



# Satisfaction Levels Amongst Customers in Focus Ireland Long-term Housing

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# Satisfaction Levels Amongst Customers in Focus Ireland Long-term Housing

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# Acknowledgments

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## Executive Summary

As part of its contribution to tackling the housing and homeless crisis, Focus Housing is committed to more than doubling the housing it provides over the next few years, providing secure long-term homes for people with experience of homelessness who would be at risk of returning to homelessness without appropriate support. The commitment is not only to provide *more* homes but also to ensure that we provide the best homes that we can, with appropriate support and maximum independence. In order to help us deliver this commitment, Focus Ireland undertook a survey of its long-term housing customers to identify their views on the physical quality of their homes, on their neighbourhood, on the level of support provided and their engagement in work or education and their local community.

The survey was carried out over a three-month period, March to May 2019, and covered the responses of 213 tenants, 48% of the 446 customers who were initially identified for contact. The customers reflect the range of family type, dwelling type, age group and location of Focus Housing customers across the country. 73 of the households were families (34%), with a total of 130 children living in these households. 20% of the families were lone-parent families. Over half the customers were between the ages of 35 and 54, with 11% being over 65.

The report showed a high level of satisfaction with the quality of Focus Housing accommodation, with an average satisfaction rating of 7.9 (out of 10). The most frequent problems raised concerned heating, windows and damp/leaks, which were a problem for up to 30% of customers, although in most cases this was described as a 'slight problem'.

The satisfaction level with the neighbourhood was 7.7, with convenience of local amenities (shops, public services, transport) scoring particularly highly. However, there are some challenges in relation to sense of community, with almost a quarter of customers either disagreeing (14%) or strongly disagreeing (9%) that the area has a sense of community. On the other hand, 78% felt the area was safe, but with 6% indicating strongly that they did not feel safe.

The level of satisfaction with key workers support was also high, with 87% of customers who had a key worker saying they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the support they were receiving, with very few saying they wanted either more or less contact. 81% were satisfied overall with their key worker.

A large majority of customers were outside the labour force, receiving welfare payments such as Disability Allowance (54%), Pensions (16%) and Carers Allowance (2%). However, 21% of customers were either in full-time (10%) or part-time (11%) employment and 13% were on Jobseekers Allowance. One in ten customers said they would like more support to take up training or employment.

The most common form of social participation was meeting friends in pubs, cafes etc., with six out of ten customers reporting this. Fewer than a quarter reported participating in a 'community event', with a similar level reporting going to either sporting or cultural activities.

The report makes recommendations to Focus Housing, Focus Ireland Services and Focus Ireland Advocacy.

The research was part of a series carried out with the assistance of researchers with lived experience of homelessness and/or housing insecurity, who helped design the questionnaire as well as carry out the interviews and contributed to the analysis and drafting stage of the report.

# Introduction

Focus Housing is one of the largest complex needs Approved Housing Bodies in Ireland, providing long-term homes for over almost 600 households<sup>1</sup>, most of which have previous experiences of homelessness or housing precarity, and many of which continue to face challenges in sustaining tenancies. As part of our response to the current housing and homelessness crisis, Focus Housing is committed to more than doubling the number of homes it provides over the next four years. We are not just committed to providing more homes, but also to providing the best homes that we can. Listening to and learning from our customers will play an essential part in achieving this.

This report marks the completion of Phase 2 of our monitoring and evaluation program which explored levels of satisfaction amongst our long-term housing customers in terms of their housing and supports, as well as trying to gain some insight into the way in which our customers are integrated into their local communities, and how we can support this.

This phase of our monitoring and evaluation program gave us the opportunity not just to measure how we are performing in this area, it also provided the opportunity to engage with our long-term housing customers and to ask them to participate and help shape the services we provide.

The findings from this piece of work, along with the reports published by Focus Ireland in 2015 on long-term supported housing (congregate sites) and an in-house analysis of the demographic profile of customers compiled in 2016<sup>2</sup>, form a strong evidence base for future planning for Focus Housing.

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<sup>1</sup> As of February 2020, the internal Focus Ireland database (MIPS) identifies 571 households with long-term tenancies. Focus Ireland also provides homes for households on a short-term basis as part of specific programmes such as Residential Aftercare, or Stepdown.

<sup>2</sup> Bevan, M., Jones, A., and Pleace, N. (2015) Service Evaluation of Focus Ireland Long-Term Supported Housing: Review of Congregate and Clustered Housing. Dublin: Focus Ireland; Hoey, D. (2016) Statistical Overview of Scattered Long-Term Supported Housing. Dublin: Focus Ireland.

Central to this project was the contribution of researchers with lived experience of homelessness and/or housing precarity. Following on from the success of Phase 1 of our monitoring and evaluation program the researchers expressed a keen desire to engage in Phase 2 and in developing their research skills further. Throughout this project the team were supported to engage in each phase of the research including survey instrument design, data collection, data entry, and data analysis. All three researchers have experienced living in Focus Ireland long-term housing, and their expertise and skills were instrumental in developing and delivering this research project.

# Background

Focus Ireland's recent Strategic Plan 2017–2020<sup>3</sup> sets out 7 Key Performance Indicators (KPI) across its 100+ services around the country. The Strategy concentrates on two central pillars to the work that we do: 1) preventing homelessness; 2) achieving sustained exits out of homelessness.

As part of this strategic plan, the Focus Ireland research team set out on a program of monitoring and evaluation research so we could measure the performance of our strategic plan. To support this work, the research team sought to utilise, and develop, the skills of a team of three researchers with lived experience of homelessness and/or housing precarity.<sup>4</sup>

Phase 1 of the monitoring and evaluation program took place in 2018.<sup>5</sup> Through telephone surveys, we set out to confirm whether the tenancies of customers who were previously homeless and were supported to secure a new home were still in place six months after they left our services. Results were very encouraging: 95% of the people who had left our services into secure housing were still in their tenancies six months later; and 79% believed Focus Ireland had helped with their housing situation.

A year later, Phase 2 consisted of a research project centered on the long-term customers of homes which Focus Housing either owns, leases or manages. Providing homes and ensuring sustained exits out of homelessness is central to realising the strategic plan, and we have ambitious goals to increase the housing we provide year-on-year to contribute to ending the housing and homelessness crisis. Therefore, understanding and responding to information on satisfaction in housing and with services is very important and *may* identify challenges which the organisation may face into the future – such as ageing in housing, the level of supports required, and aspects of well-being including social inclusion.

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<sup>3</sup> Focus Ireland Strategic Plan 2017–2020 can be accessed here: <https://www.focusireland.ie/organisational-strategy/>

<sup>4</sup> This team of Focus Ireland researchers previously worked on phase 1 of Focus Ireland's monitoring and evaluation program which examined tenancy sustainment data and have also engaged in a number of other research projects within Focus Ireland. The researchers were employed on to Focus Ireland's Staff Relief Panel and were paid for the work they carried out.

<sup>5</sup> This report can be accessed here: [https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Are-you-still-ok-Report\\_final-report.pdf](https://www.focusireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Are-you-still-ok-Report_final-report.pdf)

The project reflects the values of the organisation which are always to the forefront of the work we do – particularly the values of safety, quality, integration, and empowerment.

The principle aims of this study are to:

- a)** Capture customer satisfaction of housing and property management support (e.g. accommodation standards, location, repairs/maintenance, security, etc.)
- b)** Capture customer satisfaction levels in relation to their support plan (and are they happy about the level of support they are receiving; is this support face-to-face or over telephone, etc.)
- c)** Explore the degree of socioeconomic inclusion in society (e.g. employment/training, personal finances, social participation, community engagement, etc.)
- d)** Report important demographic information (e.g. age, family size, location and type of home, etc.)

The following report presents survey data from a total sample of 213 customers who were living in Focus Ireland long-term housing between March-May 2019. This represents 48% of the total number of long-term housing customers whose phone number was recorded on the central database (n=446) and 37% of the total number of long-term housing customers (n=571).

# Methodology

## Sample

In February 2019, the names, phone numbers and addresses of 446 long-term customers of Focus Housing were received from the Property and Development team in Focus Ireland. A letter was sent to each customer to notify them of the research study, its aims, and that telephone calls would be made in the coming weeks. The letter also emphasised that taking part in the research study was completely voluntary.

The Research team successfully contacted and completed surveys with **213 customers**. This was 48% of the overall number of customers on the contact list (n=446).

The remaining 52% of customers did not take part in the study for the following reasons:

- › The researchers failed to make contact with **130** customers (no answer, no response to voicemails, etc.);
- › **44** phone numbers were either out of service or out of date;
- › **53** customers chose not to take part in the research;
- › **16** attempted calls involved either a language barrier, the customer having deceased during the study period, or a customer who was identified as vulnerable and not in a position to take part in the survey.

## Research type

The research was done by telephone survey by a team of four researchers (including one contract researcher). A small number of customers requested that the survey be posted to them. On each occasion the survey was posted with a stamped addressed envelope so the survey participant could return the completed survey without any cost. The project was managed by a Research Officer.

## Survey design

The survey was designed during several workshops between January and March 2019, involving both Services and Property and Development staff. The Research team tested the survey and some changes were made before calls with customers began.

The surveys were carried out over a three-month period, March to May 2019. The survey included a mix of open and closed-ended questions. The survey mostly featured closed-ended questions that ask participants to choose from a clear set of answers, such as “yes/no” or along a scale such as “very satisfied” to “very unsatisfied” etc. However, there were some open-ended questions that gave customers an opportunity to voice their comments, concerns, and/or recommendations.

The telephone survey covered the following sections:

- › Housing (and area) satisfaction;
- › Key worker satisfaction;
- › Employment and social participation;
- › Demographics, or statistical information such as ‘Age’, ‘Gender’, etc.

The survey took about 10–15 minutes to complete, but some calls were longer depending on information given by the survey participants.

## Ethical considerations

Customers were asked at the start of the telephone call whether they would like to participate in the survey. Customers were reminded that taking part in the survey was completely voluntary and that they were free to end the call whenever they wished or that they were free not to answer any question they wished. They were also reminded that everything they said was completely confidential unless there was a risk of harm to themselves or someone else.

Confidentiality and privacy were respected at all times. The researchers replaced names with survey identifier reference numbers and any identifiable details were removed across all hard copies of surveys. The researchers made calls in a private meeting room in Focus Ireland’s head office to maintain confidentiality when making survey calls. Hard copy surveys were stored in a secure cabinet at all times.

There was a group of customers (n=56) who were personally known to the team of researchers responsible for making the telephone calls. As this was a clear ethical concern in terms of privacy, a contract researcher was employed on a temporary basis to make these telephone calls and complete the surveys.

If the customer did not answer the call, the researcher tried again at another time or on another day, and where possible left a voicemail. The researchers did not make more than four attempts to contact customers. In cases where there was a language barrier the researcher politely ended the call and a text was sent which explained the reason for the call and included a link to the Focus Ireland website.

Details of customers who had an immediate housing concern, such as a leak or a security issue for example, were passed to the Property and Development team to be followed up on as soon as possible.

## **Data entry and analysis**

The researchers coded the survey responses to numbers and entered the information into a Microsoft Excel Worksheet. This numbered data was then transferred to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 24 (SPSS) where it could be analysed in more detail. Microsoft Excel was also used to create graphs and tables for this report.

## **Study limitations**

This study represents a portion of the total number of long-term housing customers who were living in Focus Ireland accommodation between March-May 2019. It does not claim to be representative of all long-term housing customers but rather gives an insight into a large group who were successfully contacted.

# Findings

## Demographic profile

There were slightly more men (52%) than women (48%). Over half of survey participants were aged between 35–54 years of age (52%), and a relatively small number were born outside of Ireland (16%). Most had children (60%). However, a large number of those who had children reported that their children did not live with them (41%).

### Gender

- › 109 were male (52%)<sup>6</sup>
- › 99 were female (48%)

### Age

- › 6 survey participants were aged between 18 and 24 years of age (3%)
- › 28 were 25 to 34 years (14%)
- › 56 were aged between 35 and 44 years (27%)
- › 56 were aged between 45 and 54 years (27%)
- › 40 were aged between 55 and 64 (19%)
- › 22 were over the age of 65 (11%)

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<sup>6</sup> There were some incidences where data was missing from surveys. Percentages included in this report refer to the valid percentage meaning the percentage when missing data is excluded from the calculations.

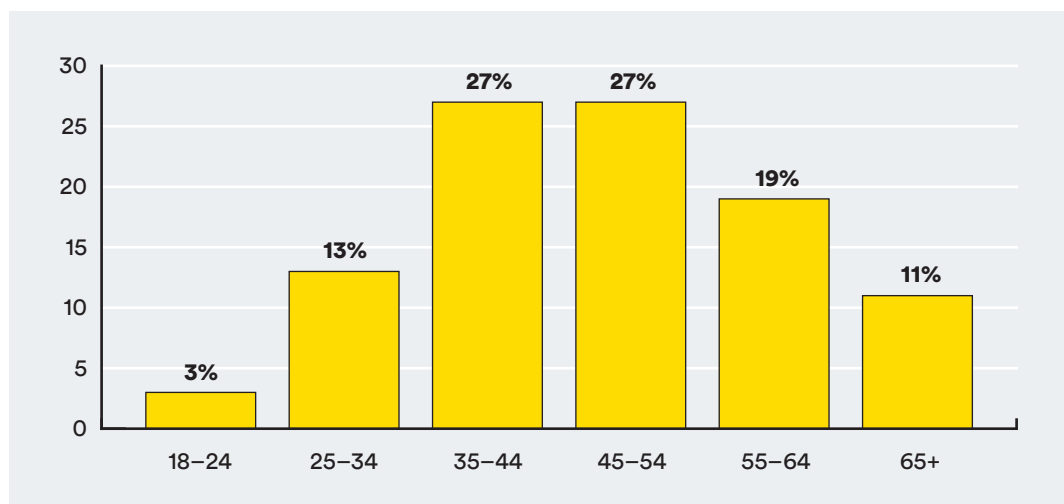
## Nationality and ethnic/cultural background

- › 174 survey participants were born in Ireland (84%)
- › 22 were from countries within the EU (10%)
- › 12 were from countries outside the EU (6%)

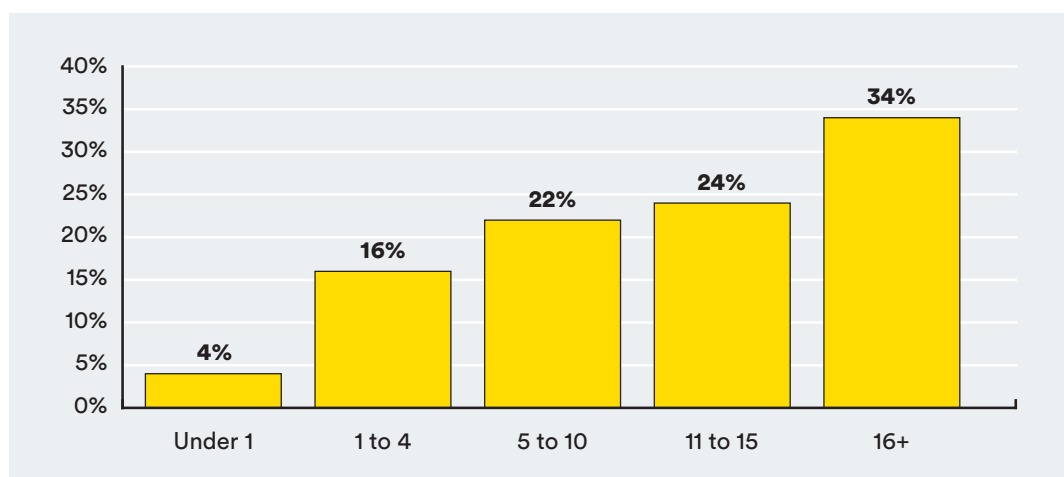
## Family type

- › 144 (69%) participants were single; 45 (22%) were in a relationship, and 19 (9%) chose 'other' when asked were they single or in a relationship
- › 125 (60%) participants had children; 83 did not (40%)
- › Of those participants who had children, 73 (58%) reported that their children were living with them. 52 (42%) reported that their children were not living with them.
- › A total of 130 children were living in the home. Of these, 44 (34%) were 16 years of age or older. 27 (20%) were under the age of 5. See Graph 2 below for further details.
- › 42 (58%) participants who had *children living with them* were one-parent households. 86% (n=36) of these one-parent households were headed by a female.

Graph 1: Ages of survey participants



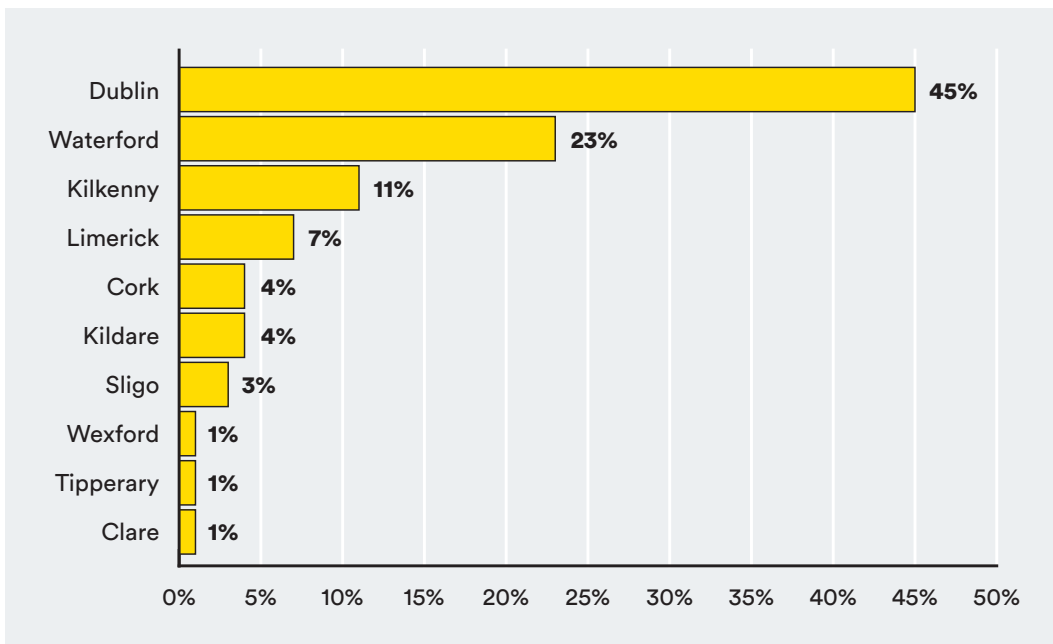
Graph 2: Ages of children living in the home



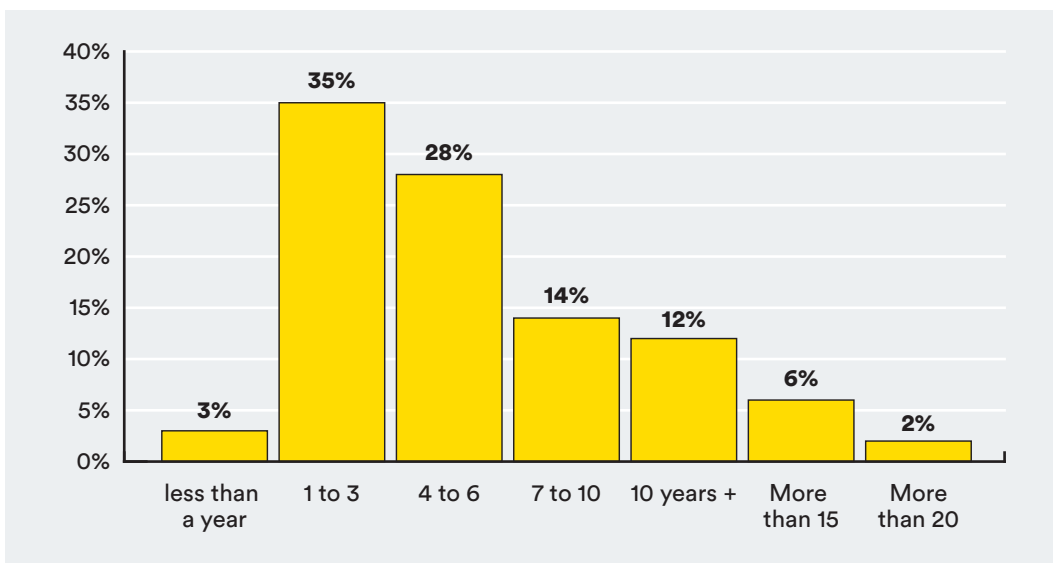
## Housing and accommodation

The majority of survey participants were living in apartments (61%), with a lower percentage living in houses (39%). Most were located in the Dublin region (46%), followed by the counties of Waterford (23%) and Kilkenny (11%). The length of time survey participants lived in their home varied: most participants were living in their homes between 1 and 3 years (35%), a very small amount were living in the homes less than 1 year (3%), and there was a larger amount living in their homes more than 10 years (20%).

**Graph 3: Location of housing by county**




**Graph 4: Length of tenancy**




## Housing satisfaction

Survey participants were asked on a scale of 1–10 how ‘satisfied’ they were with their home (1 being not satisfied at all; 10 being very satisfied). The average score for survey participants was 7.9. In relation to particular things in the home, such as kitchen and bathroom facilities for example, most participants did not have any problems (see graph 5 below). However, some participants said that they were having problems with heating, windows, damp and/or leaks in the home.

 ...my house keeps getting flooded due to the plumbing. I’ve no heating since I moved in. I’m fed up putting in maintenance reports ‘cause they never bother to come out and fix it.’

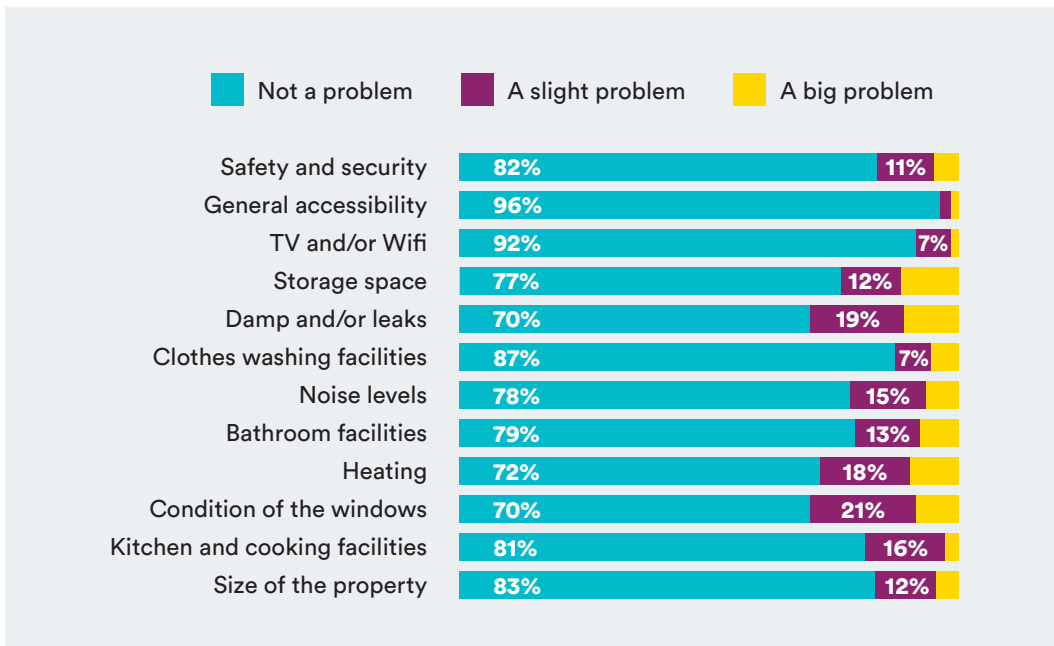
 Draught is very bad and [the] wind blows in’

Importantly, most survey participants reported that both accessibility into and around the home and safety and security in the home were not a problem (96%; 85%). While most survey participants reported that their accommodation was suitable for their needs (86%).

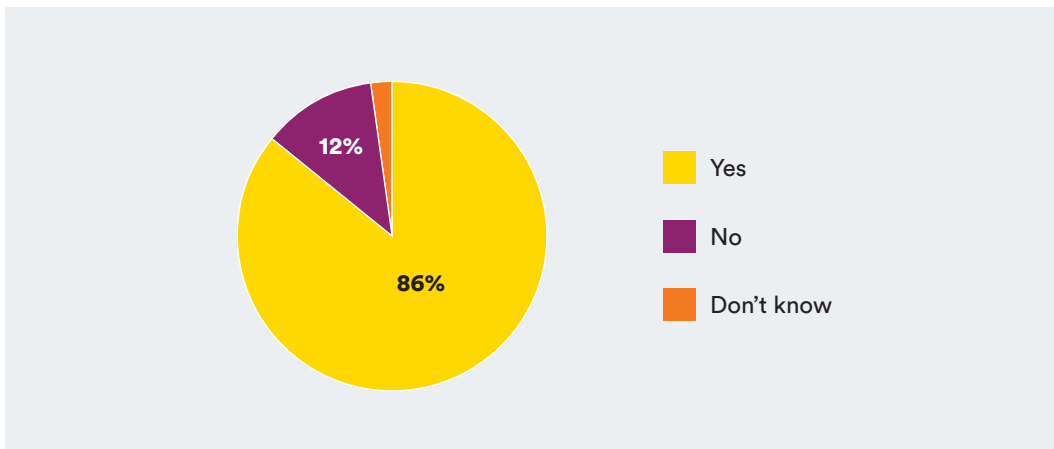
 I feel safe and secure, and it’s reasonable rent’

 [The house] is really big and suits my family really well’

**Graph 5: Housing satisfaction**



**Graph 6: Property adequate for needs**



In terms of maintenance and repairs, survey participants were asked how would they describe their overall satisfaction with Focus Ireland. Most were either ‘very satisfied’ (51%) or ‘satisfied’ (21%) with maintenance and repairs.

**[they are] willing to go that bit extra...all building work finished, staff always willing to help.’**

**Any time I have a problem they get back to me within a few hours.’**

However, there were some who were ‘unsatisfied’ (6%) or ‘very unsatisfied’ (8%) with maintenance and repairs.

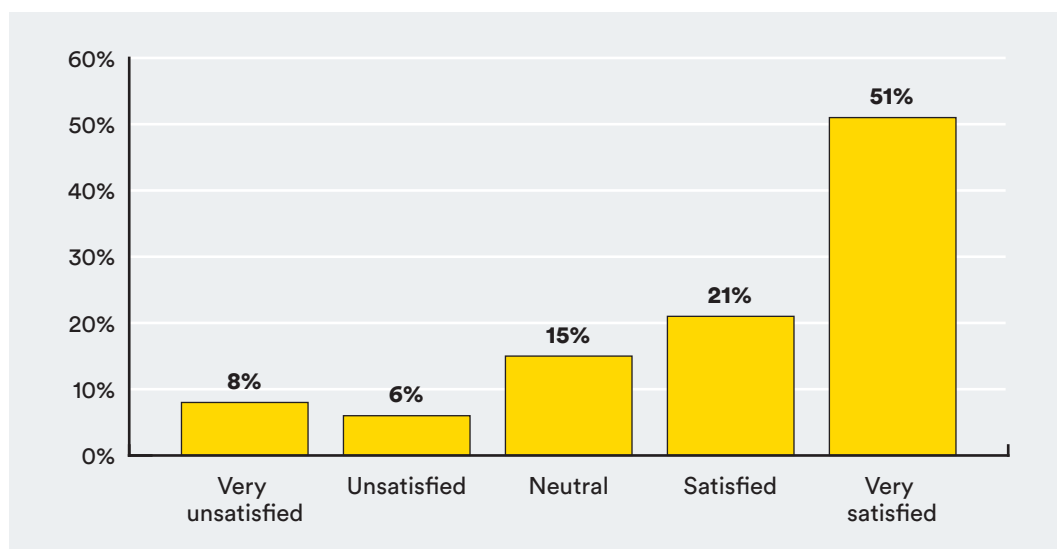


...any time I report an issue it takes a long time to get fixed’



[There’s a] slight lack of communication’

**Graph 7: Satisfaction with maintenance and repairs**



## Area satisfaction

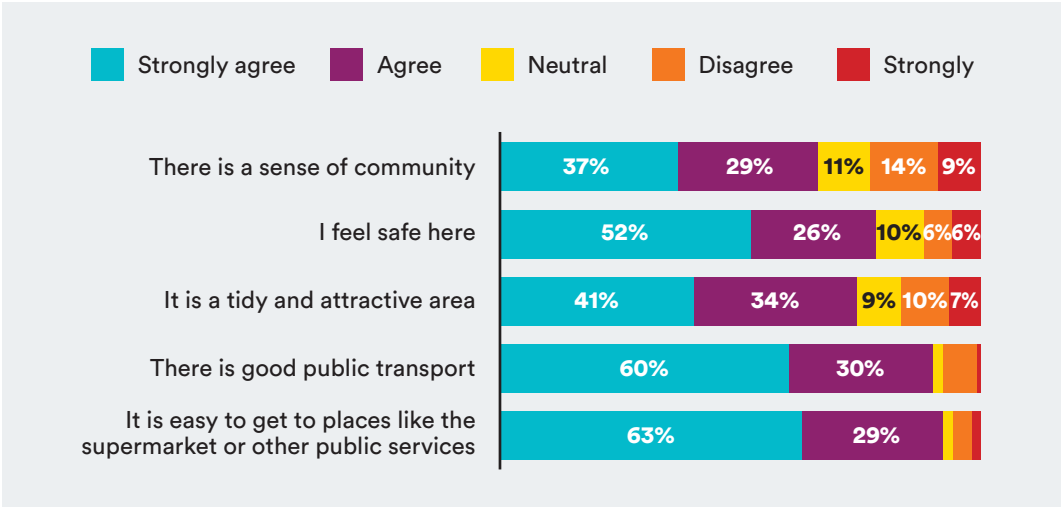
Survey participants were asked on a scale of 1-10 how ‘satisfied’ they were with the area they live (1 being not satisfied at all; 10 being very satisfied). The average score for participants was 7.7. Participants were also read a number of positive statements in relation to closeness to shops and services, transport, cleanliness, safety, and sense of community, and asked to either agree or disagree with these statements. The majority of survey participants strongly agreed with most of the statements (see graph 8 below). However, in relation to sense of community there were some participants who either disagreed (14%) or strongly disagreed (9%) with the statement.



...my house is ok but the people that live around me make me feel unsafe. They are not nice people.’

Survey participants were also asked if they would recommend the area in which they live to a friend. Most (76%) said that they would.

**Graph 8: Area satisfaction**



**Satisfaction and level of contact with key worker**

The majority of survey participants had a key worker (91%). There were some participants who saw their key worker on a regular basis (27%), including on a daily basis (3%), a few times a week (6%), or once a week (18%). However, a larger amount of participants saw their key worker less often (37%), either a few times a month (17%) or once a month (20%). While many participants saw their key worker only occasionally (35%), either a few times a year (14%) or rarely (21%).

A majority of participants who had a key worker said they had enough contact with their key worker (87%). However, there were some who said they would like a bit more contact (9%) and only one participant said they would like a lot more contact (1%). A small number of participants reported they had too much contact (4%).

A majority of survey participants were either very satisfied (61%) or satisfied (20%) with their key worker.

**‘She is very contactable, she also gives me great support and she is a great listener.’**

**‘I know that they are always there to help me when I need advice or support.’**

**‘They are there if I need support, otherwise they leave me alone.’**

However, there was a small number of survey participants who reported that they were either unsatisfied (3%) or very unsatisfied (7%) with their key worker.

**[they] don't engage with me or my family, [they are] not very clear who contacts who – needs clarification'**

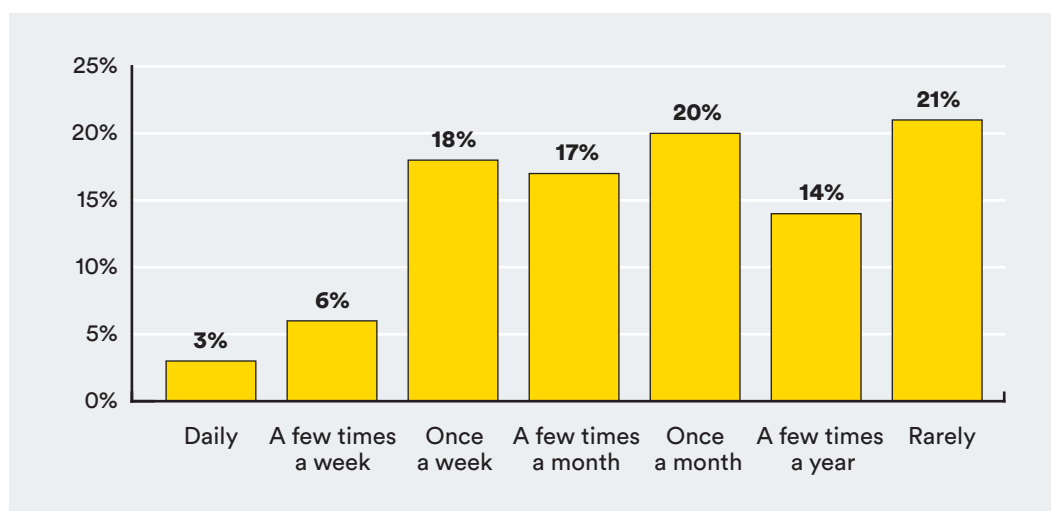
**Key workers are leaving all the time. There's not enough support workers out here to help everyone out.'**

In terms of what type of contact survey participants had with their key workers, the majority had contact with their key worker through a combination of in person *and* on the phone (50%). A lesser amount had contact solely in person (29%) or over the phone (20%).

**Table 1: Currently have a key worker**

Currently have a key worker	Number of survey participants	Percentage of survey participants
Yes	192	91%
No	20	9%
Missing data	1	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Graph 9: Level of contact with key worker**



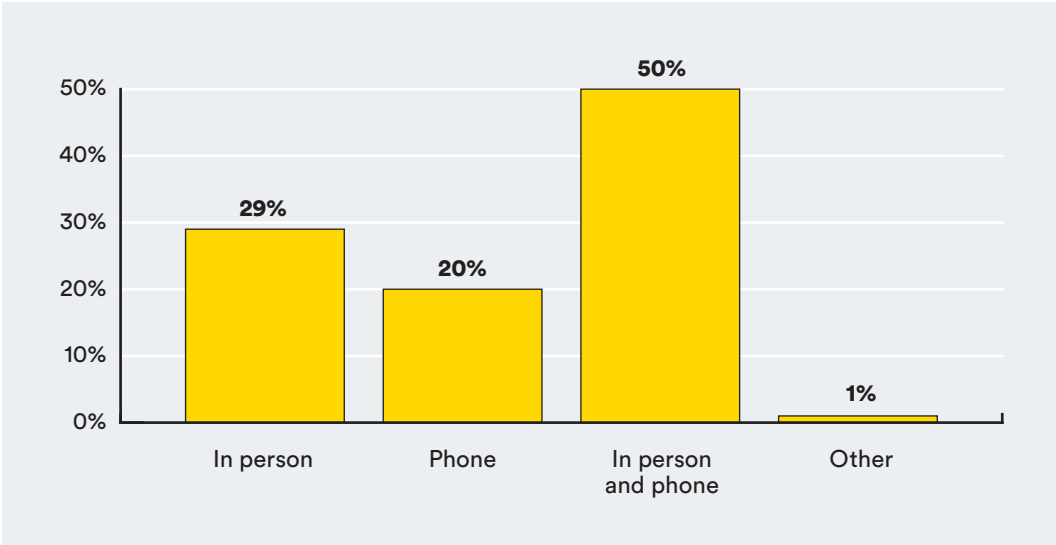
**Table 2: Contact satisfaction with key worker**

Contact satisfaction with key worker	Number of survey participants	Percentage of survey participants
I have too much contact	7	4%
I have enough contact	166	86%
I would like a bit more contact	17	9%
I would like a lot more contact	1	1%
NA	19	–
Missing data	3	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3: Overall satisfaction with key worker**

Overall satisfaction with key worker	Number of survey participants	Percentage of survey participants
Very unsatisfied	14	7%
Unsatisfied	5	3%
Neutral	17	9%
Satisfied	39	20%
Very satisfied	116	61%
NA	17	–
Missing data	5	–
<b>Total</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Graph 10: Type of contact with key worker**



## Employment/training status

The majority of survey participants (60%) described themselves as 'unemployed', though a majority of these were in receipt of disability payments, with only 22% in receipt of welfare payments with an expectation of labour market participation (13% on Jobseekers Allowance and 9% on One Parent Family payment). Some participants were either employed full time (10%) or part time (11%). A small number of survey participants were retired (9%).

Most survey participants were in receipt of Social Welfare (85%). More than half of this group were in receipt of Disability Allowance (54%). Other forms of Social Welfare assistance were State Pension (16%), Jobseekers Allowance (13%), One Parent Family payment (9%) and Carers Allowance (2%).

When asked the question 'would you like more help or more support from Focus Ireland in respect of employment or education?' the majority of survey participants (89%) replied 'No'.



I don't want to make any changes. I am happy the way I am.'



I'm busy enough with four young children.'



[I need] nothing from Focus – I've a lot of medical issues'

However, there were some (11%) who expressed a desire for more support and, in some cases, this related specifically to activities such as volunteering or social groups:



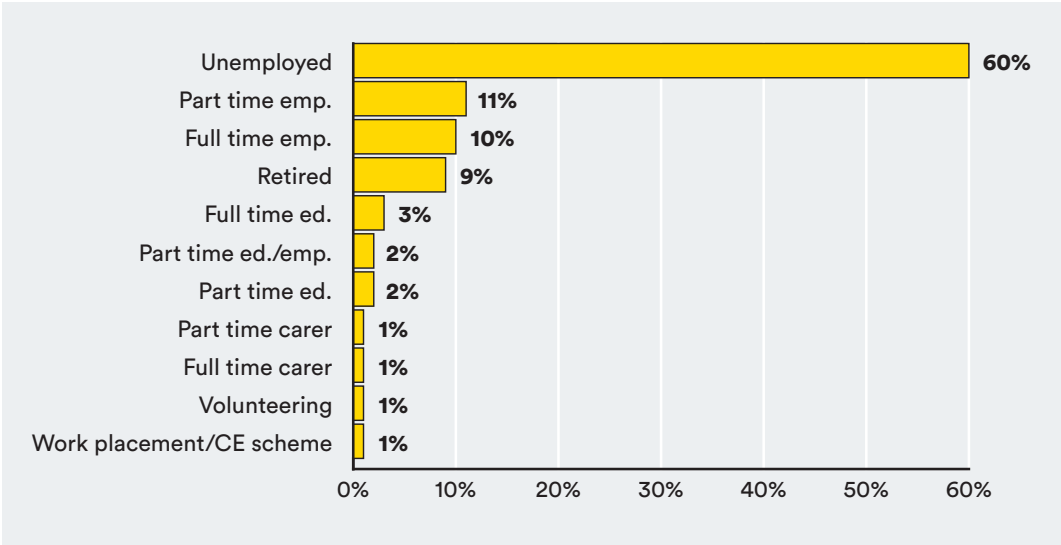
[I'd like to do] voluntary work to get me out of the apartment....[or] classes, to start them'



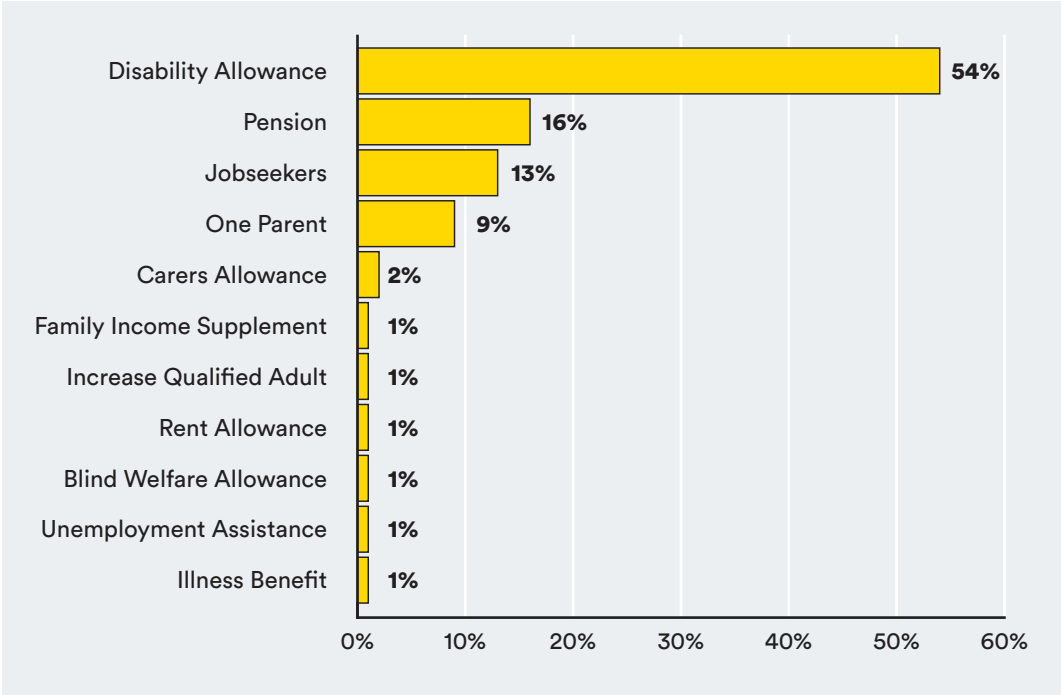
[I] would like to join a group for over 55s... gardening, bingo, games, puzzles [things like that]'

For those survey participants not in receipt of Disability Allowance a question was asked 'what would you like to change in relation to your employment/training status?'. The responses varied with some saying they would like to start a course or training (n=18) or to find work (n=16). See graph 14 below for further details.

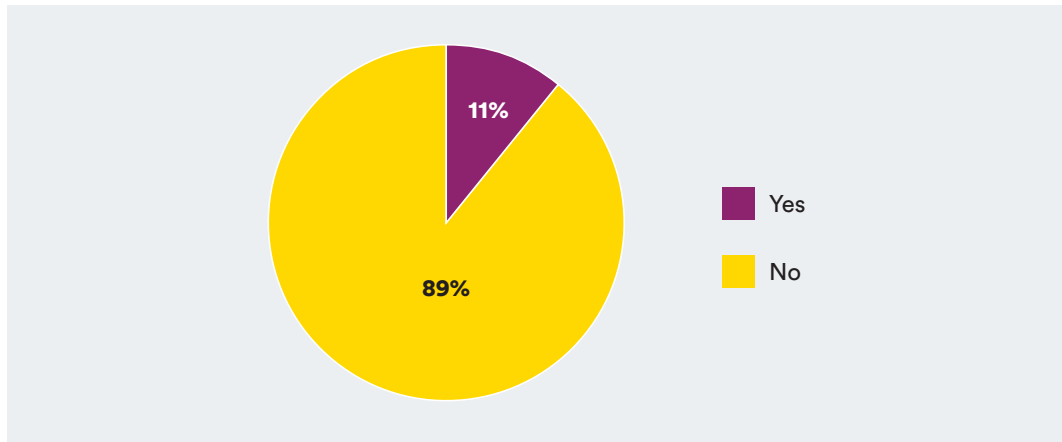
**Graph 11: Employment and training status**



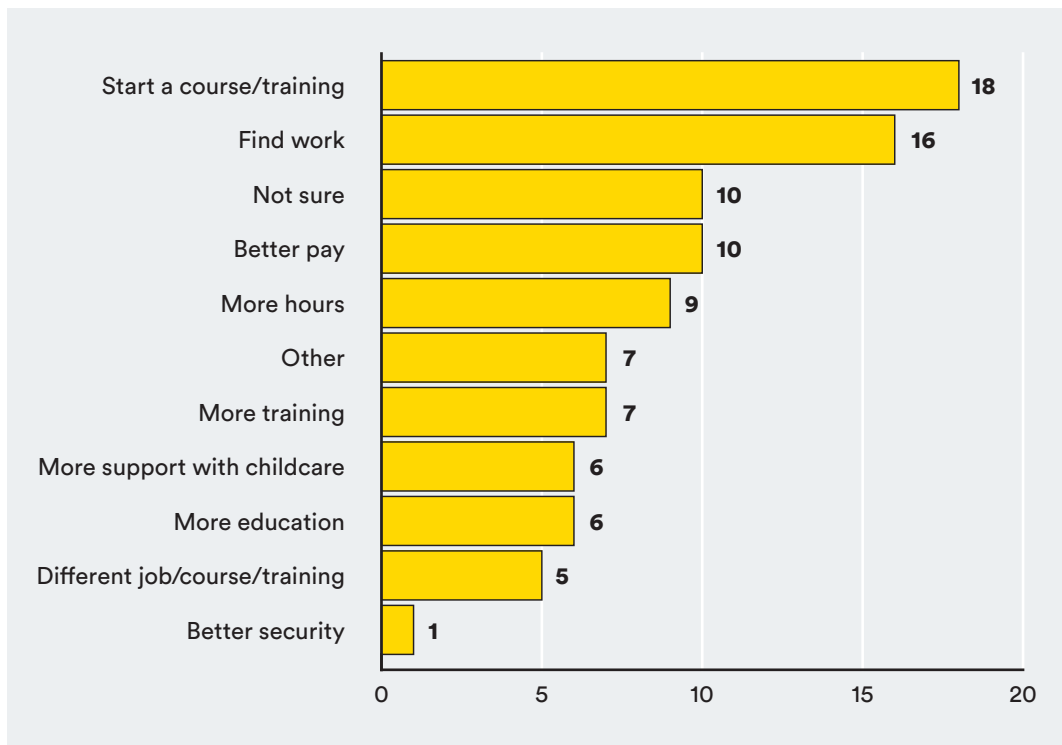
**Graph 12: Social Welfare payment type**



**Graph 13: Would you like help/more support from Focus Ireland in respect of employment or education?**



**Graph 14: What would you like to change in relation to employment/training status (number of survey participants)**



## Personal finances and social participation

Survey participants were asked three questions in relation to their personal finances. The majority of survey participants reported that they were ‘always’ either free from debt (57%), had enough money to pay for essentials (56%), and were confident in managing money (63%). However, of concern were the survey participants who had enough money to pay for essentials, such as food and bills, only some of the time (15%).

A set of questions were asked in relation to social participation over the last month or two. The majority of survey participants *had not* participated in a volunteer activity (76%), a community event (74%), or outside sports or recreation (70%). Most participants had not gone to the cinema, a gig, or a show (68%). Nearly a quarter of all survey participants (24%; 52) had not participated in any of these activities. However, a majority reported meeting friends in a pub, restaurant, or café within the last month or two (61%). Some survey participants commented that their lack of social participation was due to their poor health:

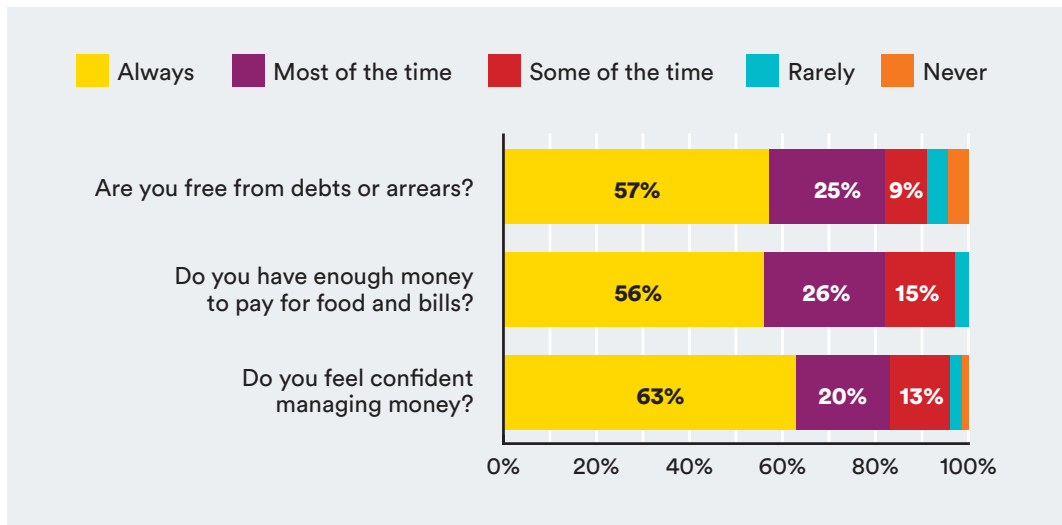


My health stops me socialising'

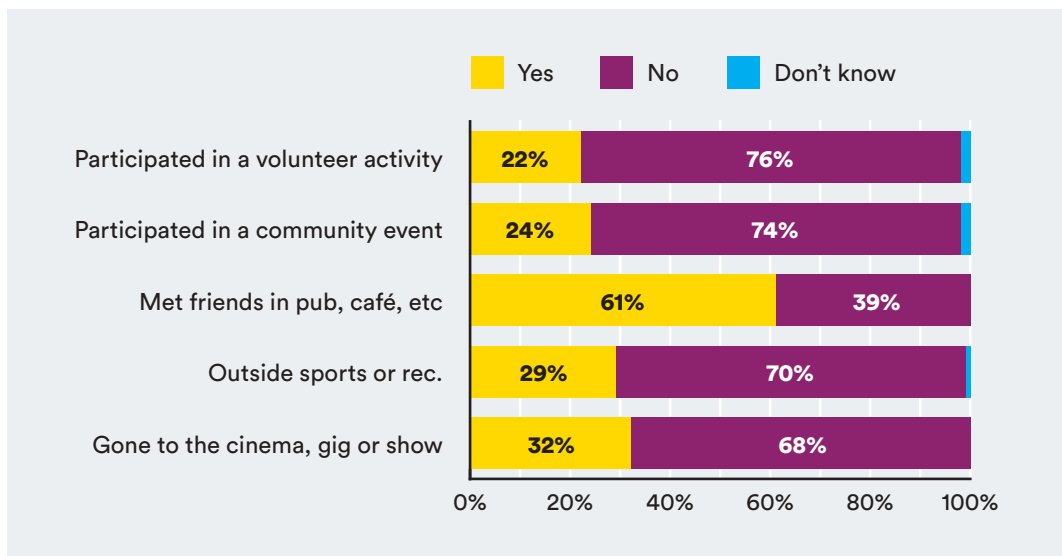


I am sick so I spend most of my time at home'

**Graph 15: Personal finance and budgeting**



**Graph 16: Social participation**



## Conclusions

This project marks the second phase of a programme of monitoring and evaluation to verify our strategic objectives and service outcomes. Its main aim was to investigate the levels of satisfaction among long-term housing customers in relation to their housing and supports, and to get a sense of levels of social participation. The survey took place a year prior to the Covid-19 lockdown, and forms a valuable base-line for understanding housing and support experiences prior to the changes required during that period.

The survey showed that housing and support satisfaction levels are high amongst Focus Housing's long-term customers. The average score for housing satisfaction was 7.9 (out of 10), and in relation to area satisfaction it was 7.7. Most participants (86%) said that their property was adequate for their needs. However, around 30% of customers indicated some level of concerns about damp/leaks and the poor condition of windows which may contribute to poor health outcomes and contribute to heating costs. This finding reflects a known problem with the age of some of our housing stock which is reflected in our renovation and maintenance programme.

The core role of Focus Housing is to provide homes for people who have experience of homelessness and have some form of on-going or intermittent support need that might put their tenancy at risk in less supportive forms of rented housing. The support of a skilled key worker for these vulnerable customers is a key element of the Focus Housing/Focus Ireland model. Over a number of years, Services have identified the challenge of finding the correct balance between this support and the objective of supporting customers to live as independently as possible. This can be particularly challenging with customers whose support needs vary over time or whose capabilities do not always match their desire for independence.

A related policy discussion has been whether there is a significant cohort of Focus Housing customers who do not have, or no longer have, support needs which require key worker engagement. The survey indicates that the allocation of time within overall caseloads by key workers is very responsive to the needs of the customers, with 87% of customers saying they are getting the right level of contact and 81% saying they are either satisfied or very satisfied with their key worker. Only 4% reported they are getting too much contact. 20% of customers said that all their contact with support workers was exclusively by phone, and particularly in the context of the low level of social interaction reported by many customers, it is recommended that Services ensure that face-to-face contact is maintained with the most isolated customers.

The number of customers who said they were very unsatisfied with their key worker was low (7%). This dissatisfaction may reflect a number of different issues including cases where key workers raise issues or behaviours which customers do not want to address. However, it would be useful in future surveys to include questions about knowledge of, and experience with, the Focus Ireland/Focus Housing customer complaints process.

While findings are generally very positive, there may be some concerns in relation to socio-economic inclusion. The majority of survey participants were not working (60%), and Disability Allowance was the most common form of income (54%). Over 20% of customers reported being at work, with equal numbers being employed full-time or part-time. A further 5% were in either full time or part-time education. While only 11% expressed a desire for additional support in respect of education or employment, this is the single largest additional support need identified. Money was a concern for some. For example, there were some survey participants who were struggling to pay for essentials like food and bills (15%).

One key area of concern is the low level of social engagement of the customers surveyed. While most of the questions concerning the locality demonstrated a high level of satisfaction (safety, public transport, amenities), almost a quarter did not feel there was a 'sense of community'. A majority of survey participants (60%) reported meeting friends in cafes, pubs, etc. However, fewer than a third reported going to the cinema, a gig, or a show, and being involved in sport or a community event. Almost a quarter of all survey participants had not participated in any of these activities. Some participants linked this low level of engagement to ill health. While most survey participants (89%) did not want more support from Focus Ireland in terms of their employment or education, there may be a need to engage with long-term housing customers in terms of supporting social participation in their communities and combating isolation.

In terms of planning for the future and particularly ageing in housing, while most survey participants were in the middle age category of 35 to 54 years of age (54%), a high number were 55 years or over (30%). This is a key consideration for Focus Ireland in meeting the needs of its long-term housing customers as they age in their housing and further research into the implications of this is included in the research programme for 2020/21.

# Recommendations

The research pre-dates the Covid-19 lockdown and the extensive changes in the way that case managers supported customers over that period. The recommendations reflect the issues which emerged at the time the data was collected (March–May 2019) and make no attempt to integrate lessons from the later period. Nevertheless, the proposed reviews should draw on and reflect the lessons from that later period.

The following list of recommendations arising from the research are grouped under the relevant teams in Focus Ireland and Focus Housing. They are as follows:

## Property and Development

- › A review of the renovation and maintenance programme to ensure that it reflects the customer's priorities in the relevant housing units.
- › A review of the long-term supported housing customer database and updating arrangements to ensure (where possible) a contact phone number for every customer is recorded and kept up-to-date.

## Services

- › A review of the best approach to providing additional support measures to customers in the area of social and community participation, with a particular focus on combating isolation.
- › A review of the best approach to providing additional support measures to customers in the area of training and education, including strengthening the links between Focus Ireland's employment and training service PETE, and with INTREO.
- › A review of the best approach to providing additional support measures to customers in the area of money management, particularly for customers struggling to budget and pay for essentials.
- › Ensure face-to-face contact is maintained with the most isolated customers.
- › A review of the extent to which customers report having no case manager, to ensure that allocation and engagement are appropriate and responsive to changes in customer circumstances.

## Research and Advocacy

- › Replicate this survey once every three years in order to track and measure satisfaction levels and support needs over time.
- › In future related customer surveys, include questions about knowledge of, and experience with, the Focus Ireland/Focus Housing customer complaints process.
- › Produce further research into the implications of ageing in housing (included in the Research Programme for 2020/21).

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