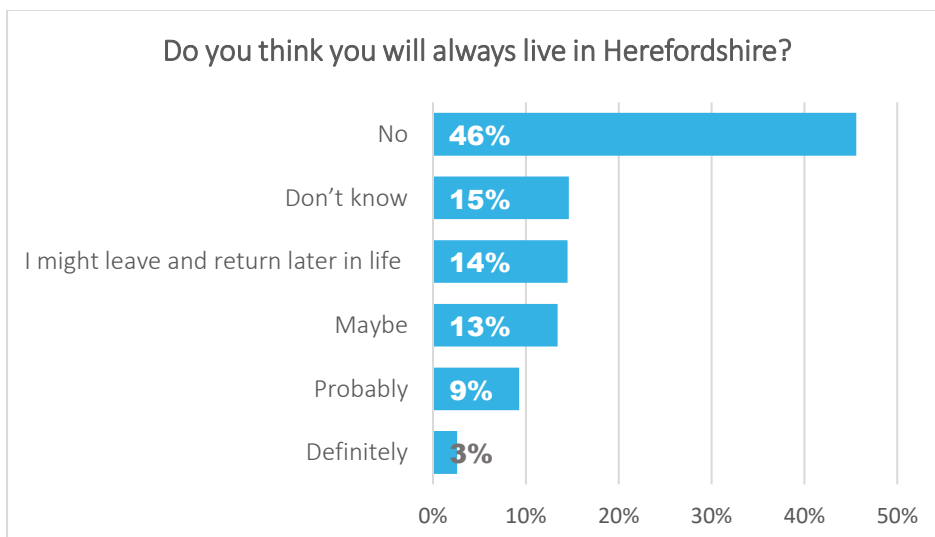
### What do young people think and feel about living in Herefordshire?



85% reported positively about living in Herefordshire

8% reported negatively

8% either lived out of county or had not thought about it



Almost half (46%) of YP would live out of county

15% more 16-25 said they would leave than U16

Twice as many 16-25 said they would 'definitely' stay (only very small numbers)

Young people were asked what the word rural meant to them. Most frequently the definitions given were not equated to a personal experience or preference, but a general description of the term, referencing countryside, green spaces, farming & agriculture. Somewhere that is away from other places or people. A lack of something was often alluded to, be that services, opportunities or amenities. There was also many that viewed it as a plus benefit, to be 'rich' in nature, nature 'freedom' the tranquil and the beautiful. Positive and negative were often intertwined, creating a real dichotomy of attributes

Whilst some were reflective and whimsical others were definitive.

"If near you there is a pub but not a clothing store, you're rural"

"Far from lots of people, often backward, but beautiful, isolation but also peace"

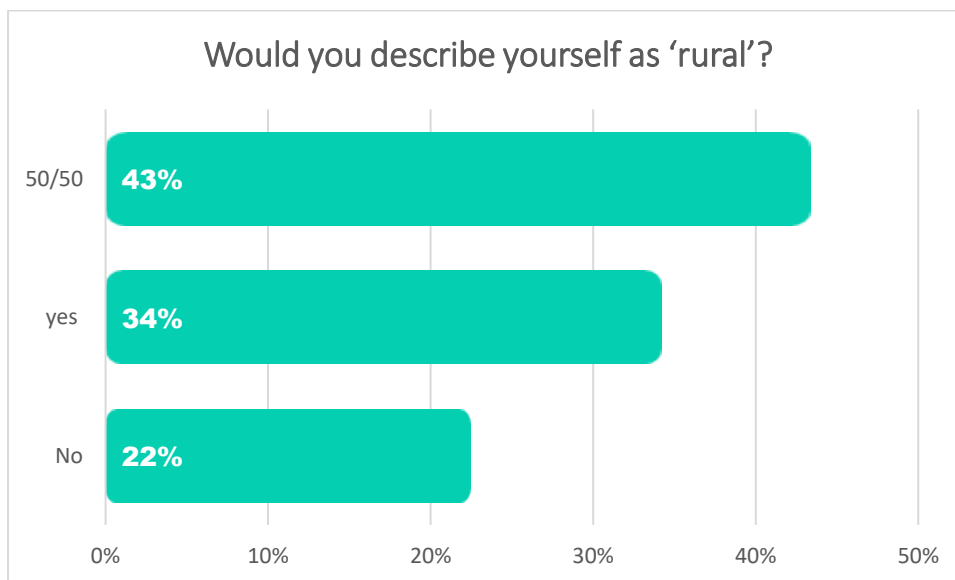
"Being in a place which is filled with amazing natural resources but also one quite close minded"

"Isolated, secluded, boring, sense of community, no privacy, nothing to do, close bonds, supportive, etc..."

"It's a bit boring but it's decent I guess"

"It's quite boring, everything is really spread out... But the people here are lovely!!"

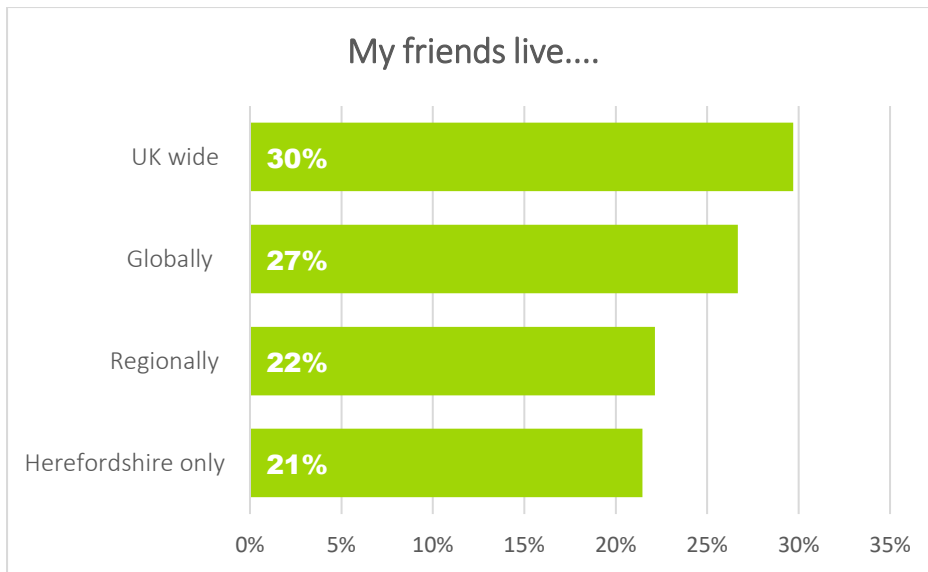
"Rural means to me hidden beauty, and places only local people know of"



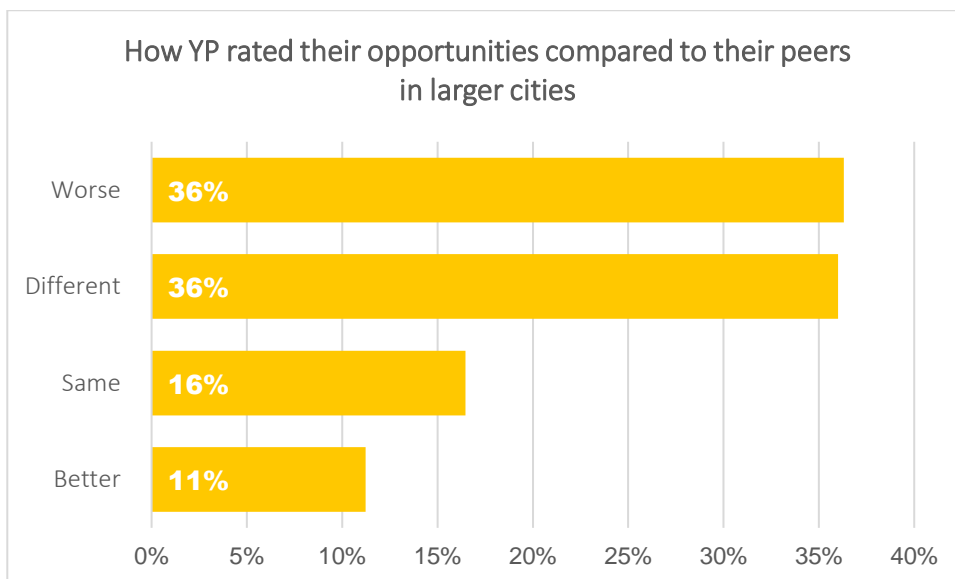
Almost half YP identified themselves as being neither rural nor urban, but a mixture of both. Herefordshire as a county is classed as rural but for those living in the city or the market towns having a very different experience to those living in villages, hamlets and unpopulated areas...

"Rural means Herefordshire, miles and miles of greenery, then you get to small villages and towns and Hereford city which still feels like you are in country side"

"What is 'rural' lies at the heart of what this country is. To be 'rural' relates to the countryside, and that which is an 'escape' from the city or suburban areas, although for those who have grown up here they typically take it for granted"



YP were asked if they had friends that lived outside of the county. Almost 1 quarter (24%) of U16's said they did not have friends outside of Herefordshire. This was double the amount reported by 16–25's.



**Worse:** YP who felt they had worse opportunities had the most to say, with a wide variety of reasons being given. Broadly these were around access to & availability of services, places & spaces, with frequent references to a lack of out of school activities & clubs. Many YP cited Herefordshire getting less funding than more heavily populated areas, particularly for educational, cultural & community provision.

“I think because there are fewer young people we are easily forgotten, so I think opportunities are fewer and less accessible”

“Hereford has NO places for LGBTQ youths to go regularly and near to them. There should be an LGBTQ youth group in every village center, as well as for ethnic people”

"It's more difficult to travel for young people and there aren't many opportunities that come to us and I personally feel like I haven't had any opportunities living here whereas my friends in cities have. Even if it's just something small like a festival"

"Because, when living in the city you are able to be independent, whereas living in the countryside you are dependent on your parents or cars to take you to see friends, jobs, clubs etcetera"

"There's hardly anything in Hereford in terms of groups, classes, activities. In the other cities my friends have much more opportunity to meet people and attend classes/groups focused on their individual interests"

"The lack of acceptance and opportunities is something I really have struggled with since moving to Herefordshire. There is an extreme amount of judgement in our county and people are expected to have the same personality's interests and looks"

**Different:** 16-25 reported 'different' opportunities more frequently, YP frequently talked about being educationally better off (early on) but then having less employment & graduate opportunities later in life,

"Whereas my friends living in bigger cities have more accessible public transportation, I have opportunities to get out of my house and walk for miles! (Very helpful during Covid)."

"Less opportunity for activism but safer in countryside; more spatial freedom/closer to nature/clean air etc."

"I am lucky to have had a safe upbringing, I feel as though you're able to be a child for longer when you live rural, however they (those who live in bigger cities) will be better equipped to deal with the real world"

"Less career possibility but better quality of life"

**Same:** Proportionally three times more U16's felt that opportunities were the same for them as their peers in larger places, often referring to a standard educational pathway, working hard and creating your own path to get where you want to go.

"We have the same hobbies and online groups so we choose to do similar activities"

"If you work for it then it can happen"



“I have all the necessary things here - a nice house, sports clubs, gyms, schools, high schools, shops, restaurants etc..... And a person in a city will have the same things probably, just more of them to choose from because a city is more diverse”

**Better** opportunities was the option chosen by the fewest YP however the ones that did rate their opportunities as better had lots to say about why. These included the ease of access to access natural surroundings in order to maintain good levels of mental health and wellbeing, Specialist jobs relating to the rural environment and levels of freedom. 25% more U16 thought that opportunities for young people in Herefordshire were better than 16-25

“I feel that nature is one of the most important things for good mental health, and there is plenty of it in Herefordshire. People who live in cities have to drive much further to experience this. Even though people who live in cities may have access to more facilities, I do not necessarily believe that these facilities are essential, and are instead cluttering up these peoples' lives, leading to worse mental health. Personally, I prefer more of a simple life where I live”

“Most my friends live in Wales, I feel that there are much more opportunities in Hereford and it's a bigger community with a lot of focus on the younger generations and getting them the best opportunities through their education as possible”

“I think I have lots of freedom living in Herefordshire and can explore very well”

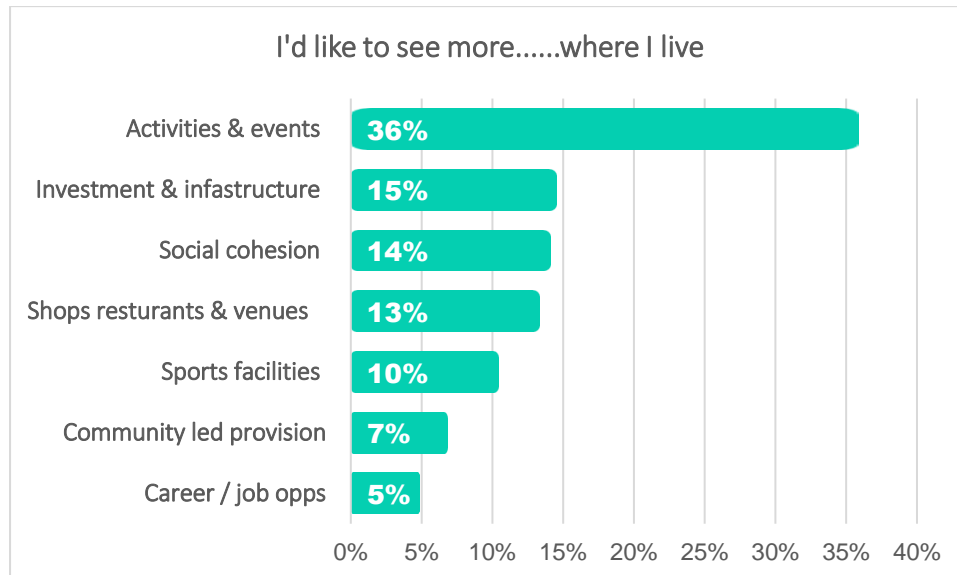
“Many of my friends in cities don't have the money or time to do the things I can. This place has a lot of potential”

What do young people think and feel about living in Herefordshire?

- Those who felt negatively about living in Herefordshire were in a small minority
- Overall the vast majority respondents reported positivity about living in county
- Responders articulated very well what they considered to be both benefits and disadvantages demonstrating maturity & insight in their answers.
- Barriers and difficulties to living in a rural county began to be revealed; for some who lived in rural parts of the county who felt those living in Hereford City were at an advantage, for others comparisons to peers who lived in other, larger places.
- Although the vast majority reported positively about living in county, almost half of all respondents said they intended to leave the county at some point.

## Appendix 2.

What are the key themes being raised by young people about their lived experiences in Herefordshire?



Increased activity provision was by far the most frequently given response.

**Activities & events** Age appropriate and accessible for the whole family that are both affordable & fun

**Shops, restaurants & venues** chain & independent, venues, retail & hospitality, outdoor markets, pop up shops

**Sports facilities & activities** Improvement and/or expansion of existing facilities, reopening of Hereford swimming pool. New facilities such as Bike trails, a running track

**Investment & infrastructure** Public art, support of independent businesses, public safety, roads, transport links, cycle lanes

**Social cohesion** Safe spaces for young people, safe spaces for LGBTQ+ young people. Diversity of people, places & spaces. Tolerance of difference

**Community led provision** Youth & community programmes, that are free of charge

**A club for youth for life lessons e.g. how to buy a car, mortgage**

**Career / job opportunity's** Greater range of employment opportunities, particularly outside of Hereford City & the market towns & in the arts. Better pay for young people, more employers willing to take young people on

P.O.V. Appendix 2 raised by young people about their lived experience in Herefordshire?

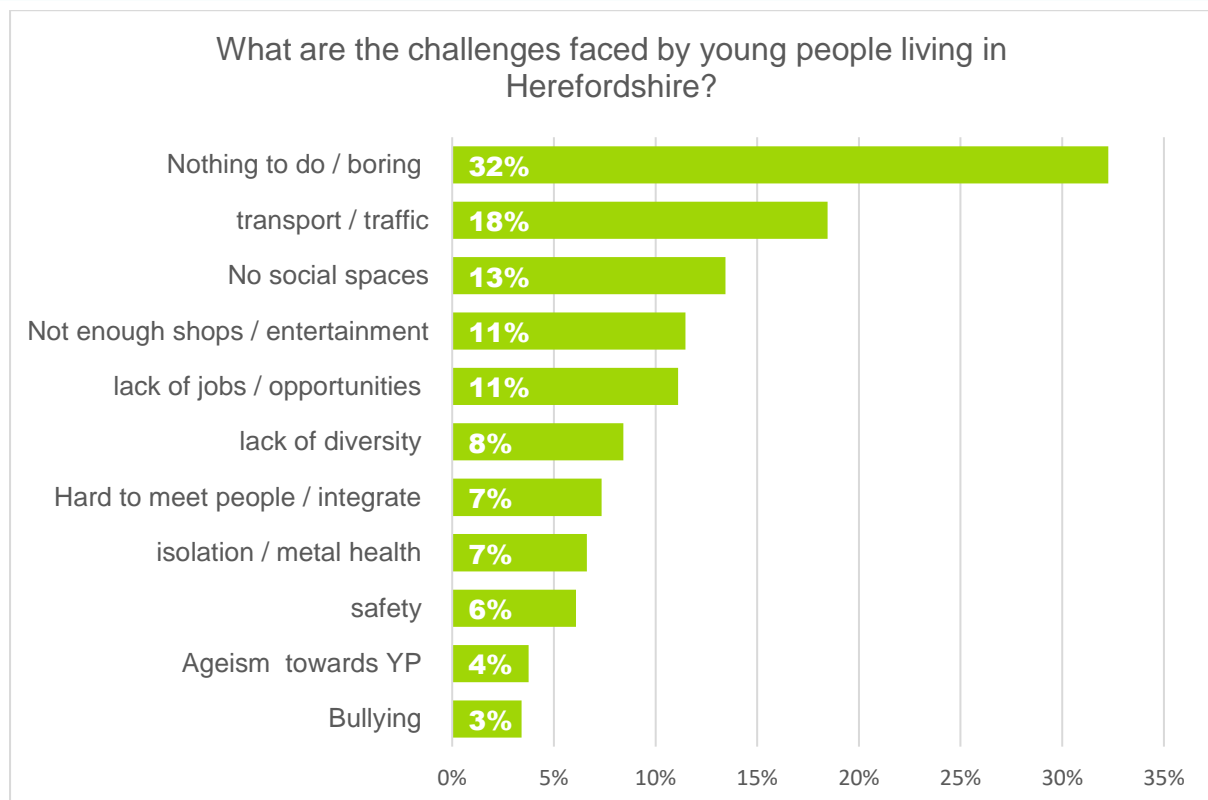
Young people were asked to identify what they felt the challenges of living in Herefordshire were for themselves and their peers.

Those age 16 to 25 had a lot more to say, the issues raised was broad ranging and

“Unless you know people from school or college, it can be a challenge meeting new people in a small village as most of my friends live over 10 miles away. Learning how to drive is an essential in rural areas, which can put monetary pressure on lower income families”

“No buses to and from my house”

“No young people ever move into the village “



Responses revealed a myriad of limitations around access, opportunity and prospects. which included financial, social, logistical & perceptual factors.

It was felt by many that young children & older YP were catered for but not younger teenagers

P.O.V. Appendix 2 raised by young people about their lived experience in Herefordshire?

Living in more rural parts of the county or not on public transport routes left many isolated from peers when not at school or college.

Financial road blocks were prevalent and included transport and activity provision being prohibitively expensive, as well as having less employment opportunities in their local area.

Negative assumptions being made about young people, adults having low expectations and assumed there will be negative or anti-social behavior from YP.

**“I think a lot more credit should be given to young people. We should be recognised for what we are doing, positive wise.”**

Not living near friends so unable to socialise outside school, not living near people their own age or not knowing them as attend different schools. The lack of places & spaces to go limiting number of new social connections.

**“Different schools- feel a bit detached from surrounding communities, maybe because of a lack of places to meet new people etc”**

Isolation & exclusion became a symptom of the above, many YP found it hard to mix socially, people closed off to outsiders with references made to mental health issues & experiences of bullying.

**“Herefordshire kind of lives in its own little world.”**

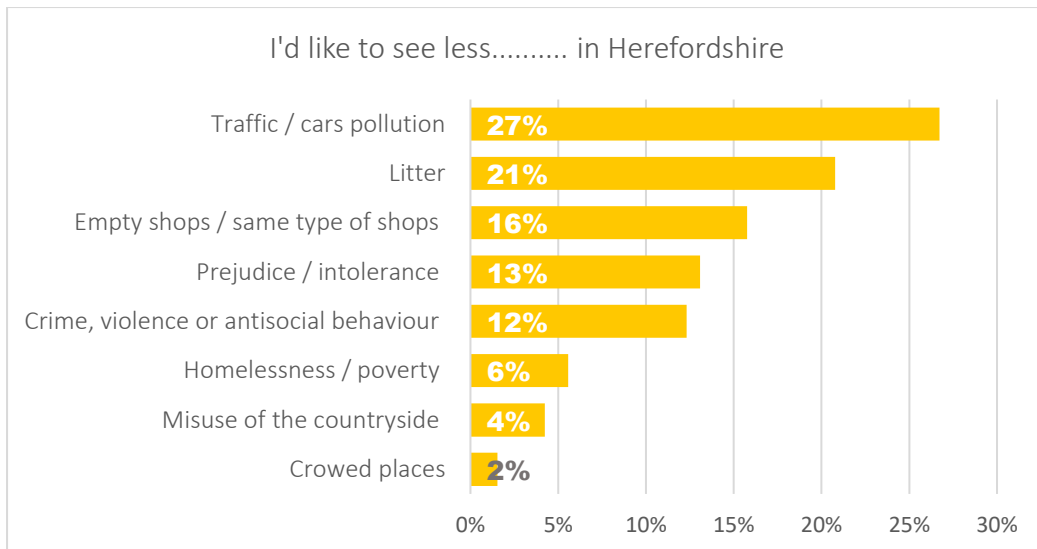
Safety concerns ranged from dangerous roads, traffic, lack of street lights, other people, drugs, older teens, bullies, violence, crime.

**“Whenever I go into Hereford town I feel unsafe”**

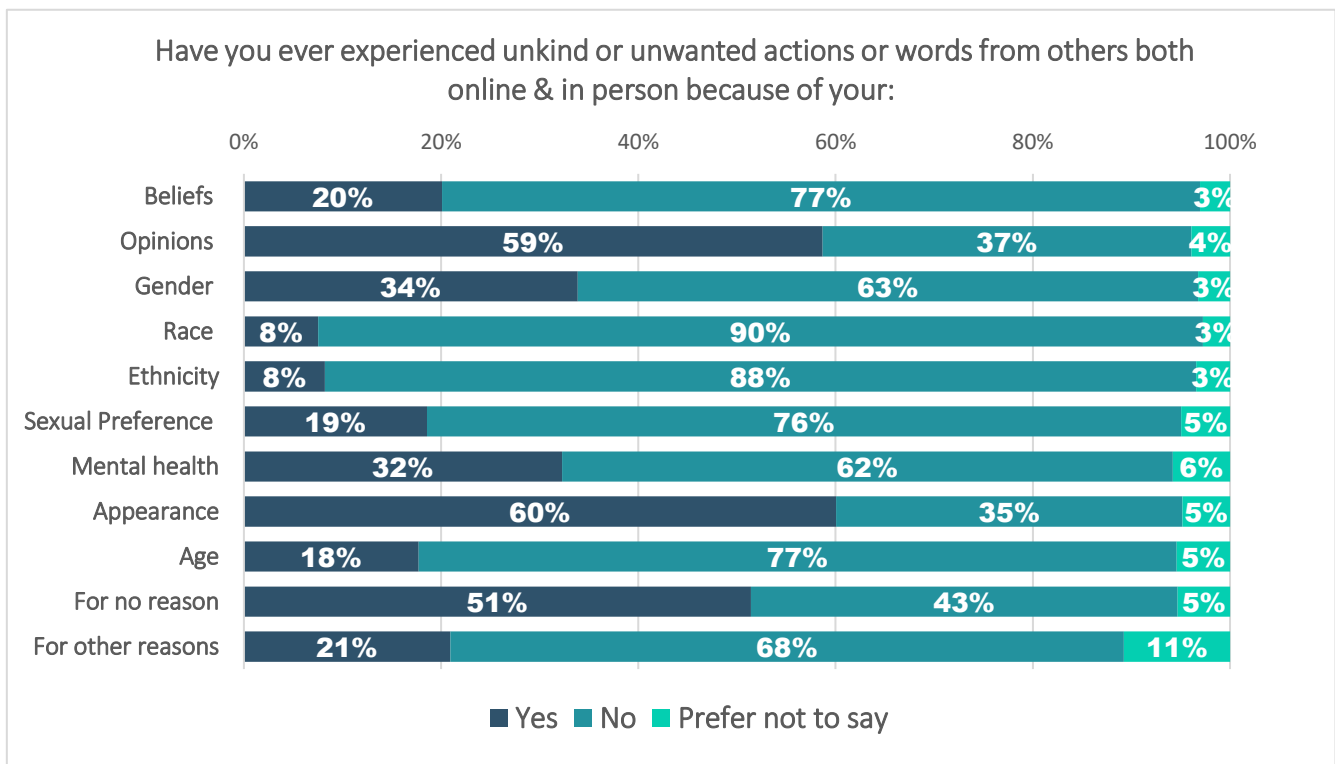
**“Rampant racism and homophobia to be honest, it’s a lot more hostile here than where I’m originally from”**

**“In general I would say there isn’t that much to do, but now that we are getting a university I think a lot of that will change. For young people who also are too young to drive or haven’t learned yet, living in Herefordshire can be quite isolating”**

On a more positive note: 4% said they didn’t feel there were any challenges to be faced



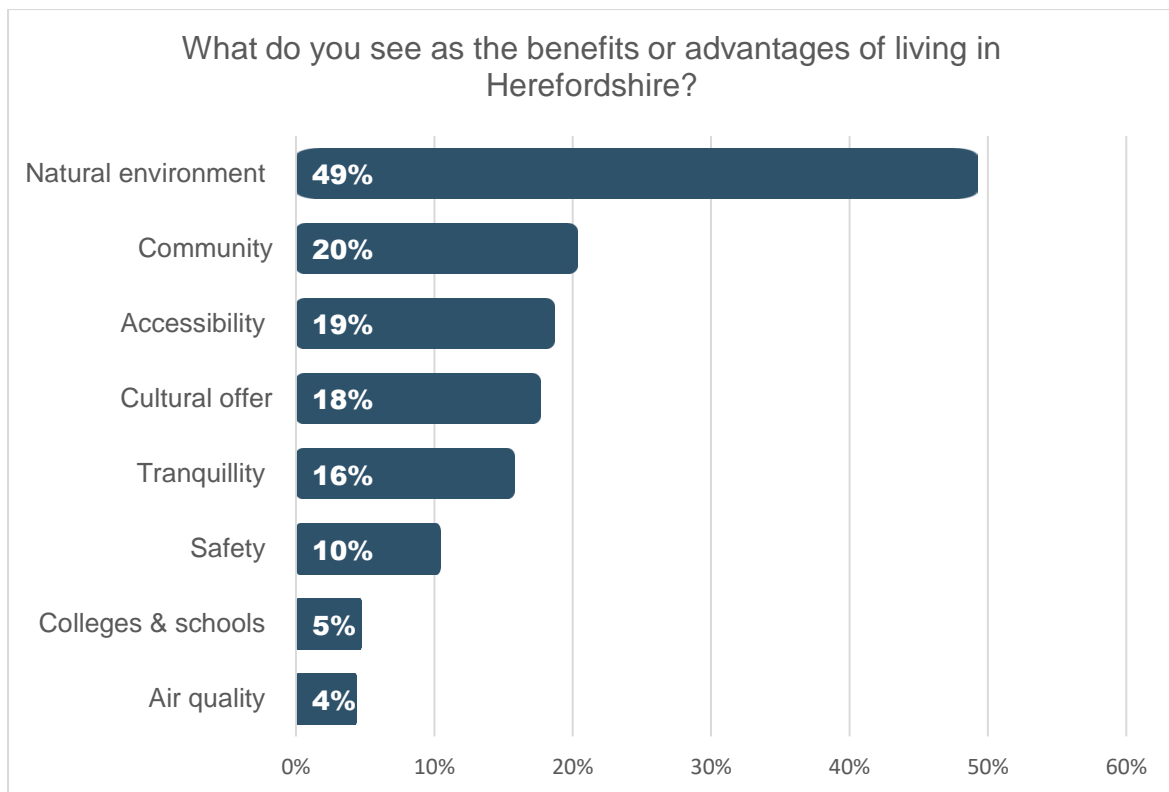
**“Potholes - sometimes I have to use a wheelchair and accessibility is dreadful”**



**“I have been severely bullied since moving to Herefordshire and within social media groups online I’ve always found those from Herefordshire tend to be the ones causing confrontation through lack of acceptance”**

‘Other’ reasons were broadly: Social choices, personal taste and interests. Background, upbringing & ability. Family circumstances. Behavior.

P.O.V. Appendix 2 raised by young people about their lived experience in Herefordshire?



**“I feel people are kind here”**

Being in or near natural surroundings was the most frequent response given, with appreciation and gratitude for the qualities of the environment. These included

The second sense of community as a major benefit, this varied from having family / friends nearby so maintaining regular close contact, general friendliness of wider community, knowing people and being known locally, ease of making friends due to smaller size,

Smaller but significant proportion cited cultural offerings such as shops, bars, restaurants, and the creative arts.

Others praised the quality of educational facilities, both schools and colleges.

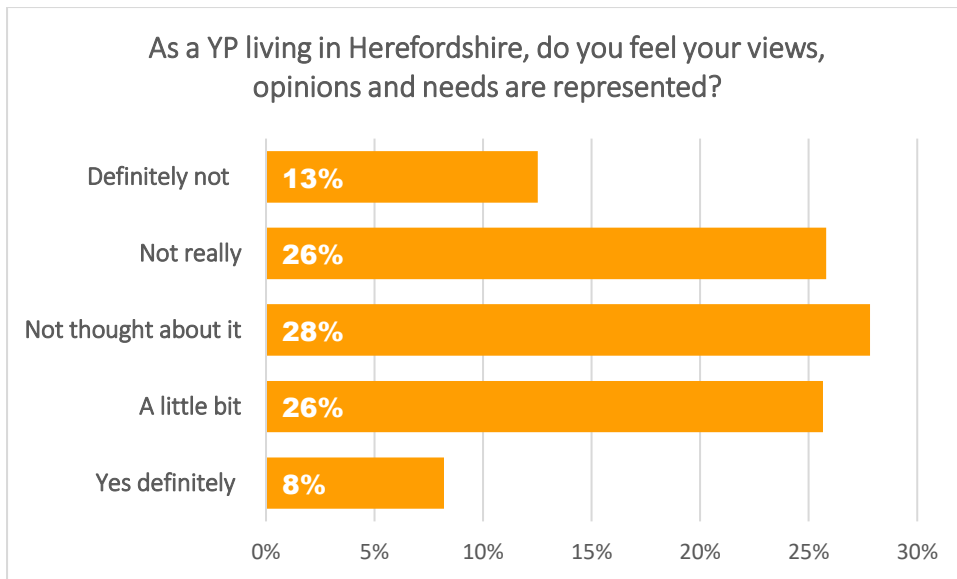
Accessibility was a common theme, with to the countryside, town, transport links, to other people, or was easy to navigate. These responses were predominantly from 16-25 who referenced lived in/around Hereford city or – near to market town train stations

Responses varied considerable reflecting the wide range of ‘rural realities’ lived by Herefordshire’s YP

YP living in more rural parts of the county experienced less social interaction, were more cut off and didn’t feel as confident going into Hereford.

YP living in more populated parts of the county were more exposed to anti-social behavior and crime but more likely to have friends nearby & had more job opportunities

P.O.V. Appendix 2 raised by young people about their lived experience in Herefordshire?



“We are represented by someone much older who does not understand the priorities young people have.”

“The health and well-being of our age group as it can sometimes be over looked or passed over.”

“Getting your voice heard and getting involved in opportunities to better the city; there are things in place but accessing them can seem difficult or unnerving.

“There is not much to do around Herefordshire. Also the lack of help you get regarding mental health issues. Don't get me wrong youth service and charities are great. However, the GPs hospitals ect... Don't seem to care. I am facing mental health issues and when I discussed them with my doctor he said I need to see the mental health nurse. Then he said I can't do it for at least a 1yr or 2. I know the covid situation hasn't been a major problem for everyone. However, people mental health has increased and this is the time we need it the most. After the pandemic I think we will see a lot of people suffering in silence because they are use to doing that why. It feels we are being forgotten about. It like we are less than other age brackets. I want to say to those people that even though we are young we are just as important as everyone else. We are human and if they don't help to heal the young how are they expecting us to be strong and be the best we can be in the future. Please don't forget about us. It not nice and stop blaming us for the current situation we all find our selves in. Employ us we are more trustworthy than they think. Otherwise we will look at unhealthy and not good alternatives. Which we are seeing in the drugs industry.”

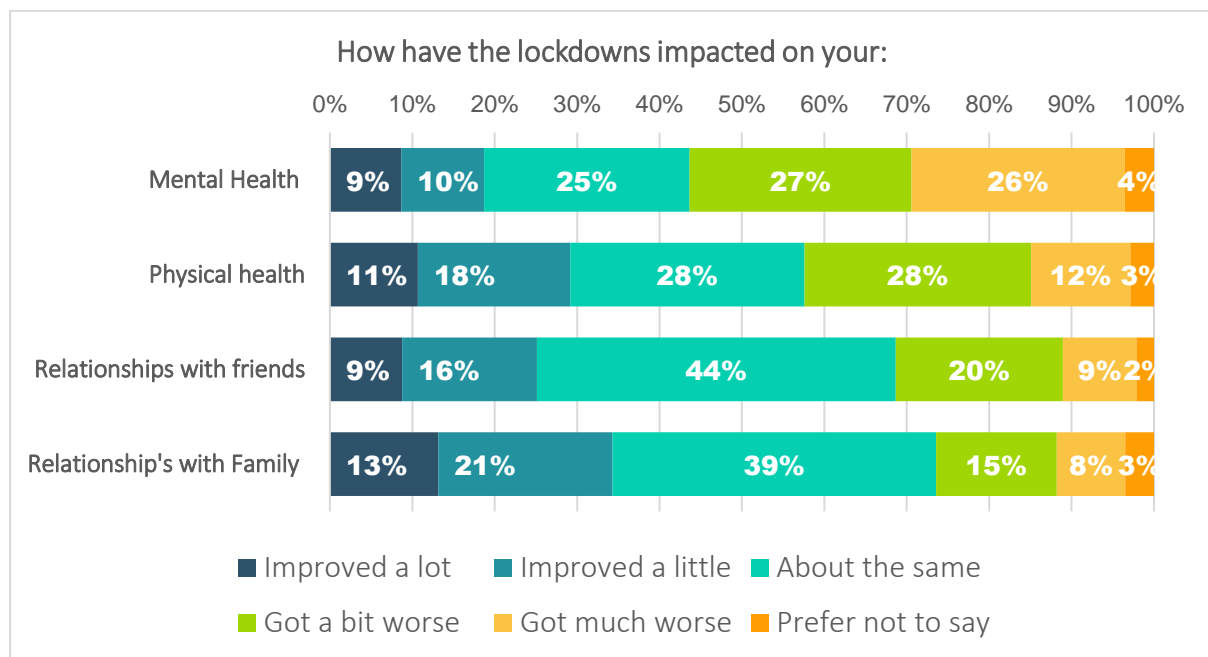
Appendix 3.

How have the Covid-19 lockdowns impacted young people in Herefordshire?

The P.O.V. consultation was not intended to focus on the pandemic; however, given the ongoing impacts of Covid 19 it was included as a specific line of enquiry within the survey.

“My small business I've been running for a few years is struggling”

“Financially it got worse for my family who run their own business it got quite rough”



“Living outside the town, there aren’t as many buses. And due to the pandemic, less buses are available. Now there are only buses every few days. Rather than every day.”

“Schooling during lockdown was difficult and stressful.”

**MENTAL HEALTH** Significantly more under 16’s reported that their mental health had ‘improved a lot’ compared to 16-25 (10% vs 6%) Many young people reported to have adapted well during the lockdown period, including some who have a protective home environment and a difficult relationship with their school. 35% more 16-25 reported more severe negative affects to their mental health compared to U16’s.

Dependent on where YP were on the educational pathway, particularly those with upcoming exams or who had just started or finished school, college or university during lockdown appeared to be the worst affected.



Broadly the main areas of concern reported were:

- Lack access to or available support for mental health needs
- Struggling to complete school or college work at home
- Boredom & lack of motivation due to loss of usual social networks and activities
- Uncertainty, fear and & anxiety about the how disruptions would affect educational attainment and future opportunities
- Relapse into or development of mental health disorders including depression, anxiety & eating disorders.

“ I felt extremely enclosed and depressed”

“I believe that my mental health got worse. I never felt depressed in mental health terms, but I did feel down all the time. I was bored out of my mind and it made me lose some of the drive I had to work hard”

“Led to me developing depression, anxiety and other mental health issues”

**PHYSICAL HEALTH** – The lack of regular structured physical activity such as team sports, gym attendance was felt keenly by many. This was somewhat counterbalanced by those who had taken up physical activity over the lockdowns and seen and felt the benefits of this.

“My physical health has improved”

“I miss doing all my sports activities”

**RELATIONSHIPS WITH FRIENDS** Nationally there was a bigger increase in loneliness for ‘older’ younger people (16-24) during the first lockdown than with those aged under 16. <sup>1</sup> This was mirrored within the P.O.V. results with almost double 16-25’s reporting relationships with friends ‘had got much worse’ compared with their under 16 counterparts.

“They have changed my relationship with friends, I have gained some and lost others “

“As I have been at work consistently not a lot feels different for me, I just miss being able to spend my free time with friends and family.”

**RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY** Nationally U16’s happiness with their family remained fairly high, on average, over this period, and the majority (of parents) reported that their relationship with their children had remained the same, with over a quarter saying it had improved. Although This large mirrors the results of the P.O.V. survey

Almost 60% more 16–25 reported higher instances of relationships with family getting ‘a bit’ ‘much’ worse over lockdown compared to under 16’s. Almost double (%) the amount of U16’s reported relationships with family had ‘improved a lot’ that the 16-25

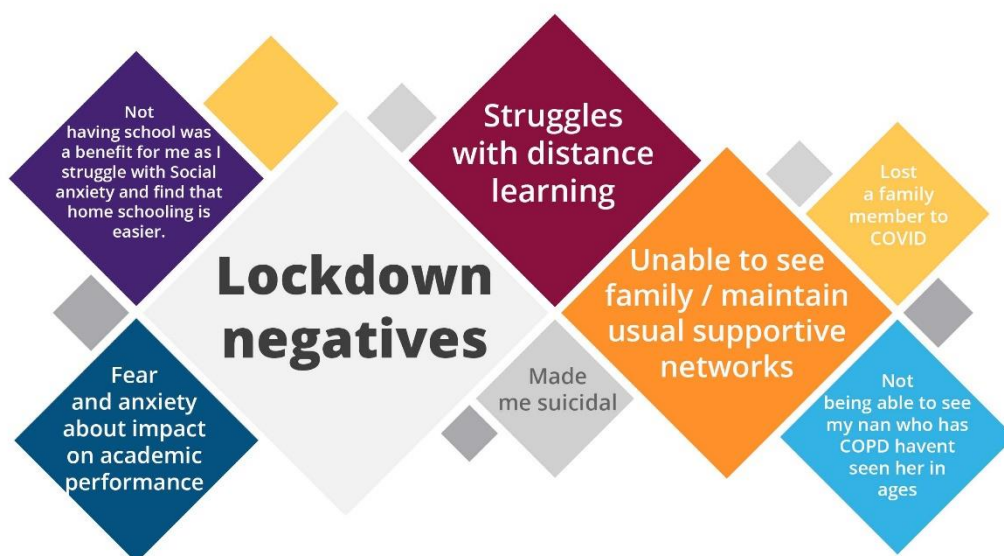
“They (lockdowns) gave us opportunities to find somewhere to move to and talk about it as a family.”

“We decorated our house, did some more cooking and just spent time with family”

Young people were asked if the lockdowns had affected them in any other ways.

Only 28% gave a response; with both U16 and 16-25 groups overwhelmingly reporting the lockdowns had effected them negatively. Both groups main reported worries were about the effect of the pandemic on their education and the impact this may have on them in later life. 3 times more under 16’s gave additional written feedback – there was a large variation of positive and negative reflections All 16-25 responses reported negative effects; financial worries, relationship breakdowns, disconnection from supportive networks





Herefordshire is an example of where the impacts of lockdown were exacerbated by existing social, economic and infrastructural inequalities.

The effect of the lockdowns on young people in Herefordshire who took part in the P.O.V. survey broadly reflects key national trends relating to mental health and relationships with family.

Many demonstrated considerable resilience, insight and humility in their responses.

Where there were many reported additional benefits to having easy access to Herefordshire's many natural spaces

"I feel like there's a bit of pressure to get your life together almost as soon as you've graduated from university i.e. Get great grad job/not move back in with parents. Whilst lockdown has made this more difficult it's also helped to relieve some of the pressure."

"It's completely changed my perspective and has made the future seem overwhelmingly scary. It has made me aware of how much I hate the unknown and not having a purpose."

"My youth is being wasted indoors."

"I'm a health care assistant working in the frontline on a Covid ward and have seen some horrible things people dying alone. It's effects you I have broken down at home crying"

"I'm lucky that I've been able to go on lovely walks nearby and that has really helped my motivation and general mental health. I think it would have been a lot harder had I lived alone or not near the countryside."

## Appendix 4.

What do young people feel about activities and opportunities for young people in Herefordshire?



Young people were asked what their hobbies and interests were.

"I'm a young carer so it's hard having life outside of home or school ,would like a place to meet other kids instead of just hanging around outside"

"Gossip and art"

"Used to do archery but only one club and now too far away"

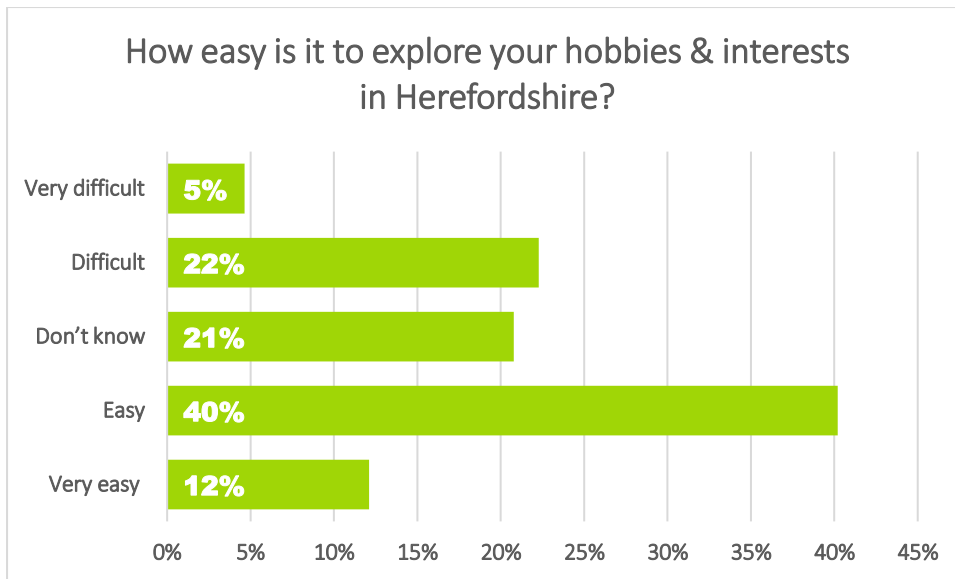
"Recently started consoles repairing, video consoles, iPhones, fixing things up and selling them"

"Sometimes in the summer, I like to buy a small picnics worth of snacks and head to the park to draw all day to music."

"I am an actress, dancer, singer and comedian. Currently auditioning for drama schools whilst maintaining my business and trying to encourage people to express themselves through performance without restrictions or judgement which is something that has always been extremely prominent in my life. Being unique is a good thing"

"I do ballet, scouts and I'm part of a youth club. I also really like swimming and playing video games"

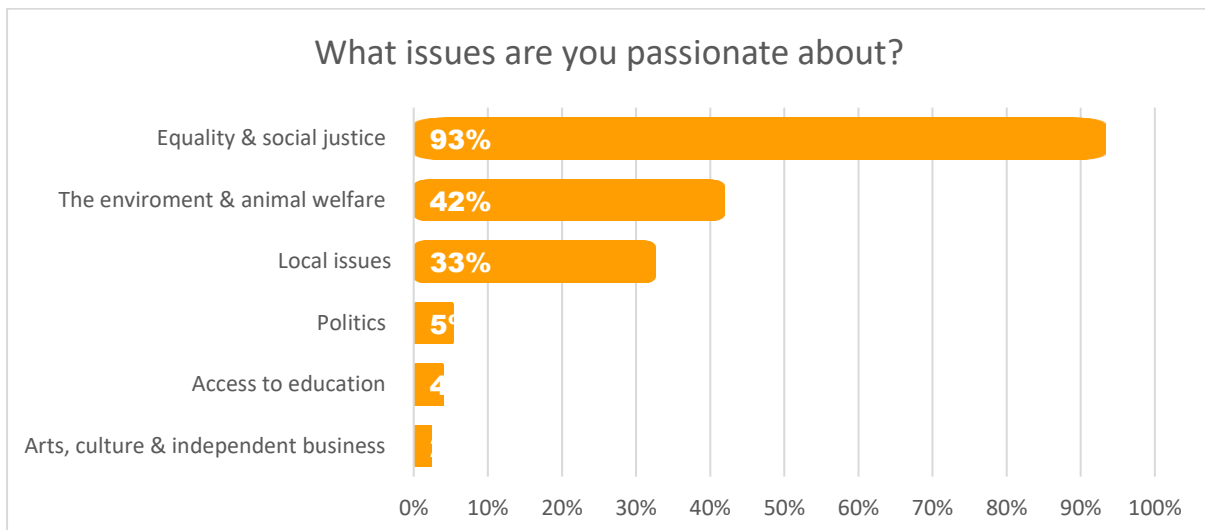
"I'm pretty interested In the skate park, I've only been there once since I have trouble with social interactions, I'm getting a skateboard soon so it'd been great to visit there more often. I also Do a lot of art and Play instruments, music is a main interest of mine and the genres I listen to would be Punk rock and alternative. I'm also interested in the LGBTQ+ community, so more support in that area would be great!"



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61% of YP who said 'very difficult' also said 'no' to 'do you think you will always live in Herefordshire

Those who reported 'very difficult' some were due to environmental factors (no sea or theme parks i.e. facilities Herefordshire does not have) but was mostly similar to the range of hobbies reported by the others. Two main contributing factors were lack of access to spaces to participate and view specified interests.



“Hmm not much really. Politically I'm pretty moderate and a strong believer in centrism but that means I'm not exactly "passionate" about anything tbh. Actually, you know what climate change that's an issue. “

“Everyone should feel like they belong”

“I am passionate about educating others on big issues in the world. E.g racism, sexism, homophobia.”

**93% Equality & Social Justice** overwhelmingly responds with global, universal issues or injustices: environmental, equality, diversity & social justice, discrimination, awareness raising of these issues.

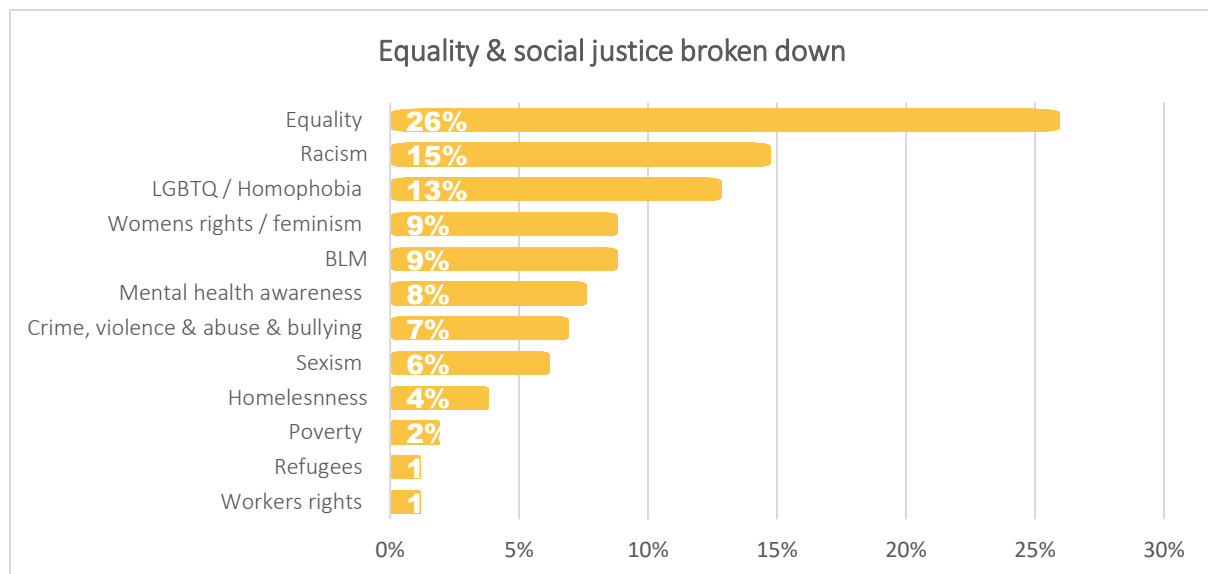
**42% Environment** Climate emergency, pollution, conservation, animal welfare, fast fashion

**33% local issues** Others responded with matters closer to home their local area, access & opportunity, environmental, social & community issues such as local independent business, equality, environmental issues, crime & violence levels. There were also Individual actions e.g. veganism, volunteering, family & friends, local environment, facilities and services.

**5% Politics**

**4% Access to education**

**2% Arts, culture & business** Support for artists & the creative industry as a whole



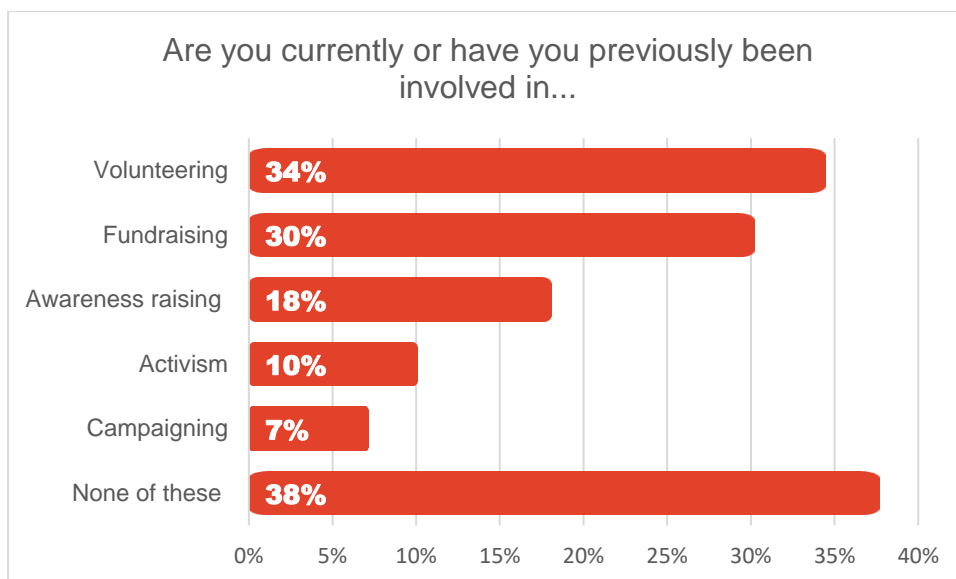
“Supporting my community and having a say”

“I am passionate about the environment, yet I prefer to physically take action (such as volunteering to pick up litter) instead of campaigning. I am also aware that there are many social problems present in Herefordshire, such as inequality and prejudice of certain groups, and in the future I would like to help change this.”

“A youth café where young people can hang out and buy non-alcoholic drinks and chat and play on games consoles and stuff and maybe a pool table and music”

“How safe people my age feel in busy or public areas and awareness of the mental health of the male gender.”

“Equality - especially ageism towards young people.”



YP reported high levels of awareness & concerns for wider societal issues but less so about local ones

More likely to be on a personal crusade i.e. individual beliefs actions rather than initiating larger or wider change, though many voiced their want for change to come about

YP were not for the most part solution driven, many identified the problems they perceived within society and the localised environment & also the causes

There were frequent suggestions for what others should be doing but very few 'What can I do? Or 'This is what I am doing' to bring about change referred to

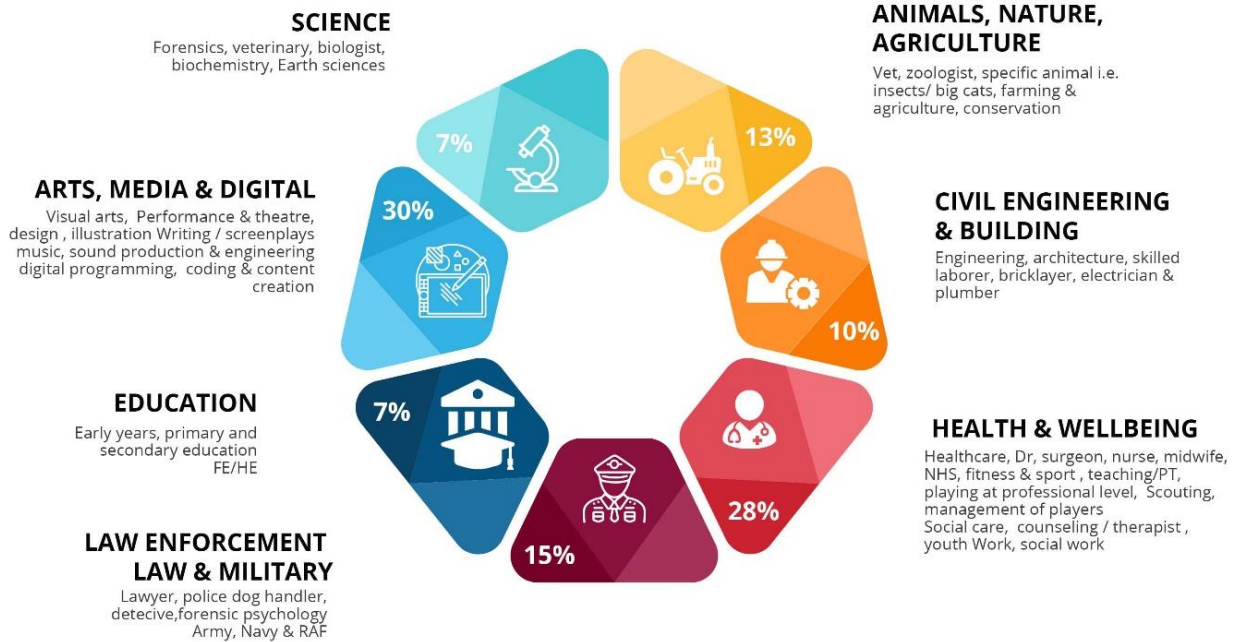
Work, careers and the next 5 years.... a time of significant change, leaving school, attending college, possibly moving away to attend university, & becoming increasingly independent.

**'Do you have a chosen career path or area you want to work in?'**

<b>18%</b> No idea	<b>47%</b> Some idea	<b>32%</b> Yes, I'm on my way to achieving it	<b>4%</b> Doing it
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YP were asked to provide details of their chosen career path, responses were rich and insightful, occasionally amusing, wonderfully honest and often inspiring. Many made reference to the more immediate decisions of what subjects to take for GCSE, what FE & HE choices to make. Others said they had a broad idea of the field or subject matter they were interested in e.g. 'something that involves' animals, the arts, helping people etc. A smaller but not insignificant group specified where geographically they wanted to work or that their work would involve travel.





**Arts, media & digital** Visual arts performance & theatre design & illustration writing & screenplays. Music, sound production & engineering. Digital programming, coding & content creation

**Health & Wellbeing** Surgeon, doctor, Nurse, Midwife, Healthcare, NHS social care, councilor, therapist, youth work, social work. Fitness & sports, teaching, personal trainer, professional athlete, scout or manager.

**Law, Law enforcement, & military** Lawyer. Police, Dog handler, detective, criminal investigator, forensic psychology. Army, Navy, RAF

**Animals, nature agriculture** Vet, Zoologist, Conservation. Farming & Agriculture

**Civil Engineering & Building** Engineering, Architecture. Skilled laborer

**Science** Medical. Forensics. Veterinary. Biology. Biochemistry. Earth sciences

Some were very 'in the moment, looking round the next corner, others had an idea, a vision or specific goal they were working towards. Some did allude to a specific area of work but more that they wished to be self-employed & run their own business.

“Don’t make me choose my life I’m 14”

“I'm thinking of what A-levels I could take “

“Even though I love my job as a health care assistant at a nursing home. I still don't want to do that forever. I am currently volunteering as a youth worker as well. This is something that I want a degree in but even with my full time job it is hard to save up to make this happen. I would need WiFi, computer, printer and many more things. I won't give up though because this is something I really want to do and I am so passionate about it.”

“I want to run a shop with my best friend or be a carpenter”

“Own a cafe by the sea”

“Stunt man “

## Grand plans

Things YP said they would like to be doing in the next five years ...

- Number 1 Being in employment
- Number 2 Attending College of university
- Number 3 Continuing with hobbies and improving skills & learning



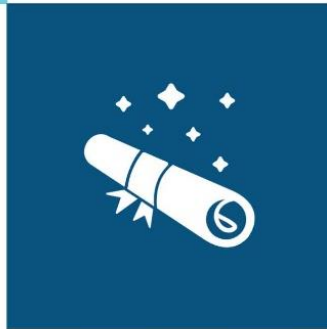
Within these responses there was a focus on stability, security & vocation. This instability of education over the 2020 lockdowns and the huge unknown it has thrown everything into. Particularly for YP where 'the future' and 'success' is very much mapped out through the educational pathway / system Recognition of the current instability within the labor market and the insight to work towards a



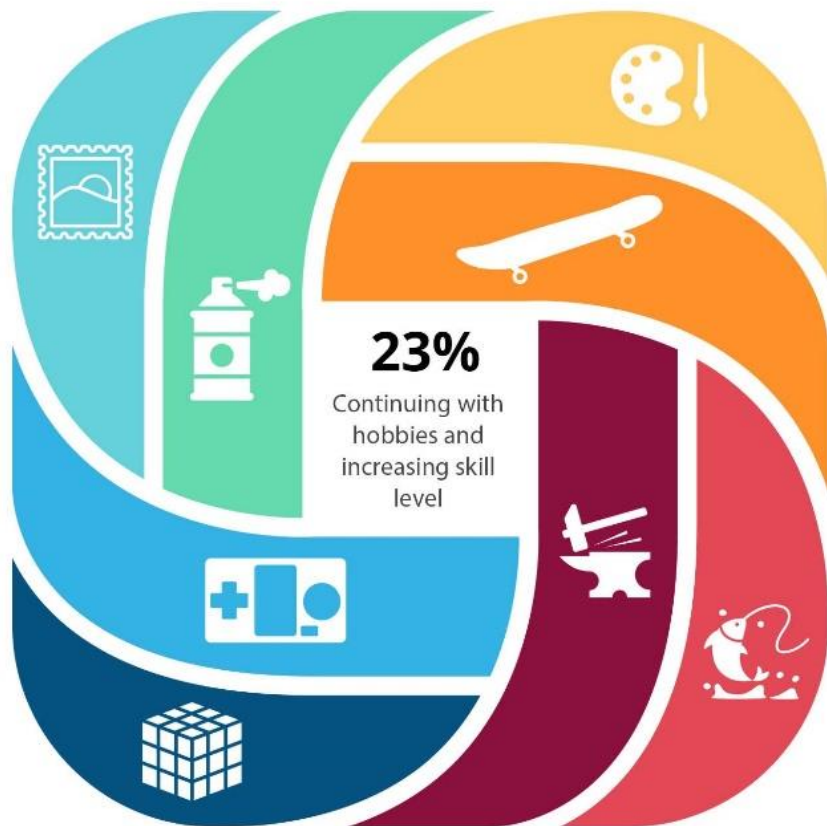
**34%**  
attending  
college and/or  
university

Attending college or university was the second most frequently given answer. With just under specifying achieving academic success.

**18%**  
good  
educational  
attainment



The continued pursuit and improvement of hobbies and new skill acquisition was the third most frequently given answer. Where for many lockdown halted the pursuit of many organized group activities there was a sense of things ‘getting back to normal’ in the answers. It also provided the opportunity for many to take up new hobbies and find new interests, which wanted to be carried on once restrictions are lifted.



The remaining responses centered mainly on independence, self-discovery and self-improvement. Moving out of the parental home was the most frequently referenced aspiration as well as the desire to travel, but also to be fulfilled, happy and content.



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