

Age Friendly Belfast Baseline Report



April 2022

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Introduction

Reducing inequalities and improving health and wellbeing are key outcomes of the Belfast Agenda, Belfast's community plan.¹ Belfast City Council, Public Health Agency and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust have a lead role in developing and delivering these actions.

A key area of joint work has been the delivery of the Age Friendly Belfast plan. In 2014 the Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership (HASP) was successful in its bid to make Belfast an age-friendly city. Its vision was that "Belfast will be a city where older people live life to the full".

The Age Friendly Belfast plan 2018–21² focused on infrastructure, social inclusion, health and well-being and financial security.

In 2021 HASP commissioned a statistical baseline to contribute to a review of the current status of ageing in Belfast and help develop a new age-friendly plan for the city.

A note on sources

The majority of data in this baseline report is drawn from Queen's University Belfast's Northern Ireland Cohort for the Longitudinal Study of Ageing (NICOLA) and Belfast City Council's Belfast Resident Survey.

Other sources are referenced throughout the report.

NICOLA

Run by Queen's Centre for Public Health, NICOLA aims to understand what it is like to grow older in NI.

¹ www.belfastcity.gov.uk/belfastagenda

² <https://www.makinglifebettertogether.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/9598-Age-friendly-plan-2018-21-28SEPTWEB.pdf>

NICOLA Wave 1 data was gathered between 2014 and 2018 from a representative sample of people aged 50 and over³ across NI. Unless otherwise stated, the sample size (n=) was 8,478 for NI and 1,260 for Belfast.

Wave 2 data was gathered between 2018 and 2020. Unless otherwise stated, the sample size was 6,152 for NI and 860 for Belfast.

A further Covid survey was administered asking about experiences during the coronavirus outbreak that began in the UK at the end of February 2020.

Unless otherwise stated, the sample size was 3,149 for NI and 452 for Belfast.

[Belfast Residents Survey](#)

Belfast City Council carries out a regular survey of a representative sample of Belfast residents.

This report primarily considers the results of the 2021 survey, which was carried out between November and December 2021. The total sample size was 1,504, of which 406 were aged 60 or over.

Unless otherwise stated, results refer to 2021. Where available, 2021 results have been compared to 2019 (carried out in January 2019, that is prior to the Covid-19 pandemic), 2017 and 2014.

³ 18 respondents or 1.4 per cent of responses were from people aged 25 to 49

Demographics

Age

It is estimated that 91,382 people or 27 per cent of Belfast's population are aged 55 and over. Belfast has a slightly younger population than NI as a whole (where 29 per cent of the population is aged 55 and over). Regardless, 2 in every 10 Belfast residents are aged 60 and over and 1 in every 10 is aged 70 and over.

Belfast				N. Ireland			
55 +	60+	70+	75+	55 +	60+	70+	75+
91,382	69,848	37,086	24,924	556,472	428,969	229,256	147,194
27%	20%	11%	7%	29%	23%	12%	8%

The proportion of older people aged 65 and over is projected to continue to increase, accounting for 1 in 4 NI residents by mid-2045. By mid-2027, the number of people aged 65 and over will outnumber children (aged under 16) in NI.⁴

Gender

Men aged 65 and over make up 6.5 per cent of Belfast's population, and women aged 65 and over make up 8.5 per cent.⁵

Ethnicity

At the last Census, 6.6 per cent of Belfast's usual residents were born outside the UK and Ireland. Almost a third of this group (2.1 per cent) were born in Middle East and Asia.⁶

⁴ www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/NPP20-Bulletin.pdf

⁵

www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/PivotGrid.aspx?ds=4244&lh=73&yn=2011&sk=136&sn=Census%202011&yearfilter=

⁶

www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/PivotGrid.aspx?ds=7471&lh=73&yn=2011&sk=136&sn=Census%202011&yearfilter=

1.7 per cent of people surveyed as part of the NICOLA WAVE 1 cohort were born outside the UK and ROI.

In the 2021 Belfast Residents Survey, 99.3 per cent of respondents aged 60 and over identified as coming from a white ethnic group.

Finances

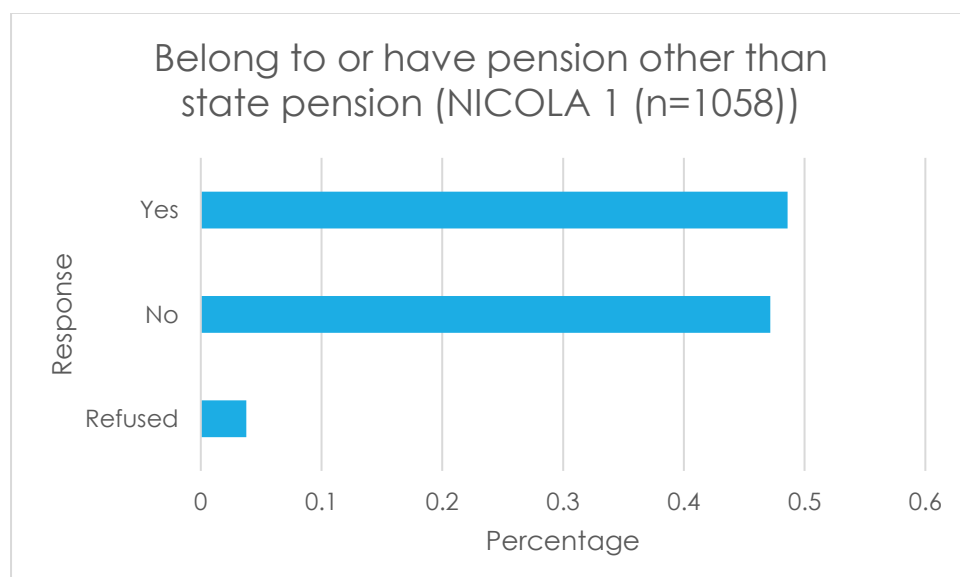
In the 2021 Belfast Residents Survey, people were asked what the priorities for the city should be. A stronger economy was the second most important priority identified by respondents aged 60 and over (13.2 per cent of compared to 8.1 per cent among 16- to 24-year-olds). 10.2 per cent also identified reducing poverty as a priority.

Belfast residents were also asked to rank their financial situation. Those aged 60 and over ranked their situation as 7.24 out of 10 (7.37 in 2019), which was in line with how the whole Belfast population (7.21 out of 10).

Pensions

There are 303,490 state pension recipients in NI. 15 per cent (46,390) are individuals over 50 who live in the Belfast City Council area.

In September 2021, the average state pension amount was £163.22. Nearly half the people surveyed in NICOLA Wave 1 do not have any pension outside the basic state pension.

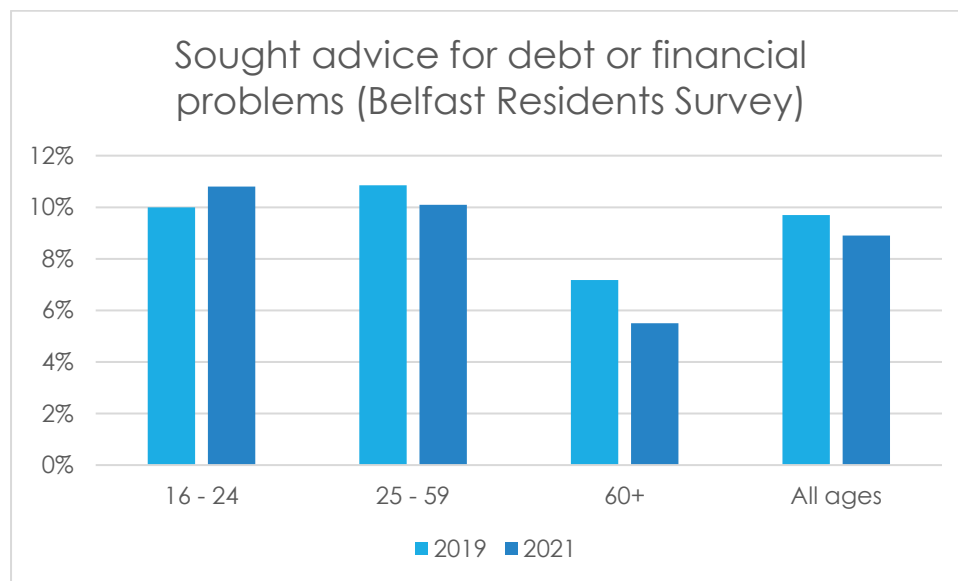


Pension credit is an average weekly benefit payment of £68.89, and in August 2021 there were 62,910 beneficiaries (claimants and their partners) of pension credit in NI, of which 17 per cent (12,380) are individuals aged over

50 living in the Belfast City Council area. More than half (51 per cent) of those living in Belfast who are in receipt of pension credit are aged between 70 and 79.⁷

Financial advice

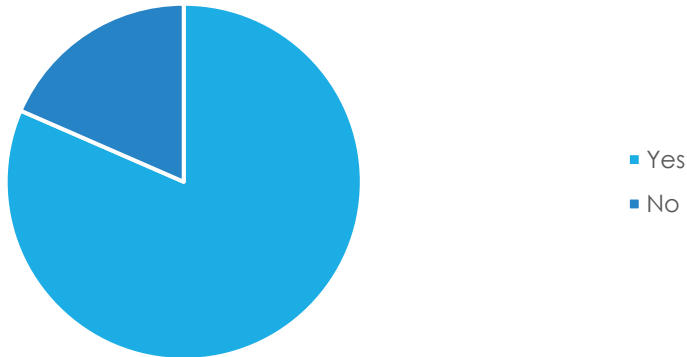
According to the Belfast Residents Survey, those aged 60 and over are least likely to have sought advice for debt or financial problems, falling from 7.2 per cent in 2019 to 5.5 per cent in 2021.



18 per cent of NICOLA respondents felt they did not receive enough information about their expected pension at retirement age. (Nearly half the people surveyed in NICOLA Wave 1 did not have any pension outside the basic state pension.)

⁷ NI Benefits Statistics Summary August 2021

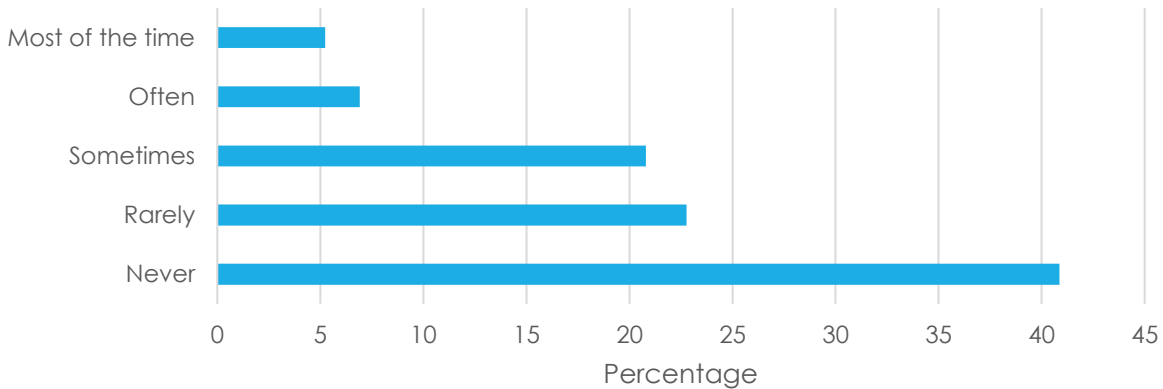
Received enough information about expected pension at retirement age (NICOLA 1 (n=634))

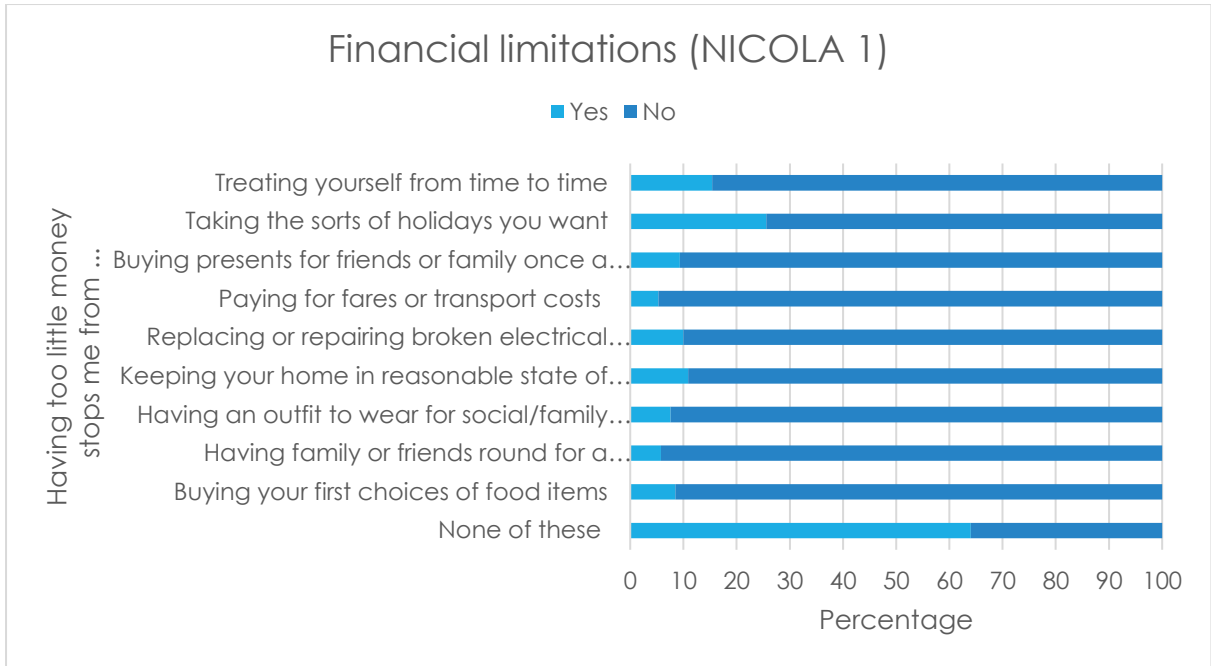


Poverty

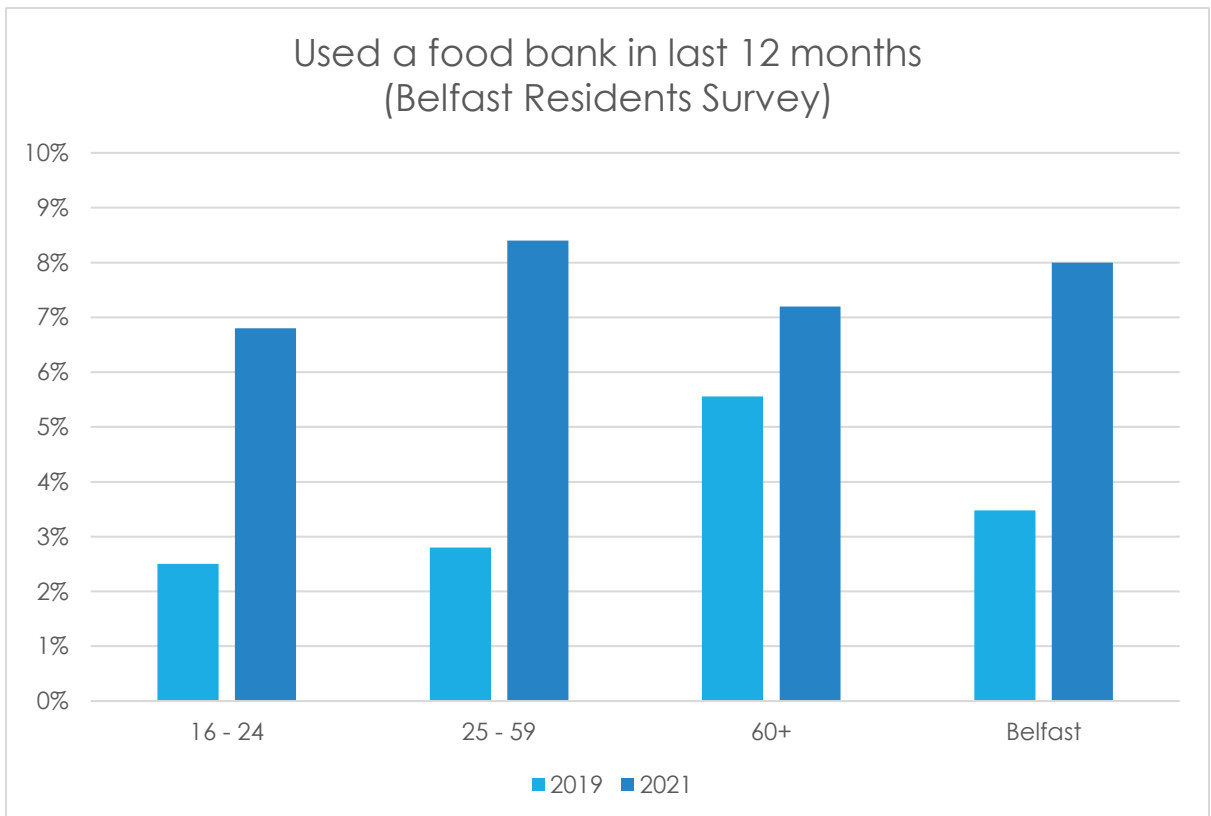
Over a third of NICOLA respondents stated that they do not have enough money for household needs sometimes, often or most of the time. One in 10 reported that this kept them from keeping their house in a reasonable state of decoration or from replacing or repairing broken electrical items, and 8.5 per cent reported that this impacted on their choice of food.

How often do you find you have too little money to spend on what you feel you/your household's needs are? (NICOLA 1)



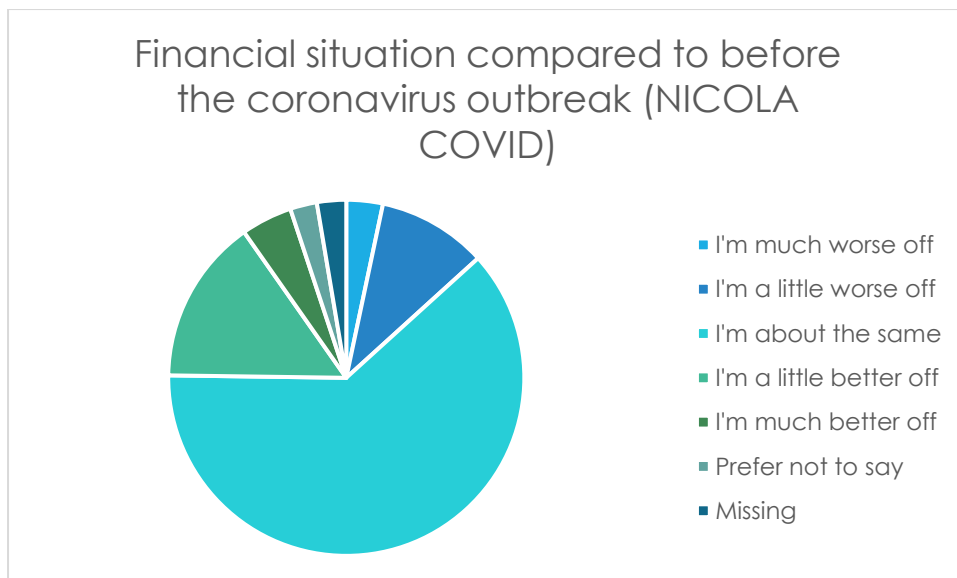
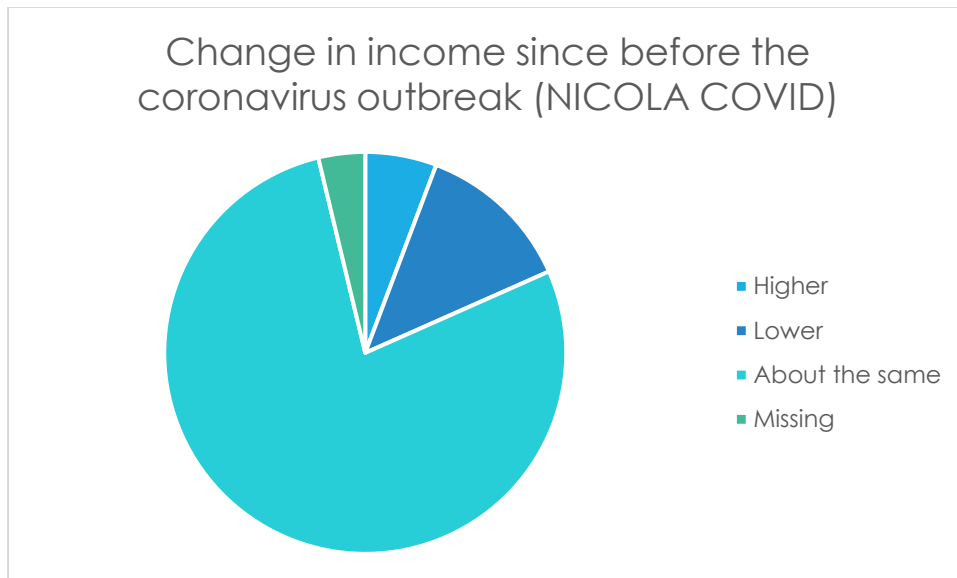


According to the Belfast Residents Survey, 7.2 per cent of those aged 60 and over had used a food bank in the past 12 months. This was an increase from 5.6 per cent on 2019 (when those aged 60 and over were more likely to use a food bank than any other age group).



Impact of Covid

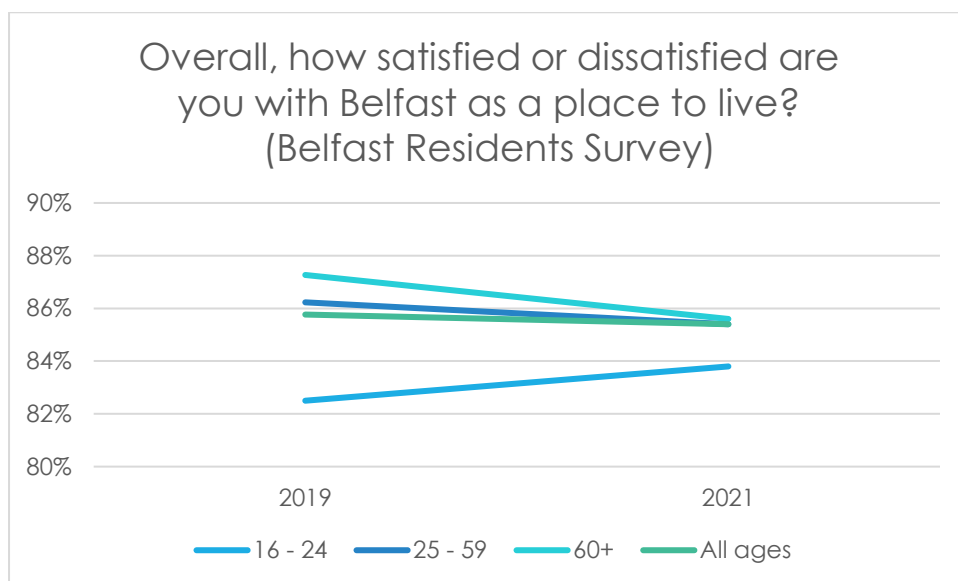
Most people did not report a change in financial situation during the pandemic. However, 13 per cent reported being worse off and 20 per cent reported being better off including 6 per cent who reported increased income.



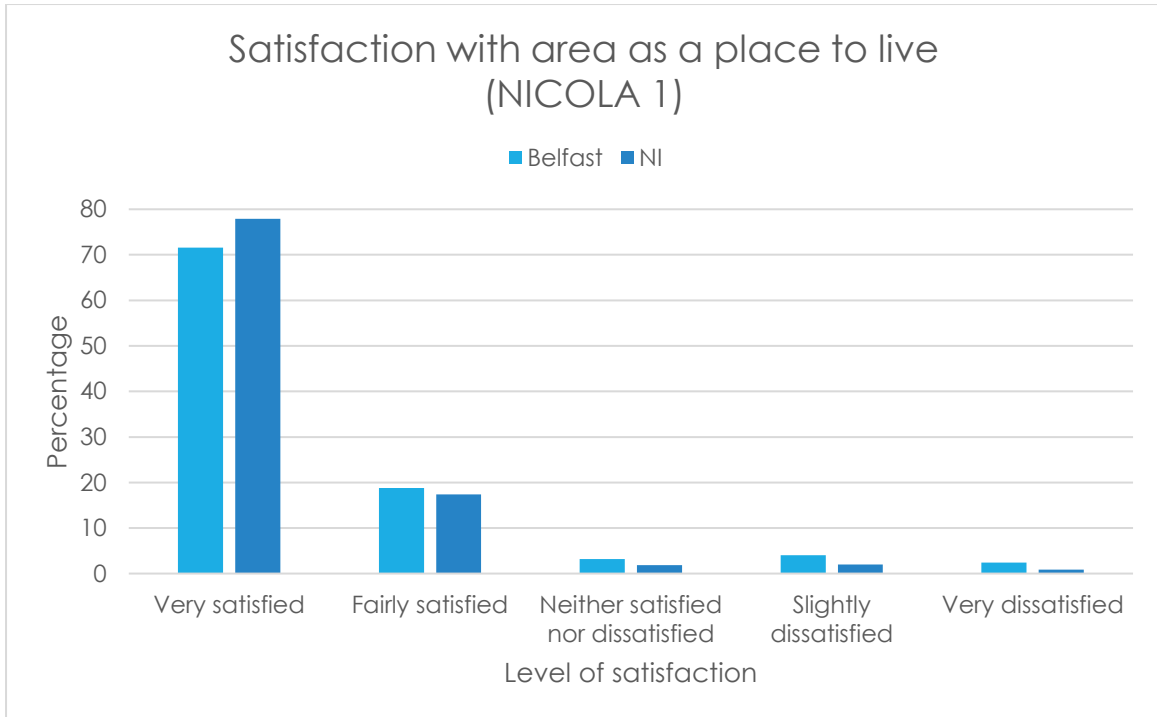
Outdoor spaces and buildings

Satisfaction with living in Belfast

According to the 2021 Belfast Residents Survey, 85.4 per cent of residents aged 60 and over were satisfied with Belfast as a place to live. This was a slight reduction on 87.3 per cent in 2019.

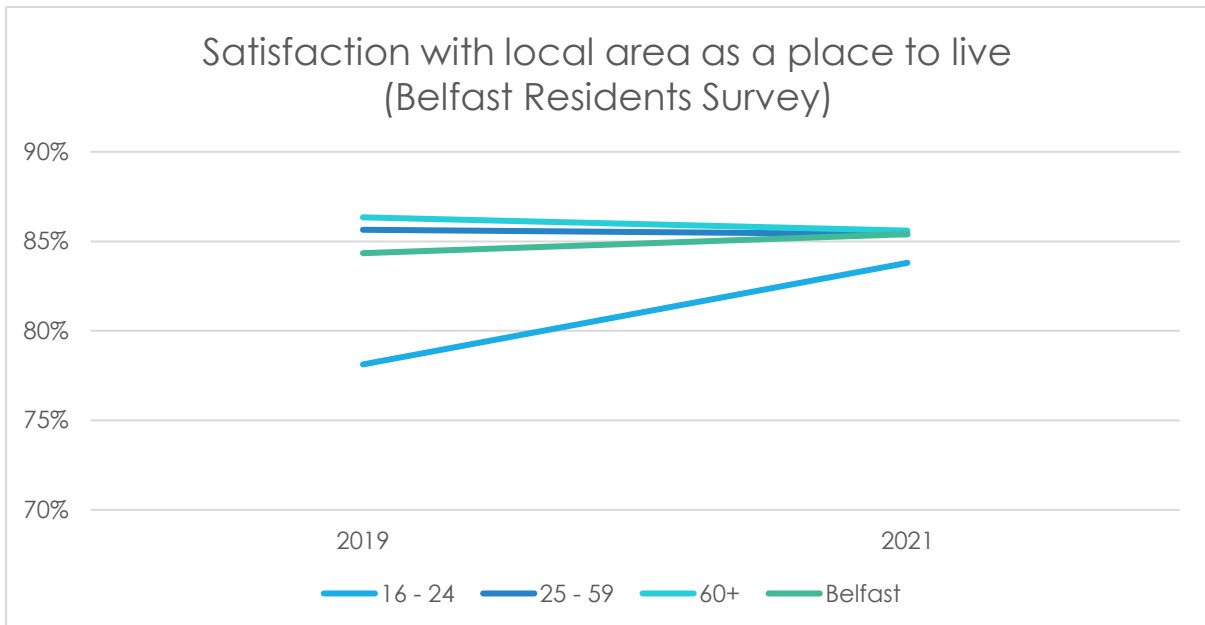


NICOLA asked participants how satisfied they were with “their area” as a place to live. Nine out of 10 Belfast-based respondents (90.4 per cent) reported they were very satisfied or fairly satisfied. This is slightly less than across the whole of NI, where 95.3 per cent of respondents were very or fairly satisfied.

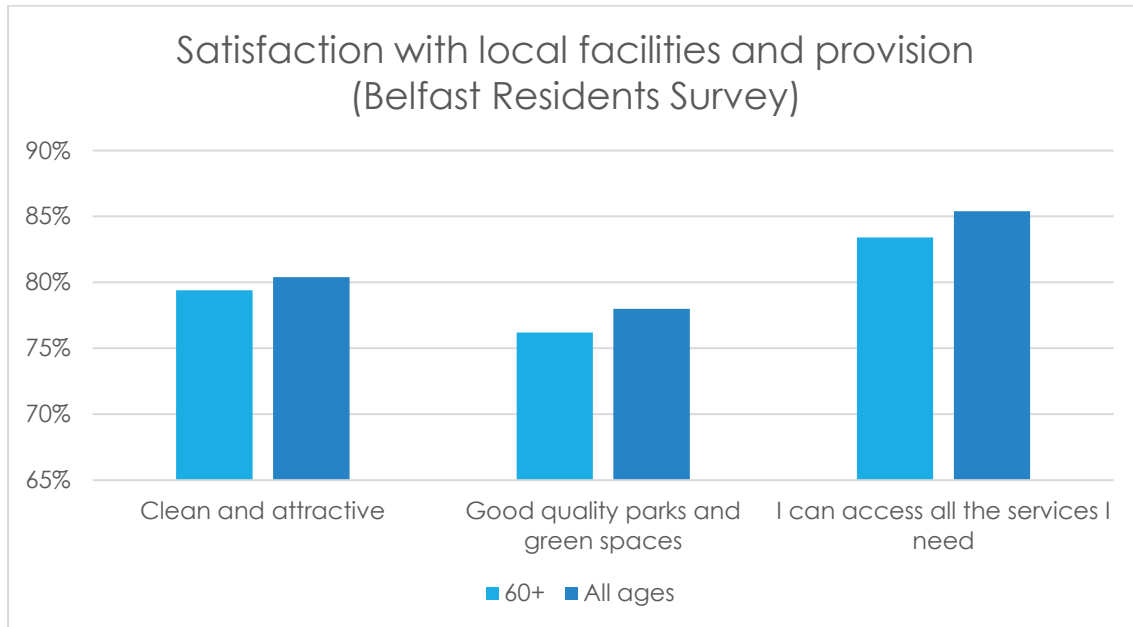


Satisfaction with local area

According to the Belfast Residents Survey, 85.4 per cent of older people are satisfied with their local area. This is comparable to the whole population of Belfast.

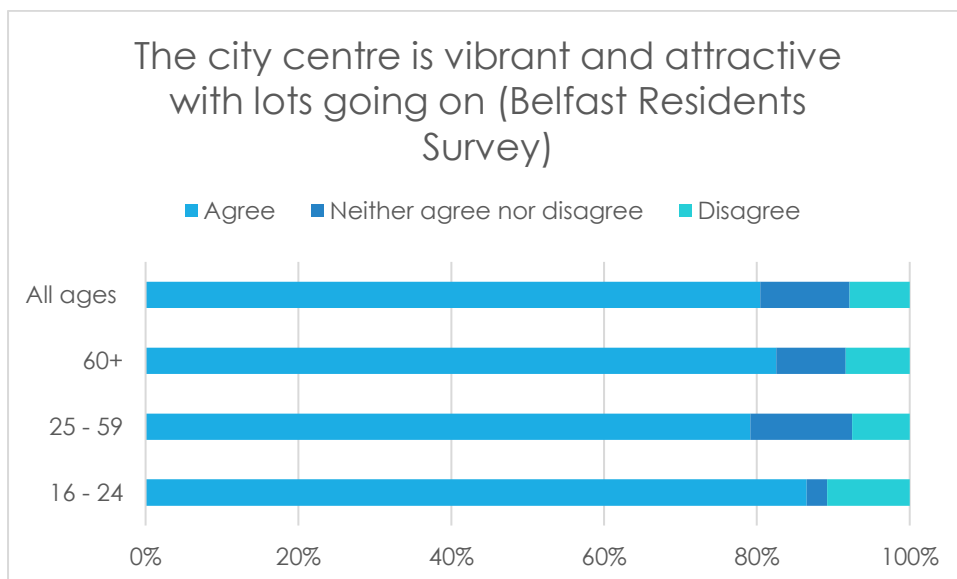


The majority of older people also felt their local area was clean and attractive, had good quality parks and green spaces and had the services they need.

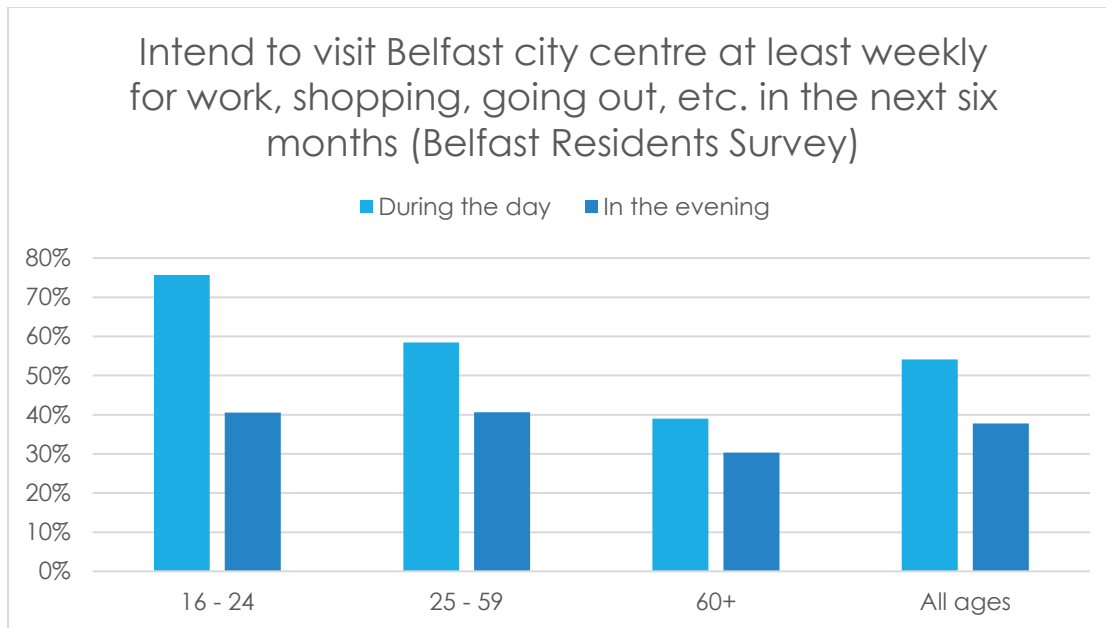


Belfast city centre

Just over 8 out of 10 residents aged 60 and over (80.9 per cent) agree that the city centre is vibrant and attractive with lots going on. This is a slight decrease from 2019 when 82.6 per cent of those aged 60 and over agreed.

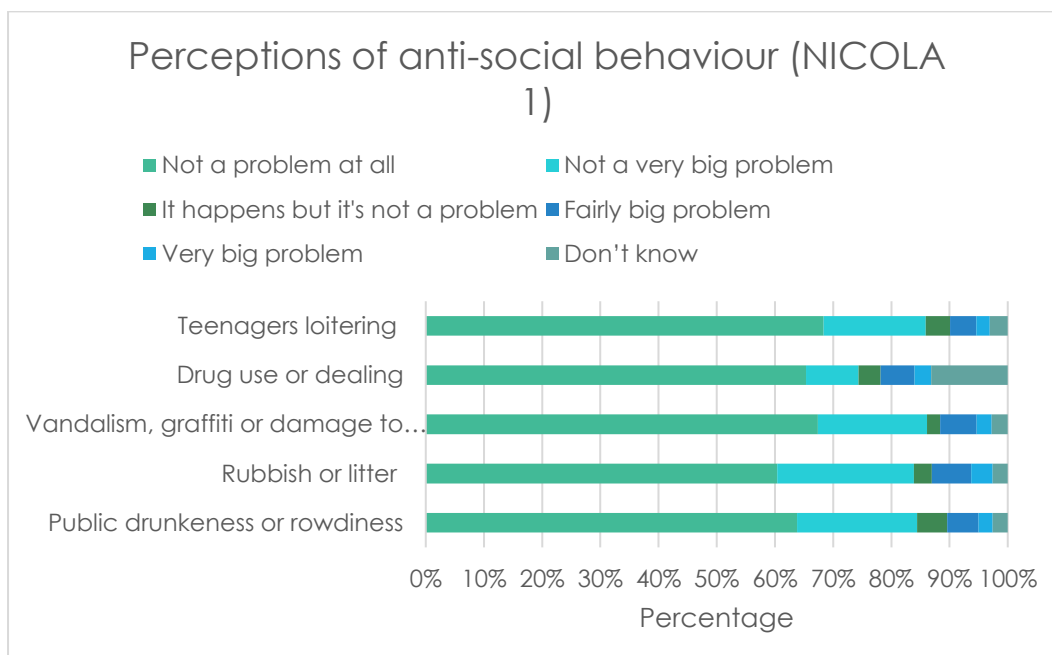


Older people are less likely to visit the city centre at least once a week than the rest of the population.



Anti-social behaviour

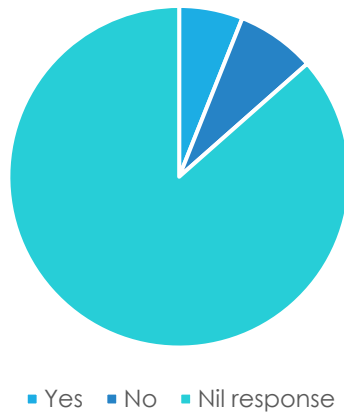
The majority of NICOLA Wave 1 respondents found that anti-social behaviour was not a problem or not a very big problem.



Access to public toilets

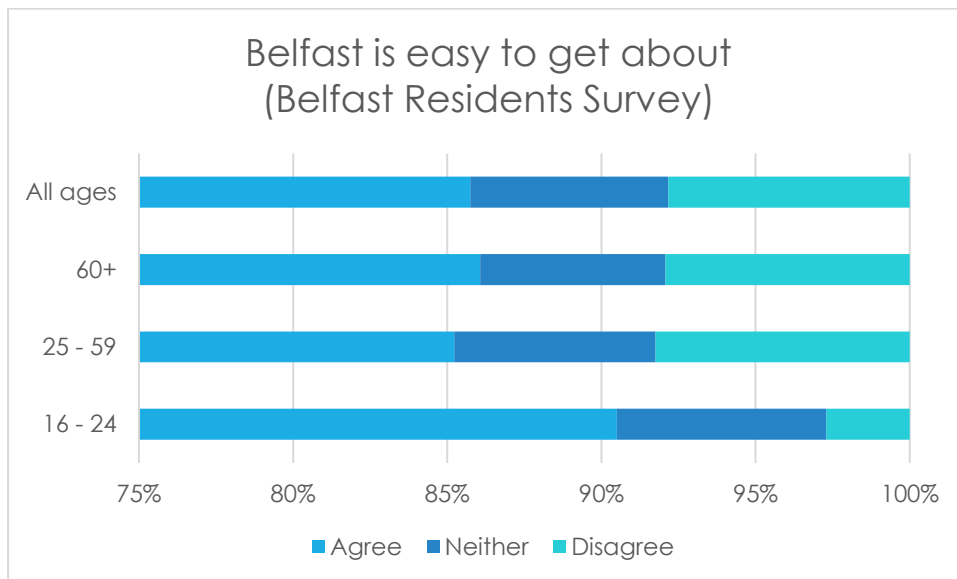
Access to public toilets is frequently cited as an age-friendly barrier. 6 per cent of NICOLA Wave 1 respondents reported that their activities were limited by urinary incontinence.

Activities limited by urinary incontinence (NICOLA 1)



Transportation

The Belfast Residents Survey 2021 asked people whether they felt Belfast is easy to get about with good roads, railway and public transport. People aged 60 and over were more likely to disagree (7.9 per cent) than those aged 16 to 24 (2.7 per cent).



Public transport

NI wide

Anyone aged 60 to 64 can access free transport on all bus and rail journeys in NI and all residents aged 65 and over can access free all-Ireland travel with a Senior SmartPass. According to the Department for Infrastructure,⁸ there are 330,437 Smart Passes held by older people in NI, which is an estimated 77 per cent of the eligible population.

Research by the Department of Infrastructure⁹ found that:

- 88 per cent of SmartPass holders agreed that having a pass increased their use of public transport
- 85 per cent said it enabled them to make more social visits

⁸ NI transport statistics 2020/1

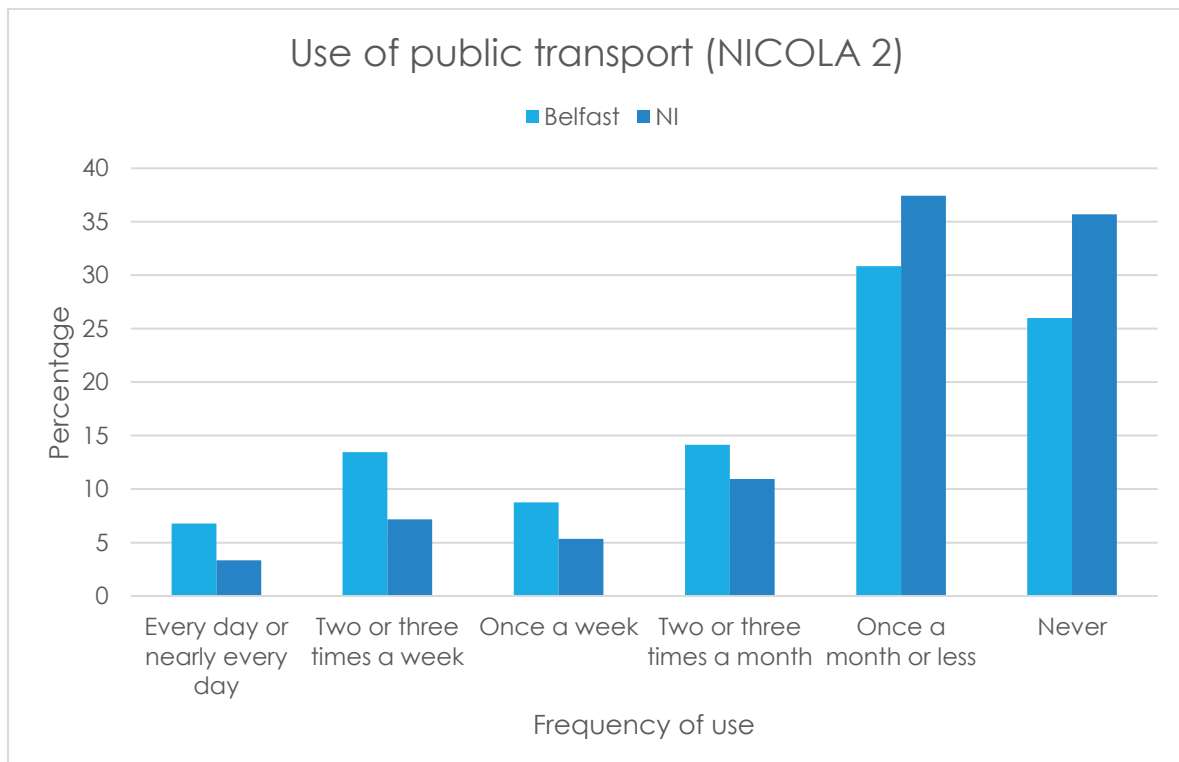
⁹ NI Concessionary Fares Scheme, 2019 Survey Analysis

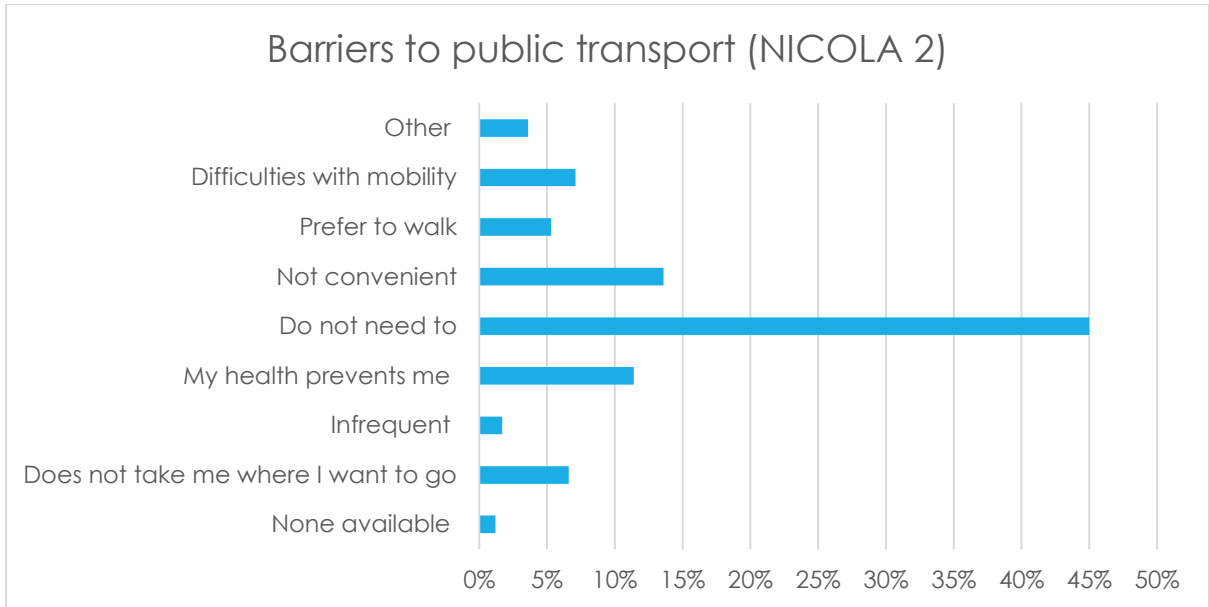
- 86 per cent agreed that it enabled them to be more active
- 23 per cent felt less reliance on friends and family for transport was the most important benefit of having a SmartPass.

The research also considered what may make it difficult for people to use their SmartPass. The most frequently response was “lack of services” (21 per cent), followed by “no direct services” (17 per cent) and “bus/train stop is too far away” (12 per cent).

Belfast

According to NICOLA, 29 per cent of older Belfast residents use public transport at least weekly, while 74 per cent use it at least once a month. The main barrier to access is “Do not need to” (45 per cent) followed by “Not convenient” (13.6 per cent) and “My health won't let me” (11.4 per cent). No one in Belfast cited fear or crime or “too dirty” as a barrier. Overall, public transport usage is substantially higher in Belfast than across the rest of NI.



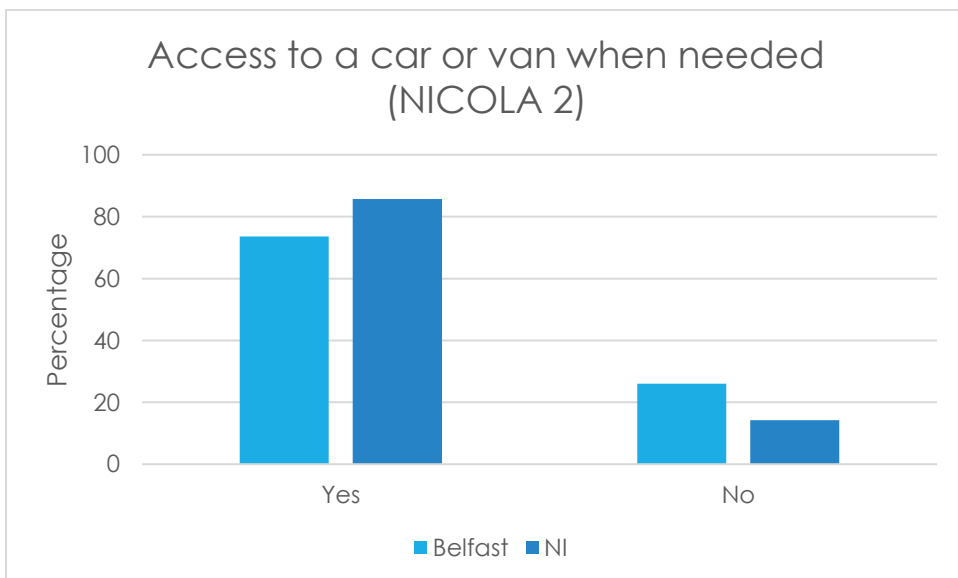


Community transport

11.9 per cent of people surveyed during NICOLA Wave 2 got lifts from friends and family outside their household. 9.8 per cent used taxis. Less than 1 per cent reported using transport provided by a hospital, day centre or lunch club, and less than 1 per cent reported using door-to-door community transport. No one reported using transport provided by a care home.

Use of a car

At 26 per cent, fewer older people do not have access to a car or van in Belfast compared to 14.2 per cent across NI as a whole.



Road safety

People aged 50 and over made up 25 per cent of road traffic collision injuries and casualties between January and September 2021¹⁰.

¹⁰ PSNI Road Accident Data 1 January 2021 to 30 September 2021

Housing

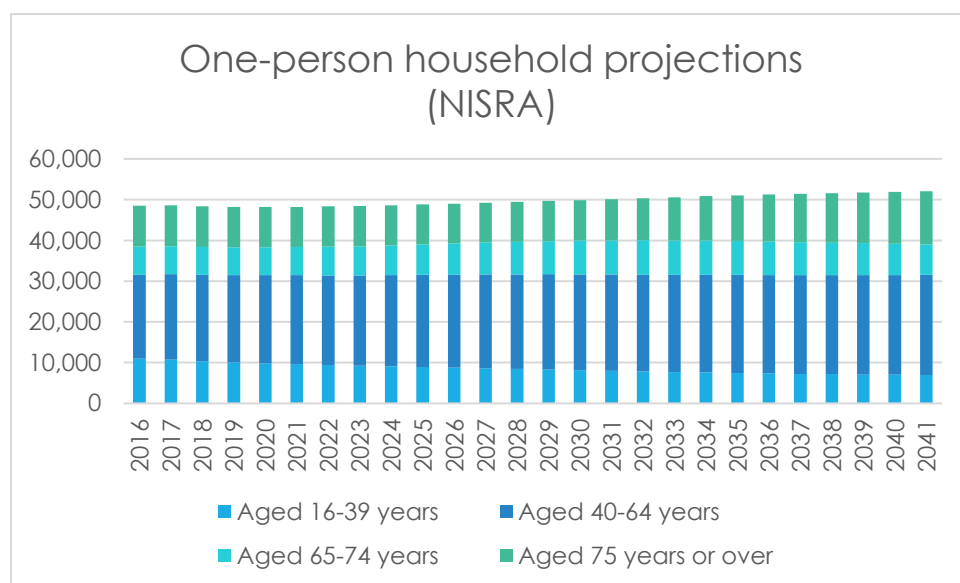
Living arrangements

NI wide

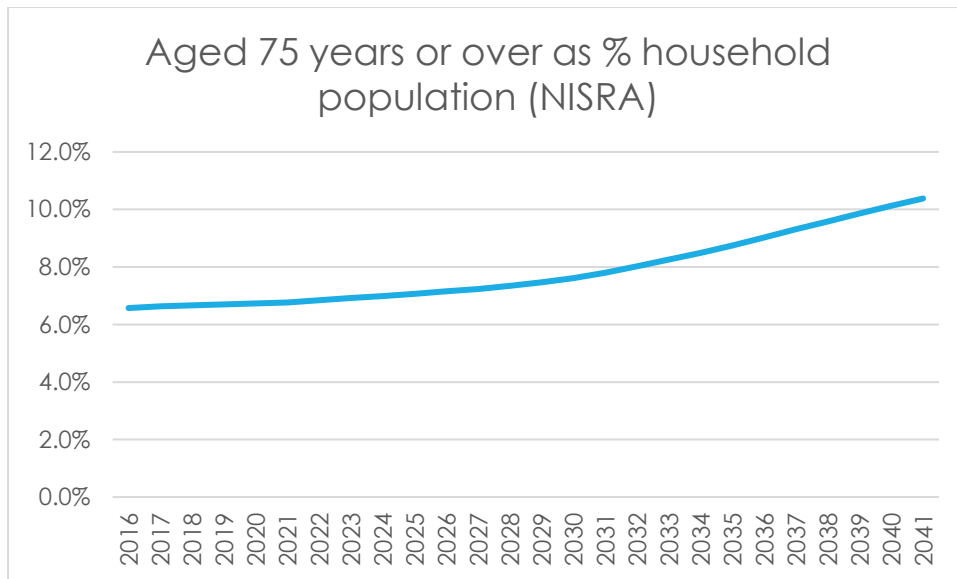
In NI according to the 2020/21 Continuous Household Survey:

- 22 per cent of households are made up of 2 adults where 1 or both is aged 60 or over
- 19 per cent of households are made up of a single adult aged 60 or over.

The percentage of households made up solely of people aged 60 or over has increased year on year and is projected to increase further still. The number of households consisting of one adult aged 75 or over is likely to increase from 47,249 in 2016 to 79,622 in 2041 (growth of 68.5 per cent).¹¹



¹¹ www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/northern-ireland-household-projections-2016-based



According to a Northern Ireland Housing Executive report, older people aged 55 and over are more likely to be living in owner-occupied homes (78 per cent compared with 66 per cent of all households) and less likely to live in the private rented sector (7 per cent compared to 18 per cent of all households).¹²

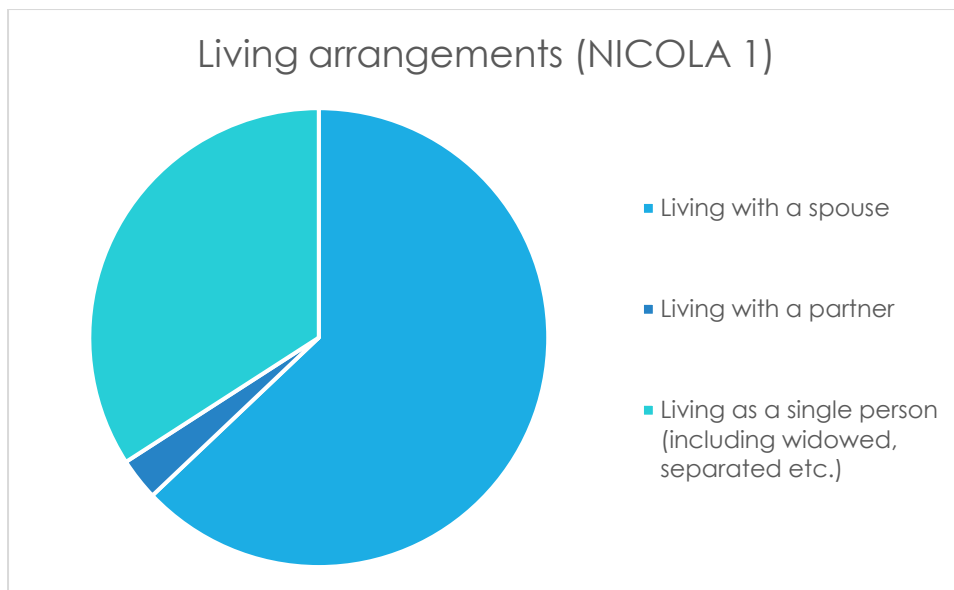
Belfast

In Belfast on Census day 2011 there were:

- 14,555 one-person households where the resident was aged 65 and over. This equates to 12 per cent of all households in Belfast.
- 6,357 one-family houses where all residents were aged 65 and over (5 per cent of all households)
- 615 other household types where all residents were aged 65 and over

According to NICOLA, two thirds of older people in Belfast live with a partner or spouse, while just over one third live as a single person.

¹² Housing and Older People: Housing Issues, Aspirations and Needs

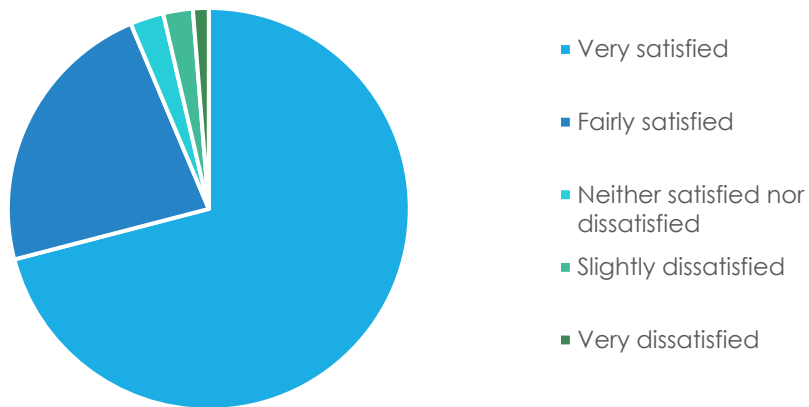


Satisfaction

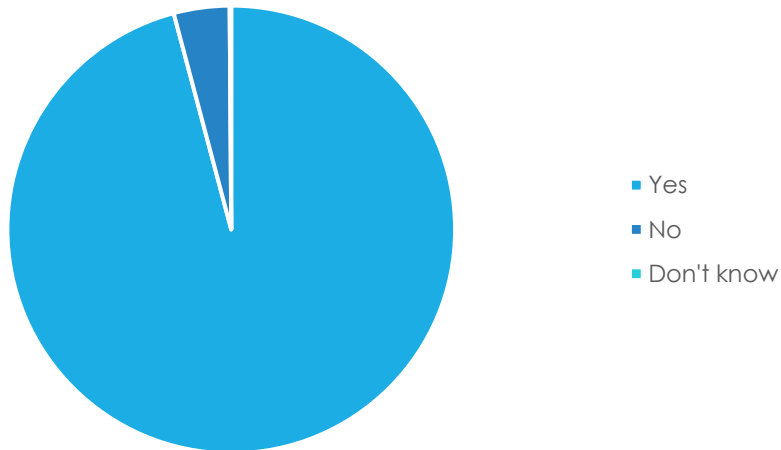
In the 2021 Belfast Residents Survey, people aged 60 and over ranked their living accommodation as 7.6 out of 10 (7.89 in 2019), which was the same as how the whole Belfast population ranked their accommodation.

According to NICOLA, the majority of older people are satisfied with their home and feel that it meets their needs. Of those who did not feel that their home was adequate for their needs, just under a third (31.4 per cent) felt they needed to downsize and just under a third (31.4 per cent) felt they needed a level-access property (such as a bungalow).

Satisfaction with accommodation (NICOLA 1)



Home is adequate for needs (NICOLA 2)

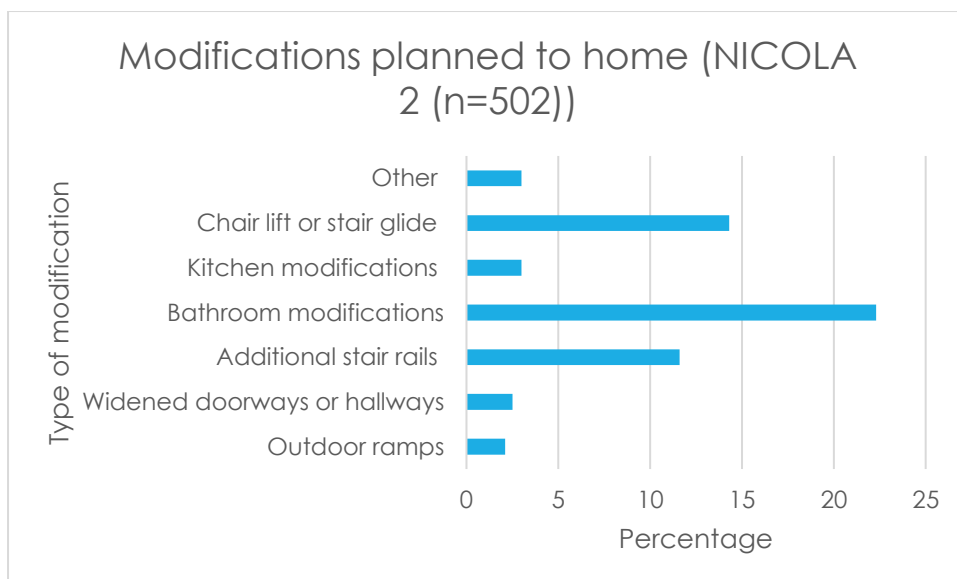


Modifications

The Housing Executive spent £2.36m on adaptations in 2020/21.¹³

Among those planning modifications within the next year, the most frequent cited was bathroom modifications followed by a chair lift or stair glide and additional stair rails.

¹³ Belfast Housing Investment Plan Annual Update 2021



Supported living

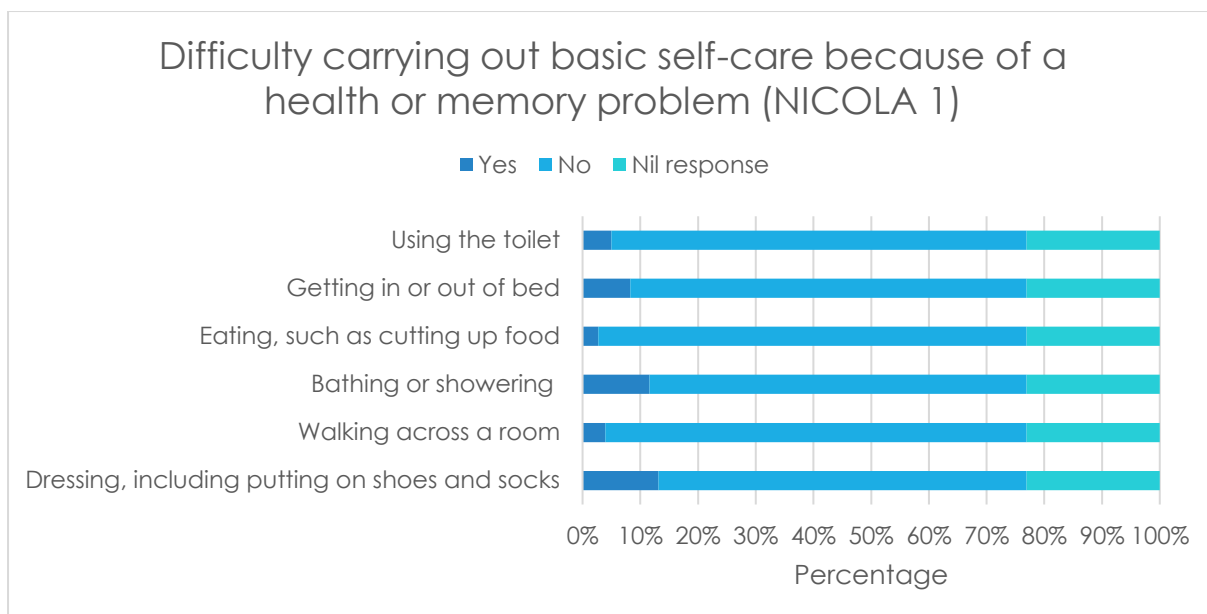
There are 41 residential homes in Belfast with capacity of 1,156 places.¹⁴ This includes the Belfast Trust's nine residential homes. These homes provide care for people aged over 65 who have physical and cognitive impairment. Some of the homes provide beds for short-term stays, respite and day care to assist carers. Five of the homes provide accommodation for people with dementia, and one is for physically frail older people.

In 2020 the number of people aged 65 and over in receipt of intensive domiciliary care¹⁵ in the Belfast Trust area was 1,182, an increase on the previous year's figure of 1,014.

13.2 per cent of NICOLA respondents had difficulty dressing, 11.6 per cent had difficulty bathing or showering and 8.3 per cent had difficulty getting in or out of bed.

¹⁴ <https://www.rqia.org.uk/what-we-do/register/services-registered-with-rqia/> (Belfast address and excluding Carlisle House)

¹⁵ The intensive domiciliary support scheme provides as with all aspects of daily living such as personal care tasks, medication, meal provision, household tasks, shopping and carer relief.



Housing stress

Older people aged 65 and over made up 10 per cent of Housing Executive's waiting list applicants in Belfast in 2021.¹⁶ This equated to 1,223 people, of whom 845 were in housing stress.¹⁷

In the six months January to June 2021, 1,087 pensioner households presented as homeless in NI, an increase on the previous six-month figure, which was 940. 15 per cent of the 5,429 households accepted as homeless in NI were pensioner households.¹⁸

Fuel poverty

The Housing Executive's House Condition Survey (2016) indicated that in 2016, 22 per cent of all households were in fuel poverty, rising to 34 per cent of older household types and 38 per cent of households headed by a person aged 75 or over.¹⁹

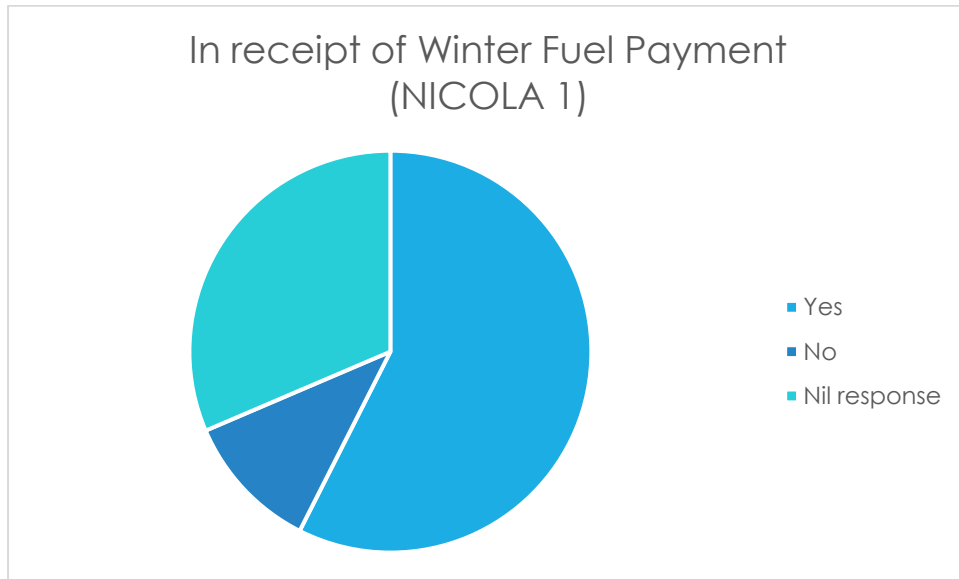
¹⁶ NIHE Belfast Housing Investment Plan Annual Update 2021

¹⁷ A household is in housing stress if it is on the Housing Executive waiting list and is assessed to be in the most need for reasons of health, intimidation, insecurity of tenure and housing conditions.

¹⁸ NI Homelessness Bulletin January to June 2021

¹⁹ The 2021 survey has been delayed until 2022 as a result of the pandemic.

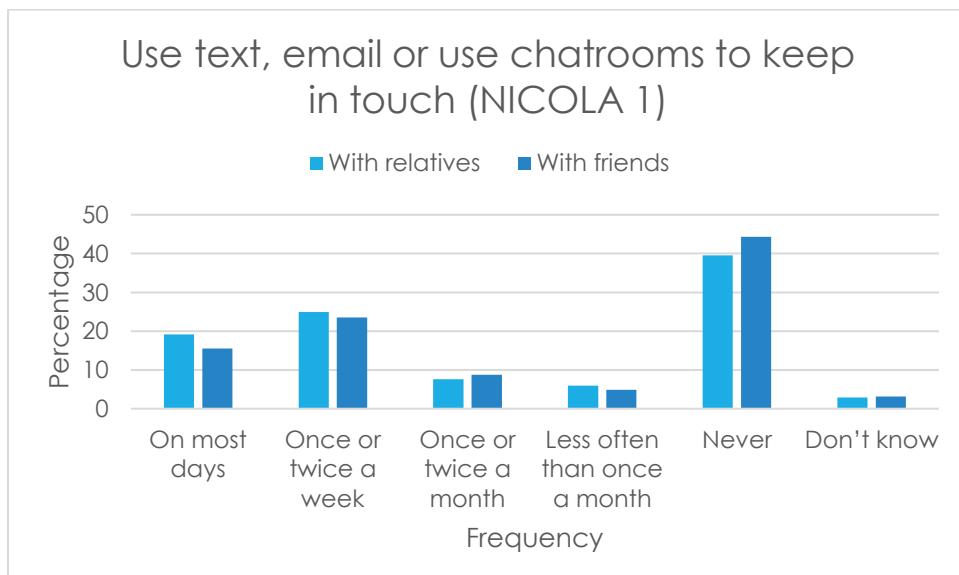
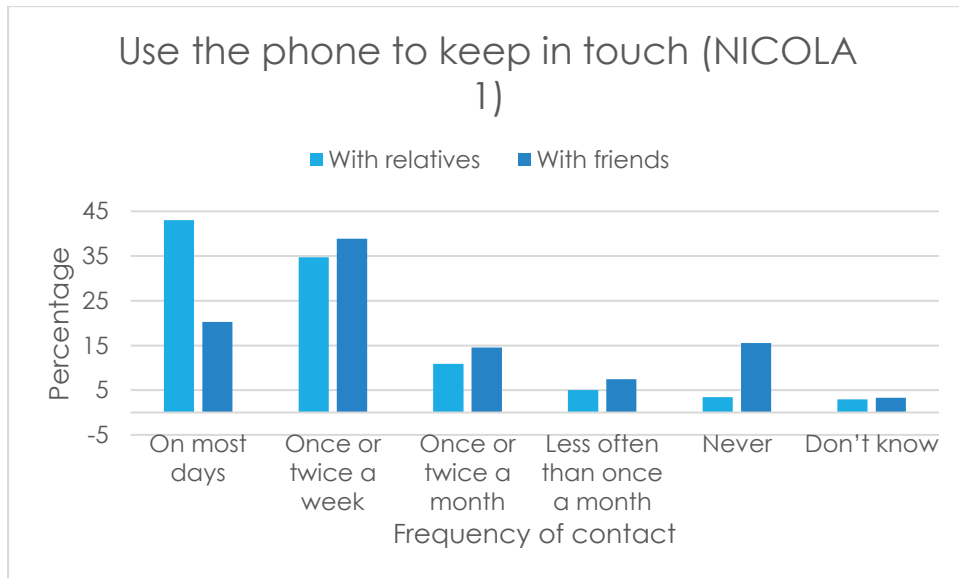
57 per cent of NICOLA Wave 1 respondents were in receipt of Winter Fuel Payments.

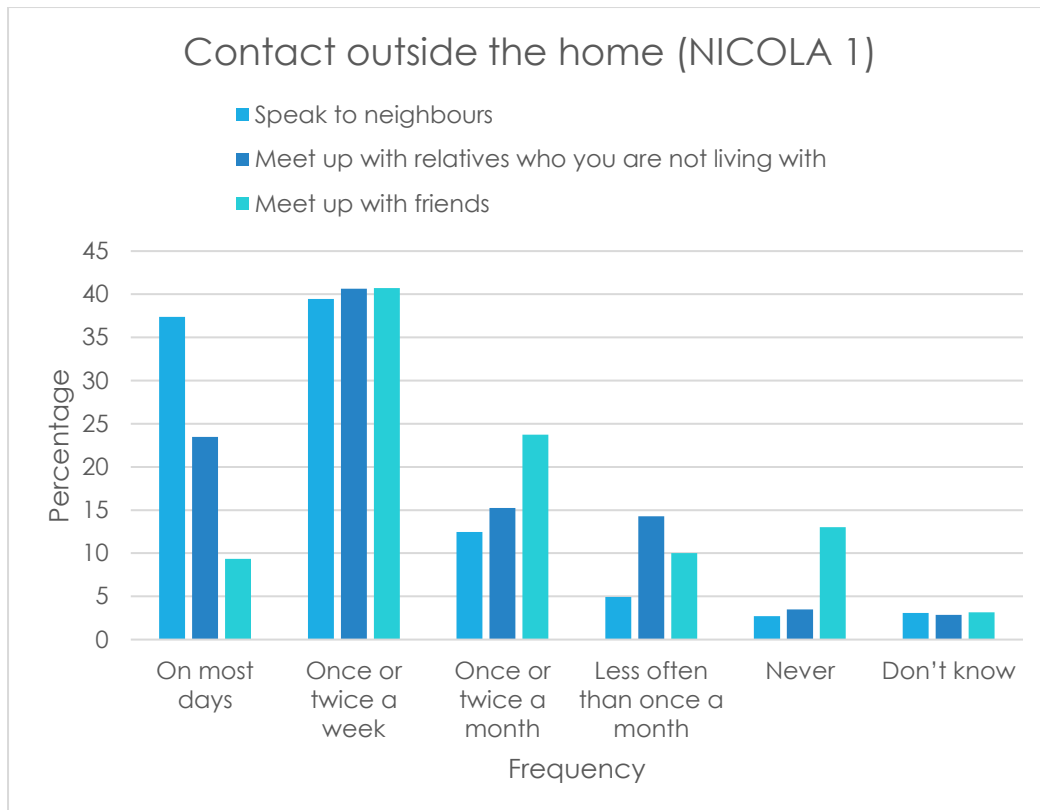


Social participation

Contact with family and friends

According to NICOLA, the phone is the most popular way older people keep in touch with family and friends. 39.5 per cent never use text, email or chatrooms to keep in touch, and 2.7 per cent of respondents never have contact outside the home.



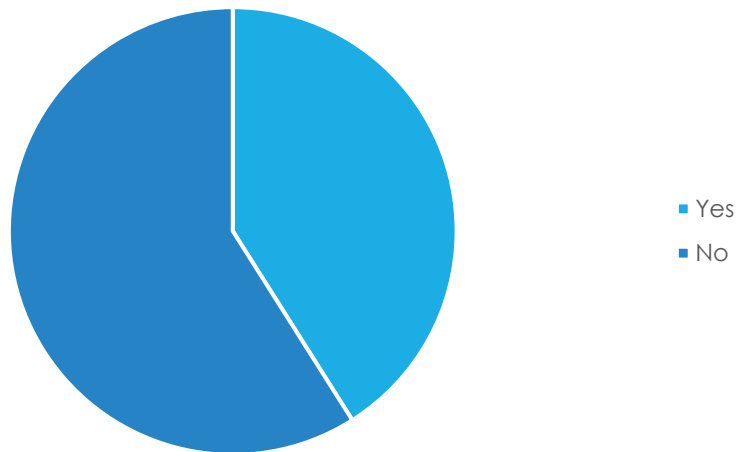


Social groups

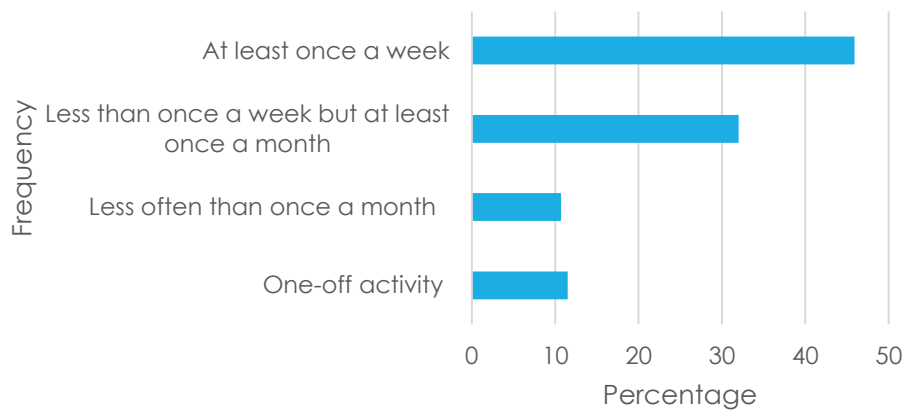
Participation in culture, arts and sports declines with age with 96 per cent of 25- to 34-year-olds engaging in 2020/21 compared to 83 per cent of 55- to 64-year-olds and 73 per cent of people aged 65 and over.

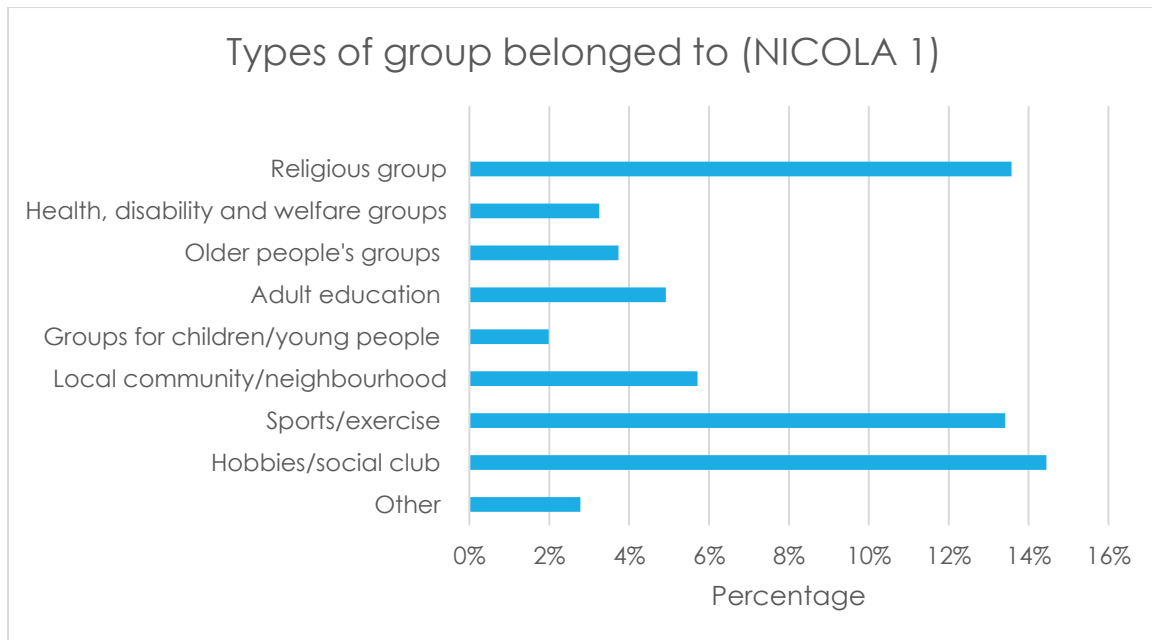
41 per cent of respondents in NICOLA Wave 2 had participated in a social group in the past 12 months. This may be a slight increase from Wave 1 when 38 per cent of respondents participated in a group in the last 12 months. Most people participated weekly. Hobbies/social clubs, religious groups and sports/exercise groups were the most frequent type of groups participated in.

Participation in any groups (NICOLA 2)



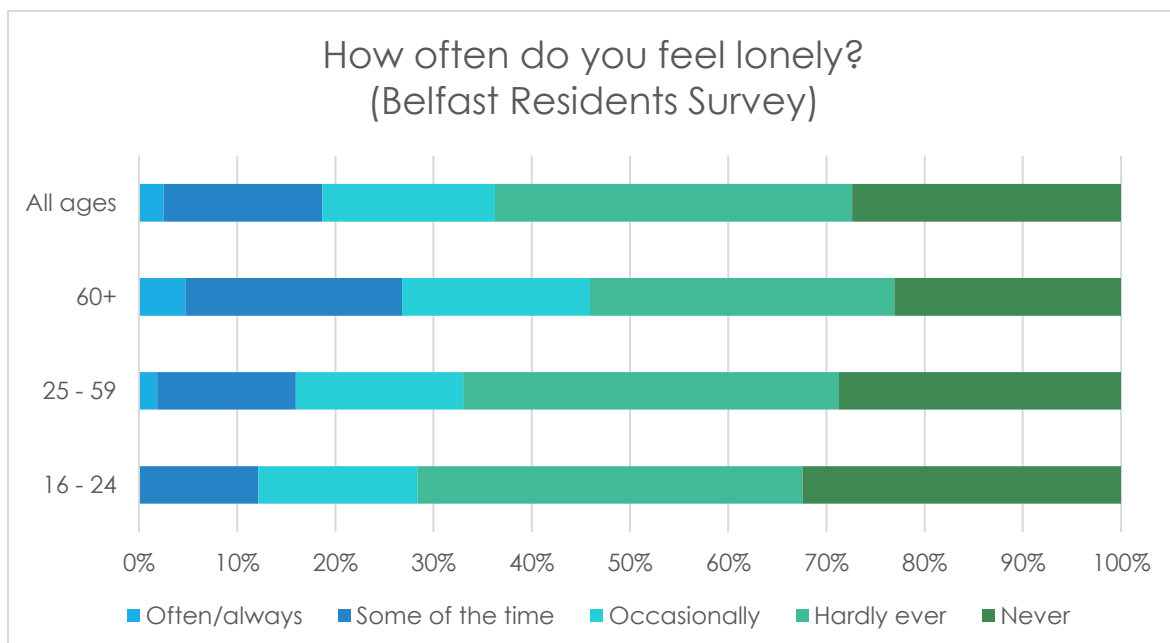
Participation in groups in last 12 months (NICOLA 2 (n=122))





Loneliness

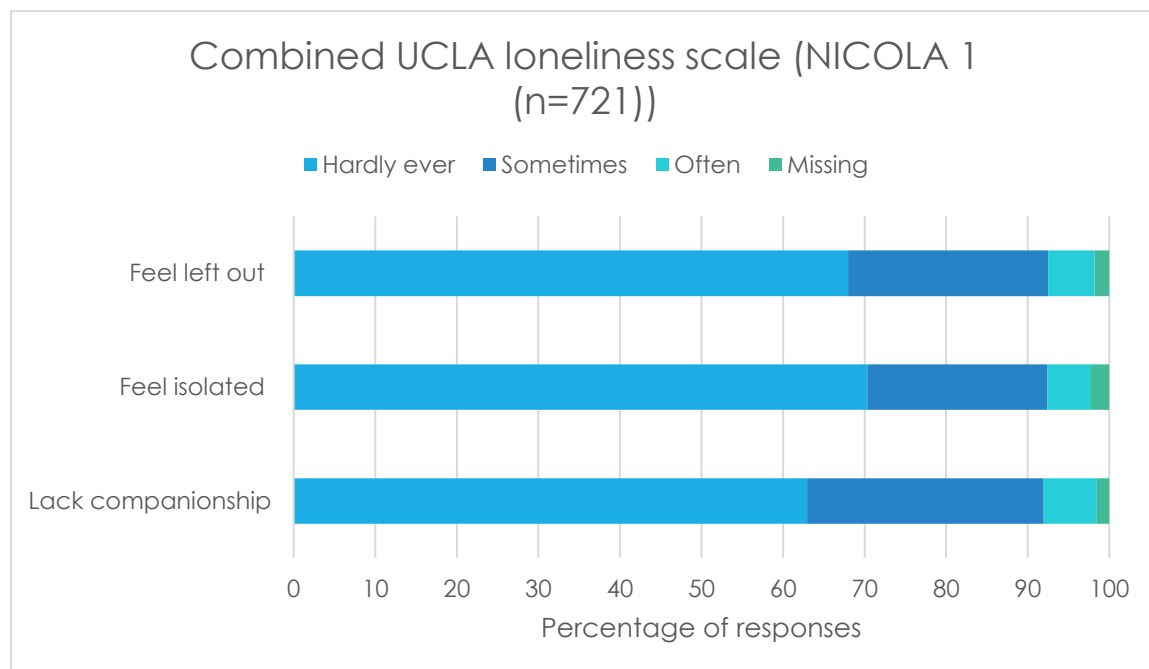
According to the Belfast Residents Survey, people aged 60 and over were more likely to feel lonely often always and sometimes (26.8 per cent) and occasionally (19.1 per cent) than the general Belfast population (18.7 per cent and 17.6 per cent respectively).



Participants in NICOLA Wave 1 were asked to complete the UCLA Loneliness scale.

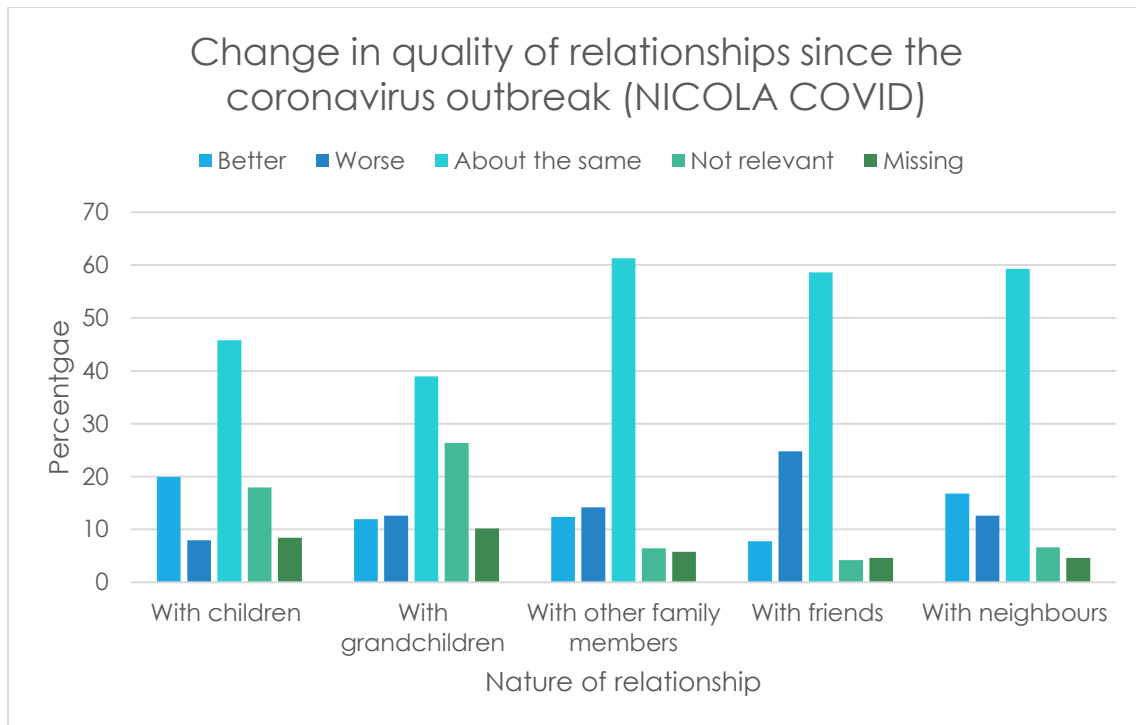
31.3 per cent of respondents said they were lonely some of the time and 7.4 per cent reported that they were often lonely.

UCLA also uses three further indicators – feeling left out, feeling isolated and lacking companionship – to provide a more nuanced and multidimensional measure of loneliness. Anyone who has a combined score of less than six (whereby “hardly ever” is scored 1 and “often” is 3) is defined as lonely. The average score across all respondents is 4.1.

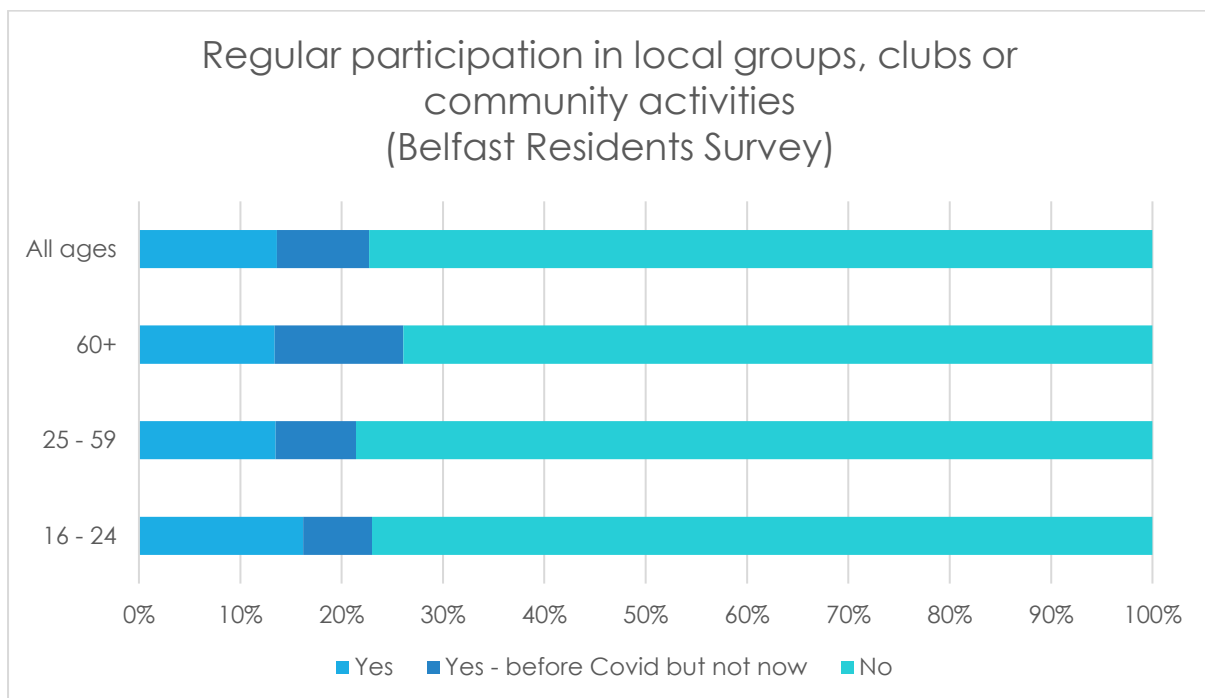


Impact of COVID

The majority of people did not feel that there had been a change in the quality of their relationships since the pandemic. Relationships with children and neighbours were most likely to have improved, while relationships with friends were most likely to have got worse.

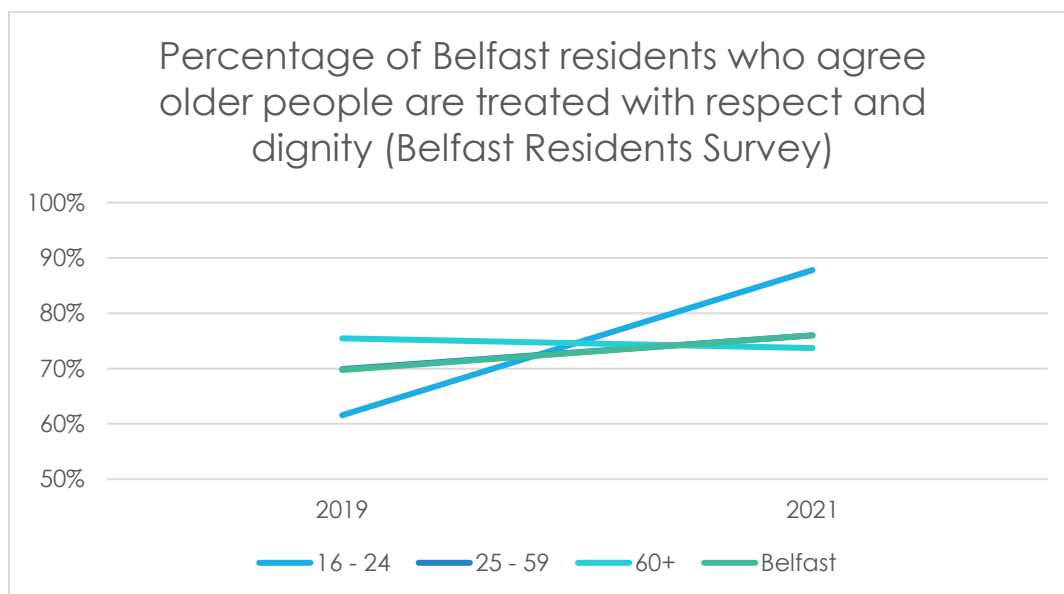


13 per cent of Belfast Residents Survey respondents aged 60 and over indicated that they had regularly (at least once every four weeks) taken part in any local groups, clubs or community activities before Covid, but they no longer took part now. This was higher than among 16- to 59-year-olds.

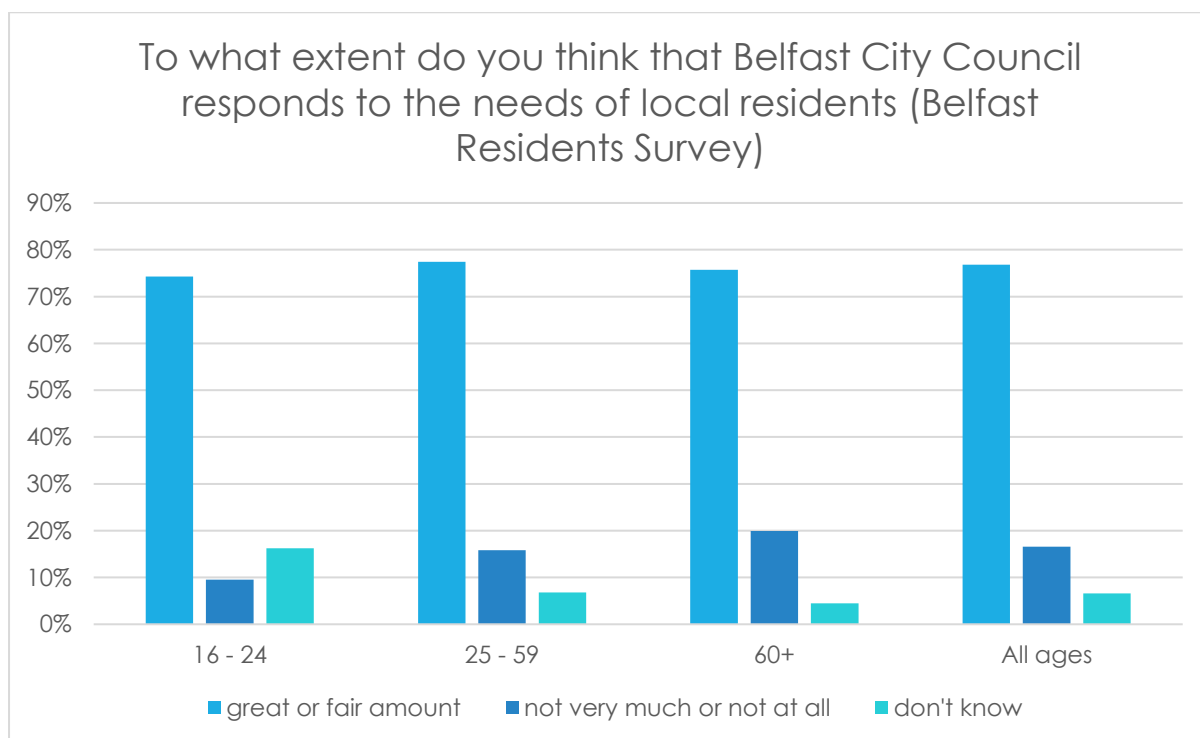


Respect and social inclusion

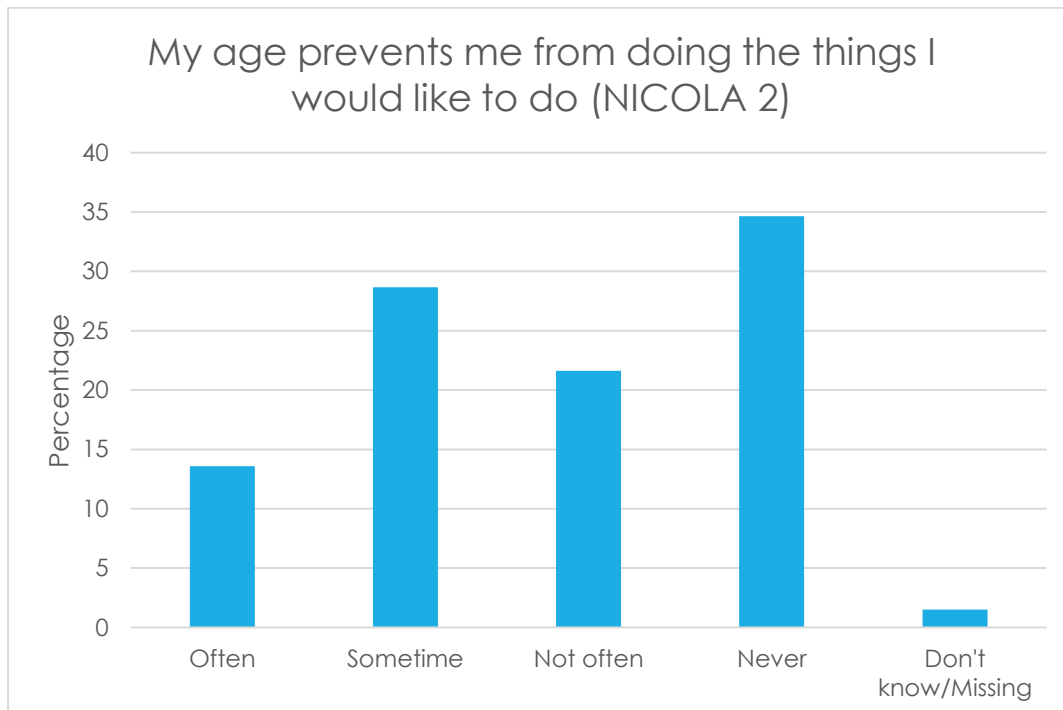
73.7 of Belfast residents aged 60 and over agree that older people are treated with respect and dignity.



At nearly 1 in 4 (19.9 per cent), those aged 60 and over may be less likely than other age groups to agree that Belfast City Council responds to the needs of local residents.



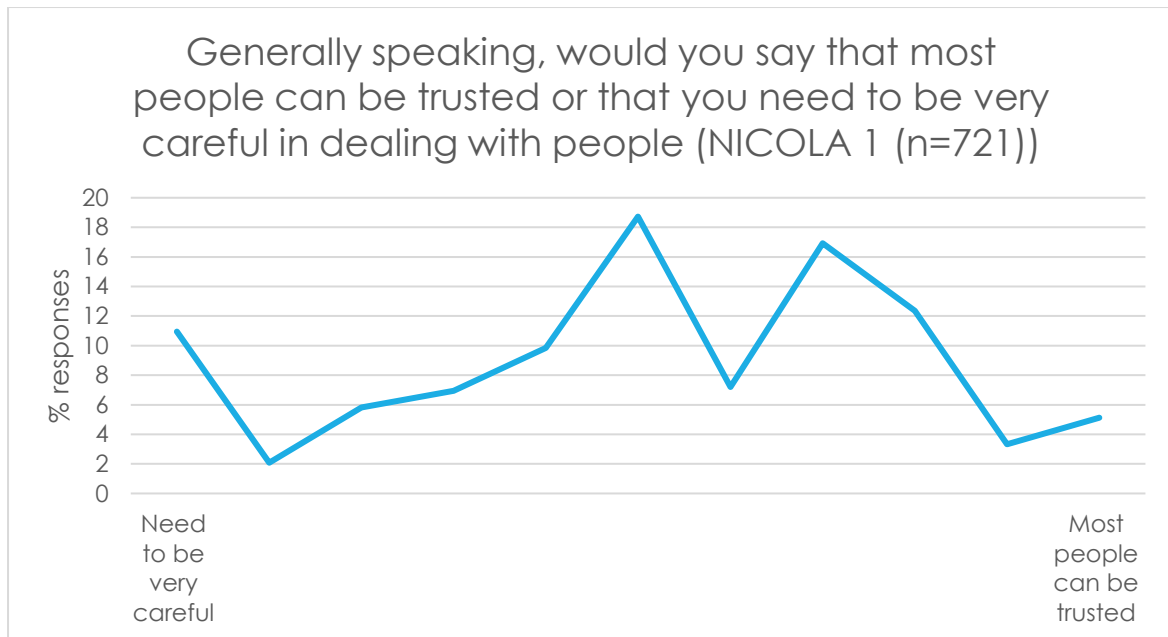
Four out of 10 NICOLA Wave 2 respondents agreed that their age stopped them from sometimes or often doing the things they would like to do.



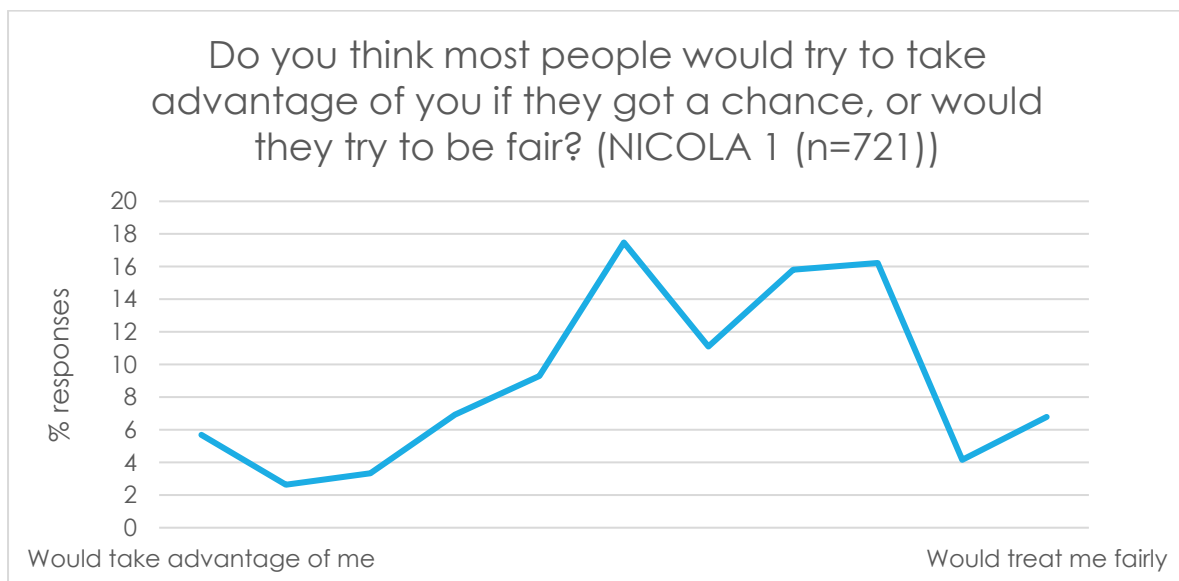
Social networks

Having trust in people and social networks you can rely on if anything goes wrong provides reassurance and are protective factors for good health and wellbeing.

During NICOLA Wave 1, participants were asked whether they felt most people can be trusted or if they needed to be very careful in dealing with people. They ranked their response on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 meant "Need to be very careful" and 10 meant "Most people can be trusted".

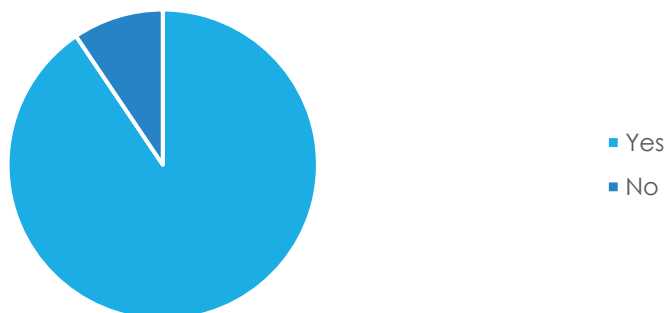


Participants were then asked whether they felt most people would try to take advantage of them if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair. They ranked their response on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 meant “Would take advantage of me” and 10 meant “Would treat me fairly”.



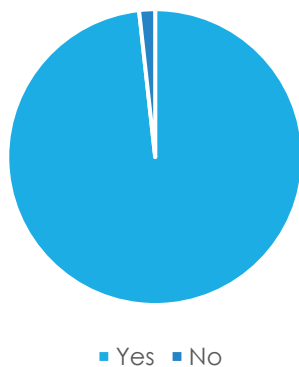
In case of an emergency, the majority of people have someone they can ask to borrow money, but nearly 1 in 10 do not.

If you needed to borrow some money to see you through a few days, is there anyone you could ask for help? (NICOLA 1)

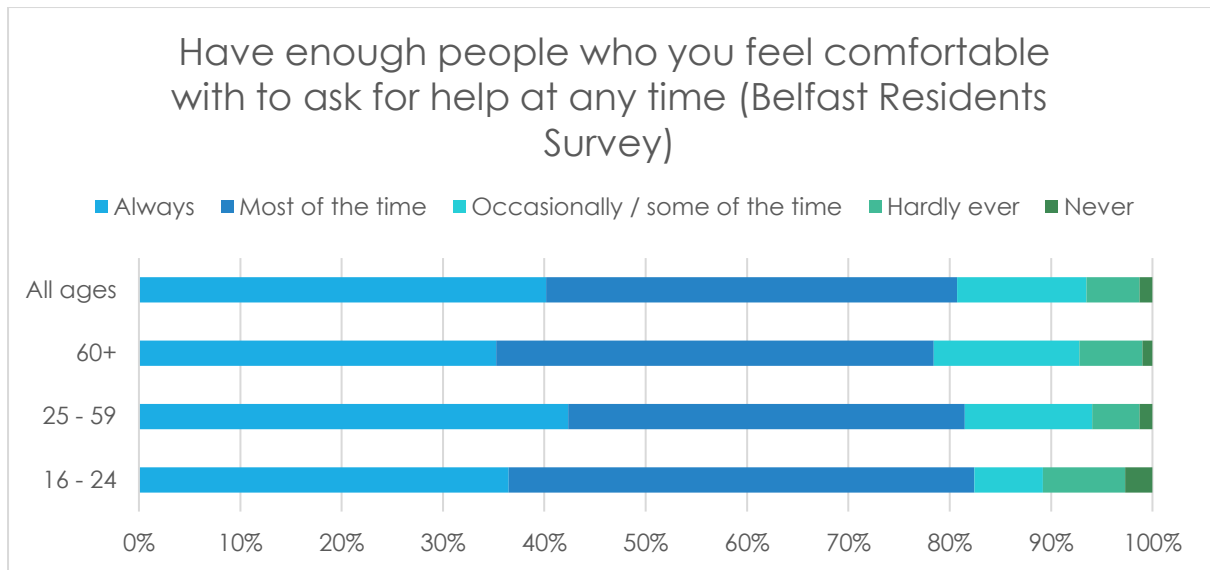


The vast majority of people (98 per cent) have someone they can rely on if they were ill in bed and needed help.

If you are ill in bed and need help at home, is there anyone you could ask for help? (NICOLA 1)

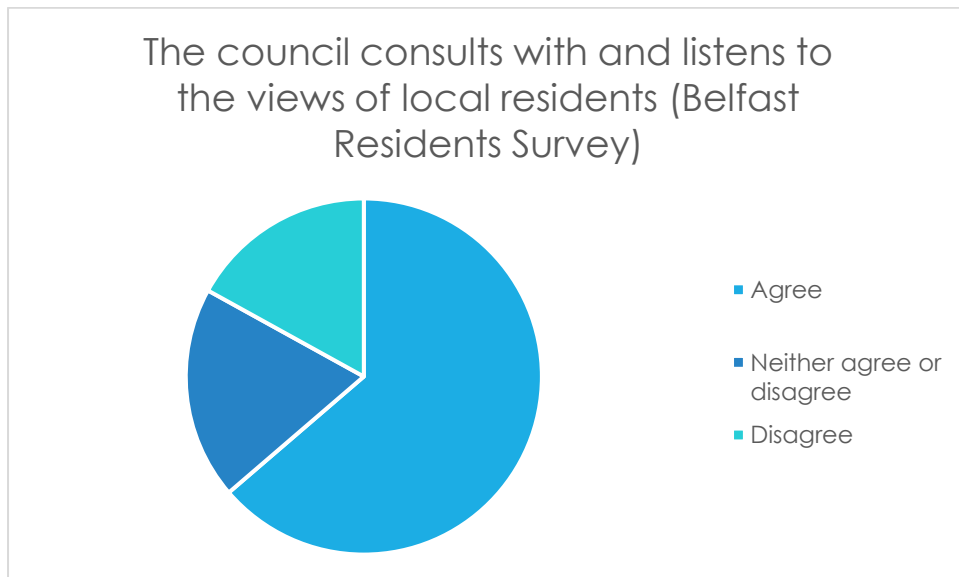


According to the Belfast Residents Survey, people aged 60 and over may be the least likely to "always" have people to ask for help.



Agency

In 2021, Belfast City Council asked its residents whether “The council consults with and listens to the views of local residents. 62.3 per cent of residents agreed 60 and over agreed. This is on a par with the whole population of Belfast residents of all ages (63.2 per cent agreed).

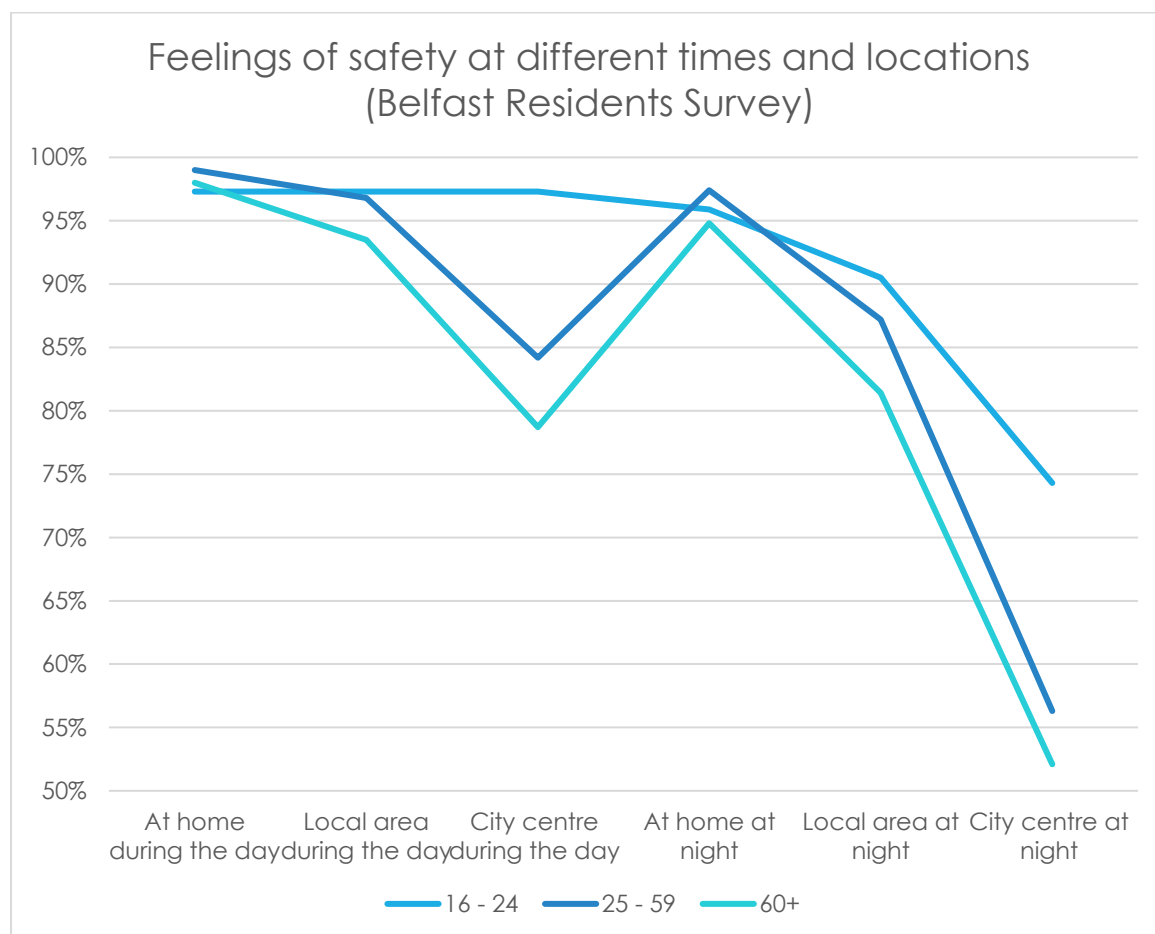


It is, however, a slight reduction on 2019 findings when residents were asked whether they felt “able to have a say”, and 64.6 per cent of people aged 60 and over reported they were satisfied (compared to 59.5 per cent of the whole population).

Safety

In NI, there were 15 crime victims aged 65 or over per 1,000 of the population aged 65 and over. This compares to 52 crime victims aged 18 to 64 per 1,000 of the population aged 18 to 64. 70 per cent of crimes against older people were theft and criminal damage followed by violence against a person at 27 per cent.²⁰

According to the Belfast Residents Survey, older people are least likely to feel safe in their local area and in the city centre during the day. They are also least likely to feel safe at night in their own home, local area and city centre.

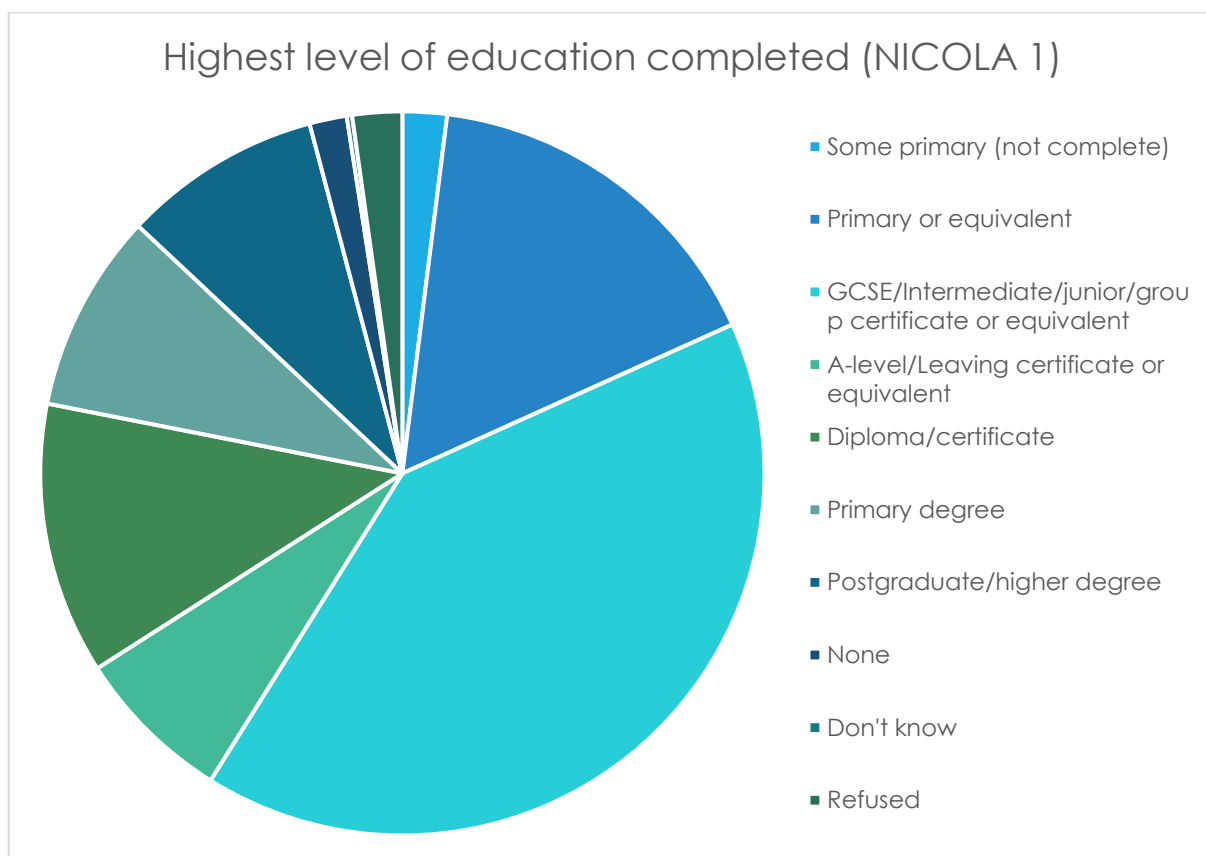


²⁰ PSNI, Trends in Police Recorded Crime in Northern Ireland, 1998/99 to 2019/20 (November 2020), www.psni.police.uk/globalassets/inside-the-psni/our-statistics/police-recorded-crime-statistics/documents/police-recorded-crime-in-northern-ireland-1998-99-to-2019-20.pdf

Civic participation and employment

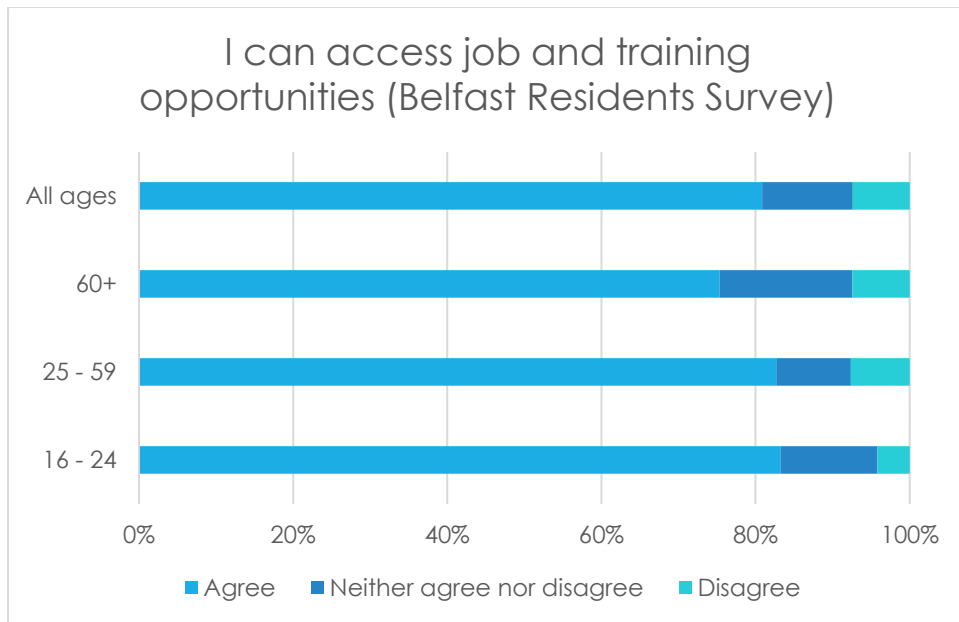
Skills and training

20 per cent of NICOLA respondents had no education or had progressed further than primary school or equivalent. 18 per cent had obtained a degree or higher.



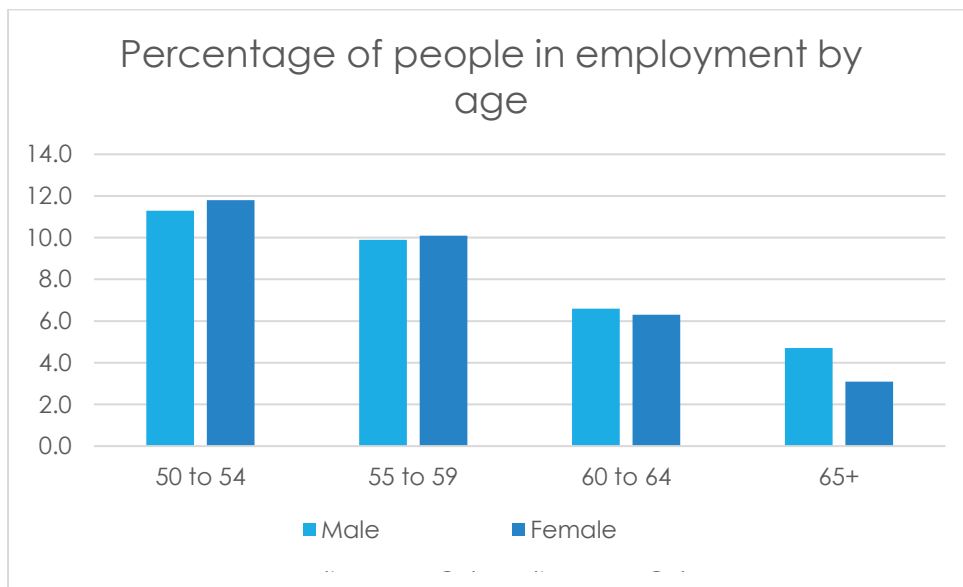
In the 2018/19 academic year, there were 640 higher education and 258 further education enrolments for people aged 60 and over living in Belfast.²¹ According to the 2021 Belfast Residents Survey, older people were less likely to agree that they can access job and training opportunities (66 per cent) than the rest of the population.

²¹ Higher Education Statistics Agency



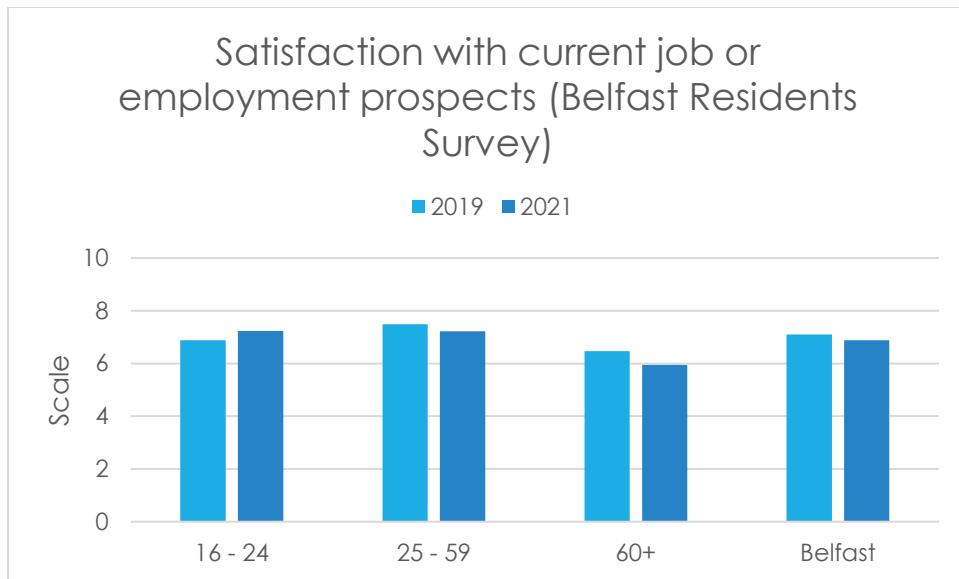
Employment

According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (February 2022) employment decrease over time across age bands in Northern Ireland.

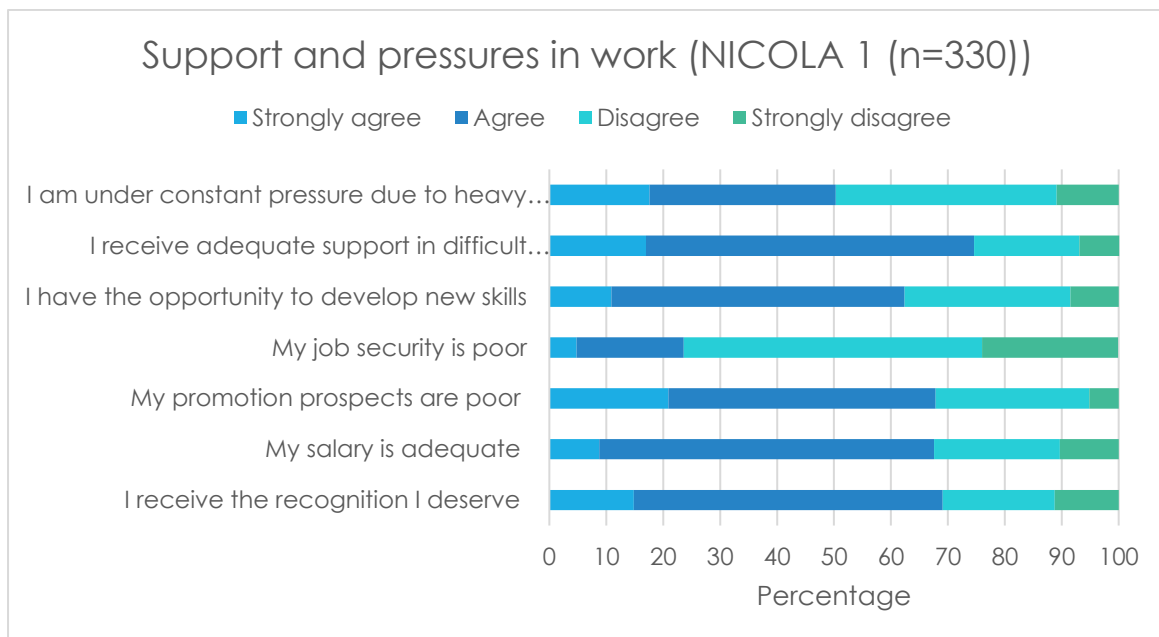


Job satisfaction

According to the Belfast Residents Survey, people aged 60 and over were least likely to be satisfied with their current job or employment prospects, and the level of satisfaction has fallen since 2019.



The majority of NICOLA respondents who were in work felt that they received adequate support, had opportunity to develop new skills and adequate salary and recognition. 50 per cent felt under constant pressure due to heavy workload.



Job-related benefits

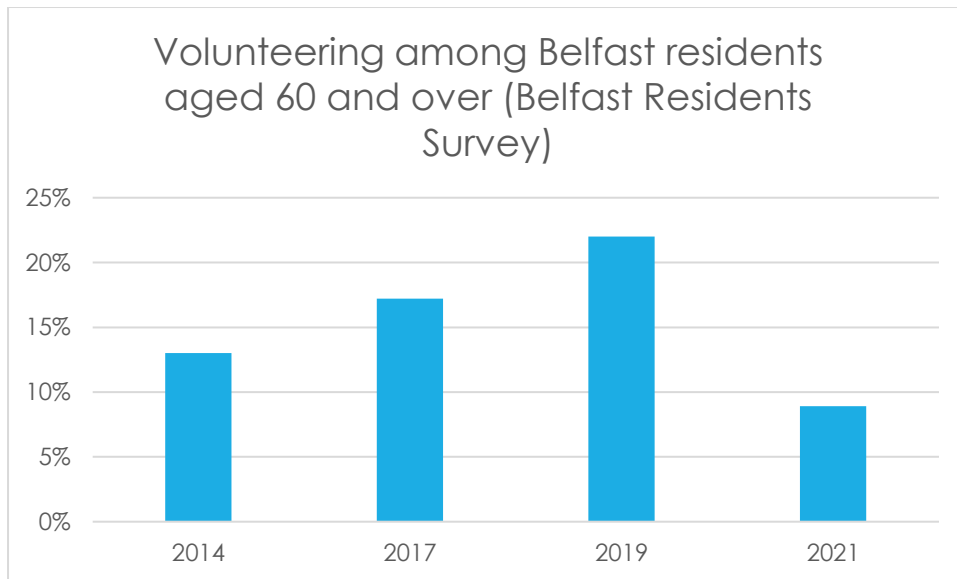
In Belfast in August 2021 there were:

- 15,490 people over 50 in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance
- 1,010 over 50 receiving Job Seekers Allowance

- 1,770 over 50 receiving Income Support²²
- 133,140 claimants of Universal Credit²³

Volunteering

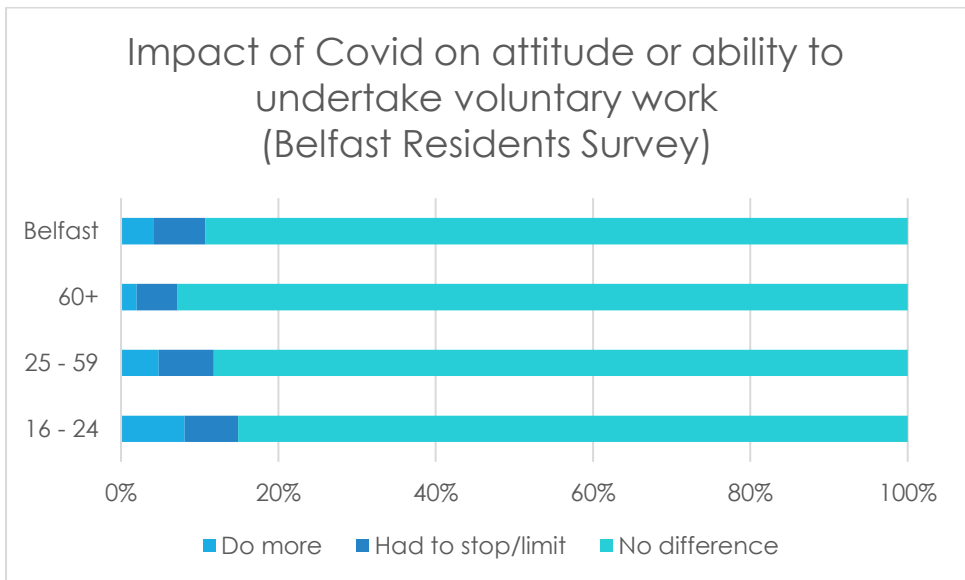
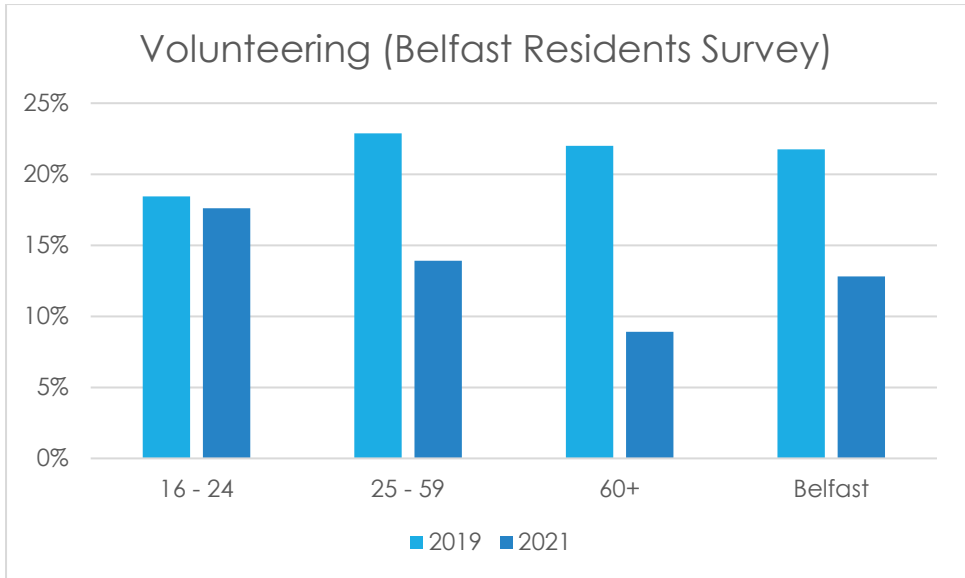
According to the Belfast Residents Survey, volunteering was rising steadily among people aged 60 and over until 2021 when it fell to 8.9 per cent.



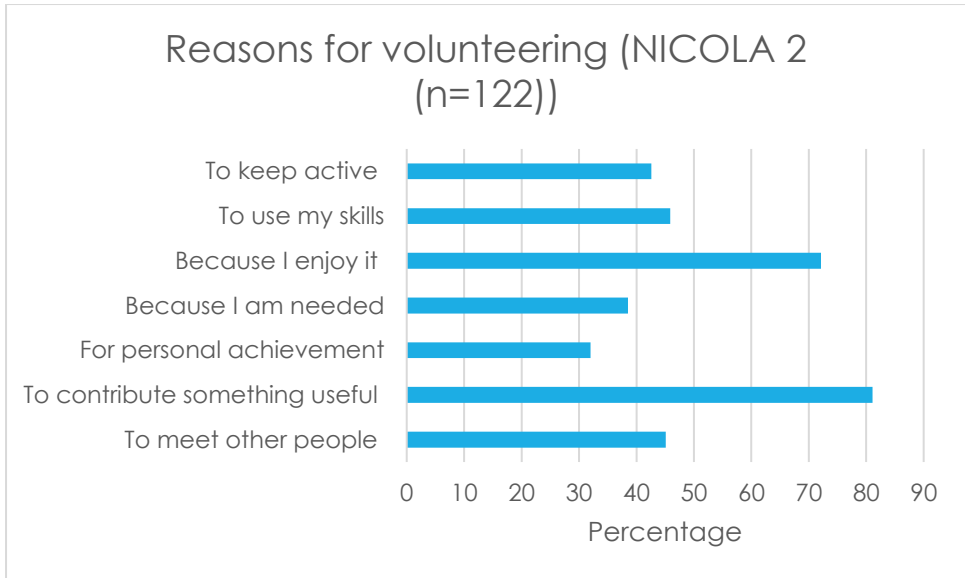
Those aged 60 and over experienced the sharpest drop in volunteering between 2019 and 2021 with 5.2 per cent reporting they had to stop or limit their activity.

²² Department for Communities Benefits Statistics Summary August 2021

²³ Universal credit was rolled out on a phased basis from December 2017 to December 2018 and replaces a number of employment/income-based benefits including Income-based Job Seekers Allowance, Income related Employment support allowance and Income support. Universal credit is not available to individuals who have reached pensionable age.



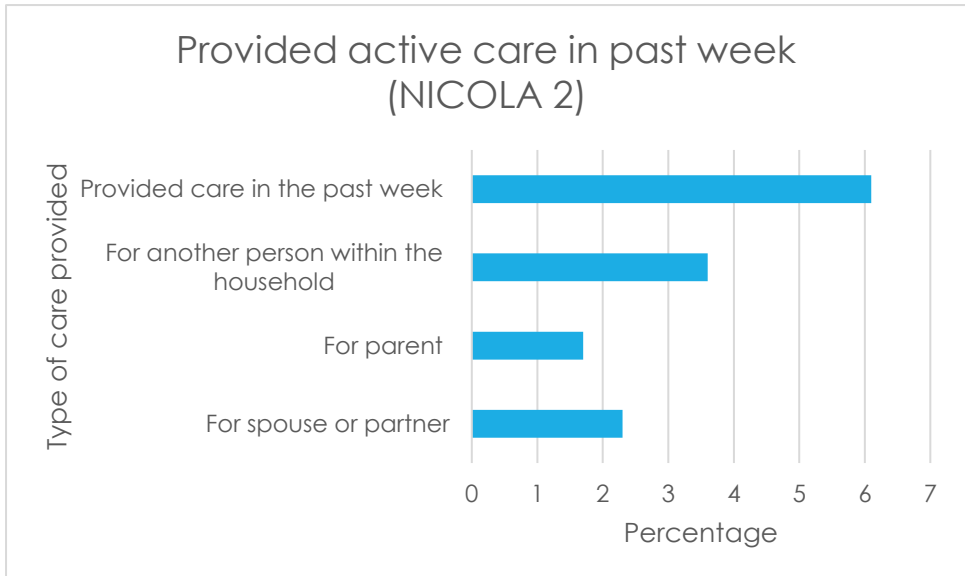
The main motivations for volunteering among NICOLA respondents were “to contribute something useful” and “because I enjoy it”.



Carers

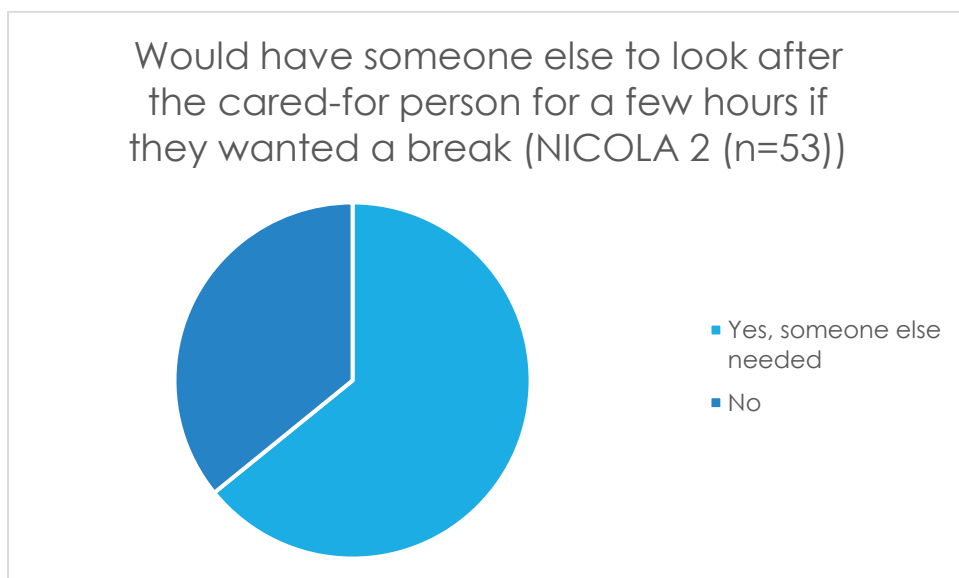
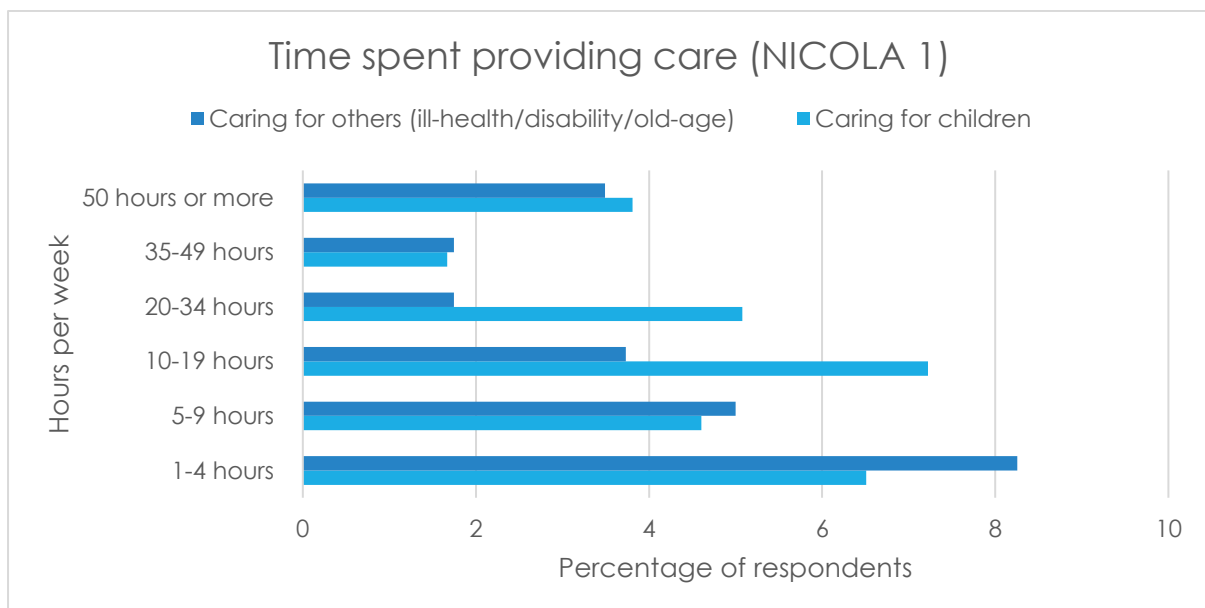
According to the Department for Communities, in 2021 there were 8,310 people in Belfast aged over 50 claiming Carers Allowance, of which 3,820 (46 per cent) were aged 65 and over.²⁴

14.1 per cent of 2020 Belfast Residents Survey respondents had dependants or caring responsibilities for family members or other persons, and 6.1 per cent of people surveyed in NICOLA Wave 2 provided care for someone else in the past week.



²⁴ Department for Communities Benefits Statistics Summary August 2021

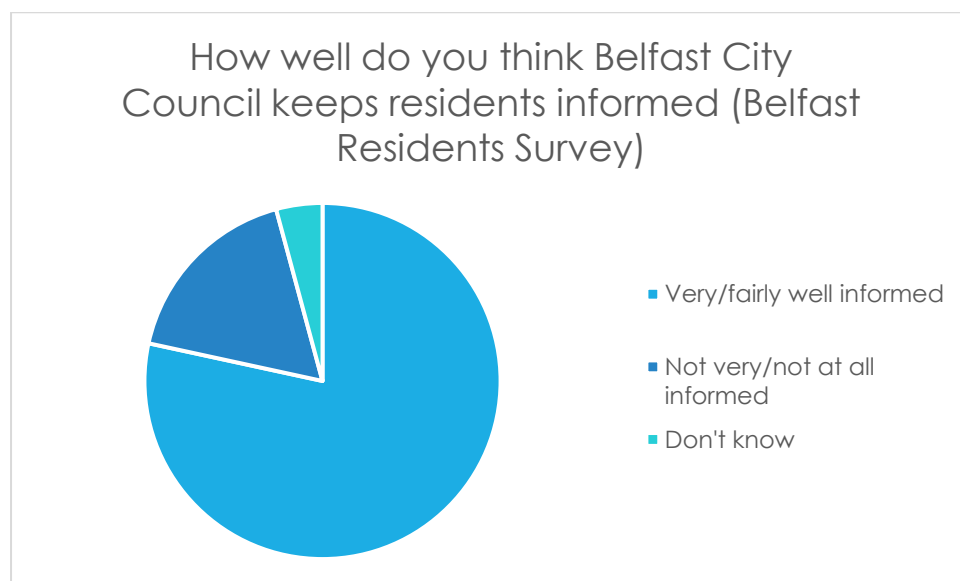
In WAVE 1, 24.0 per cent of respondents looked after family members, friends, neighbours or others because of long-term physical or mental ill-health/disability or problems related to old age; and 28.9 per cent looked after children (their own or a family member's). Most people spent between one and four hours, but 5.5 per cent spent more than 35 hours a week caring for children and 5.2 per cent sent more than 35 hours caring for others. 36 per cent of carers reported that they had no one to look after the cared-for person for a few hours if they needed a break.



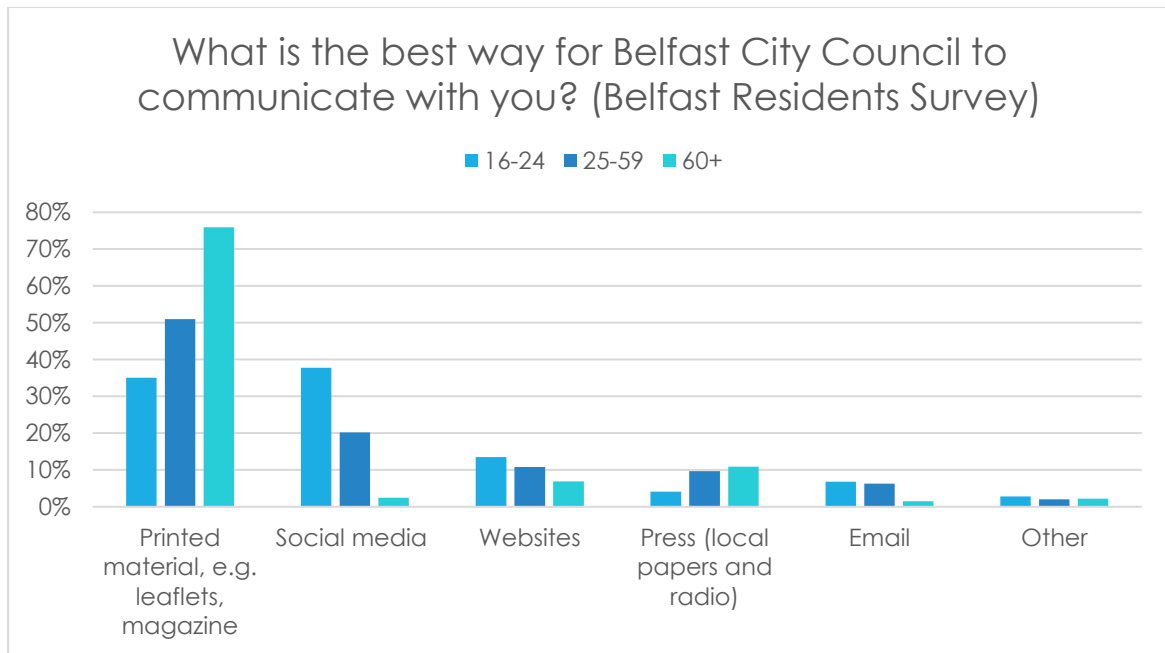
Communication and information

Sources of information

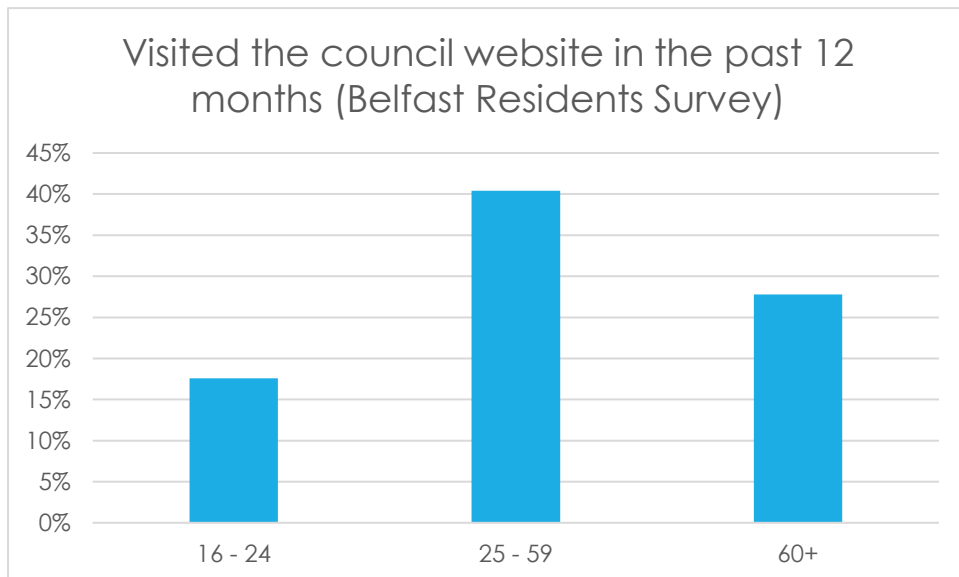
The 2021 Belfast Residents Survey asked the extent to which residents felt informed. 78.4 per cent of people aged 60 and over felt very or fairly well informed (compared to 77.9 per cent of the whole population).



75.9 per cent of residents aged 60 and over would prefer the council to communicate with them through printed material such as the council's City Matters magazine, and 83.4 per cent of this age group recalled having received City Matters compared to 48.6 per cent of resident 16- to 24-year-olds.

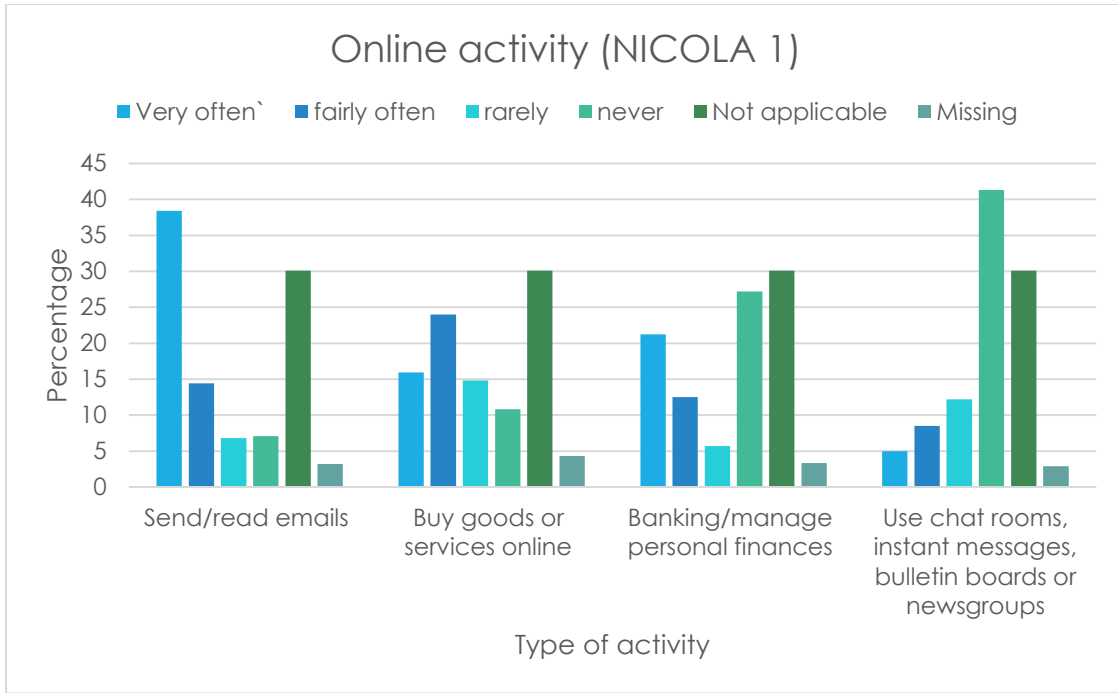


Just over 1 in four residents aged 60 and over had visited Belfast City Council website in the past 12 months, more than the 16- to 24-year-old age bracket (17.6 per cent) but less than 25- to 59-year-olds (27.8 per cent).

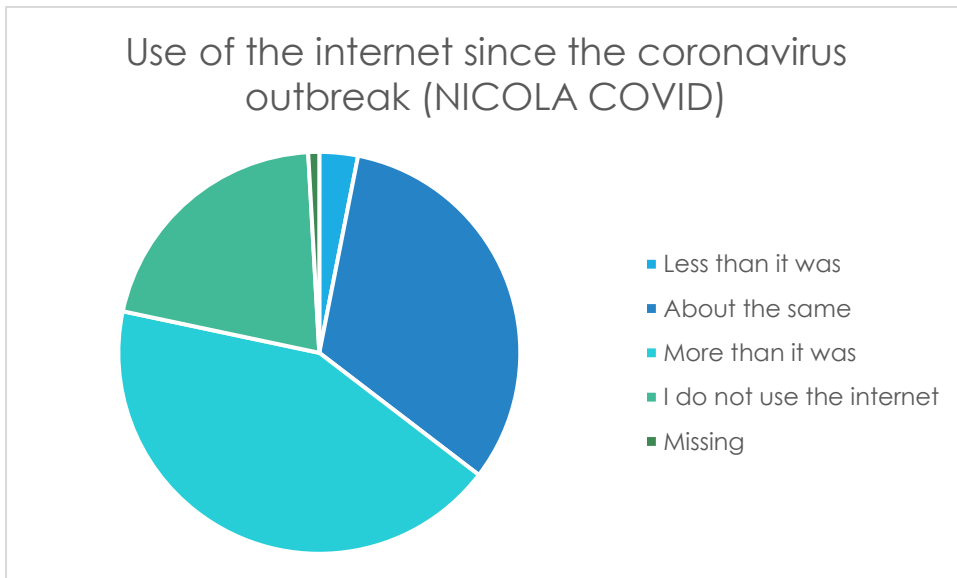


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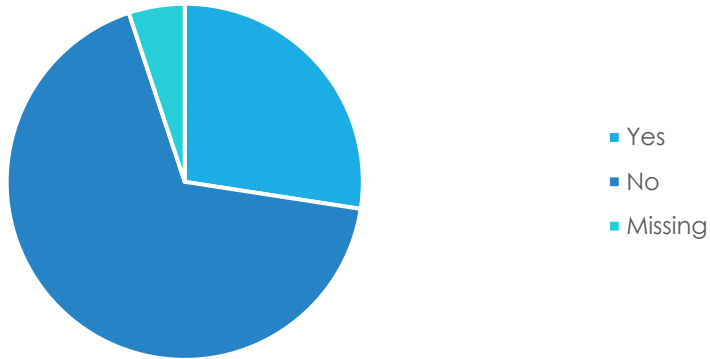
68.5 per cent of respondents surveyed in NICOLA Wave 1 use a computer. They were most likely to go online to send or read emails or buy goods and services. 27.2 never use internet banking and 5.7 per cent use it rarely.



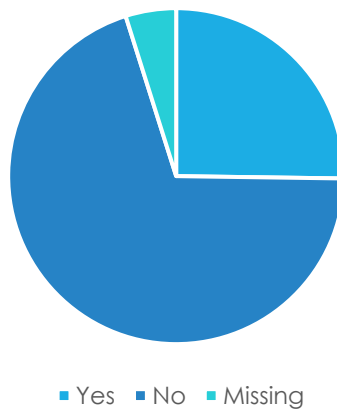
During Covid, 3 per cent used the internet less often and 43 per cent used it more often. 27 per cent used the government contact tracing app on their phone or internet. 25 per cent of NICOLA respondents during Covid would like to use the internet more often or for more things.



Use of government contact tracing apps
for COVID via mobile phone or internet
(NICOLA COVID)



Would like to use the internet more
frequently or for more things (NICOLA
COVID)

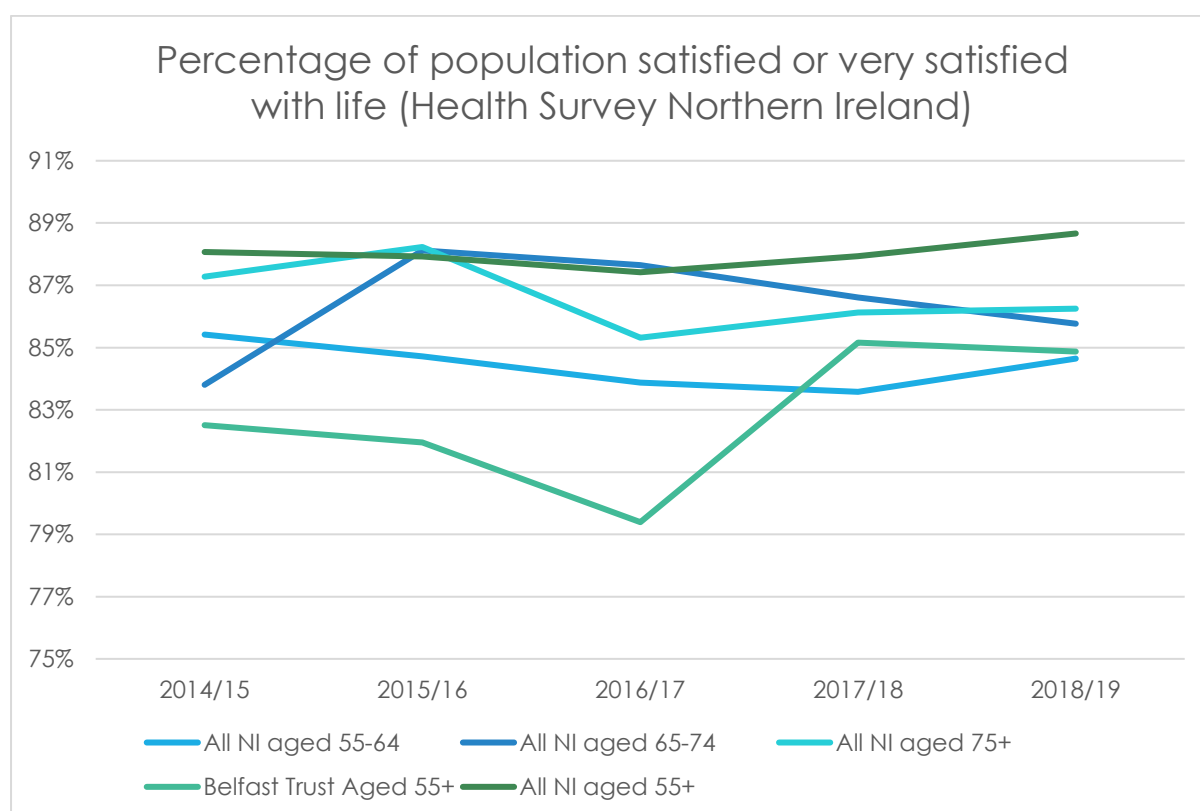


Community support and health services

In the 2021 Belfast Residents Survey, people were asked what the priorities for the city should be. Health and wellbeing was the top priority identified by respondents aged 60 and over (34.2 per cent of compared to 26.5 per cent of the whole population).

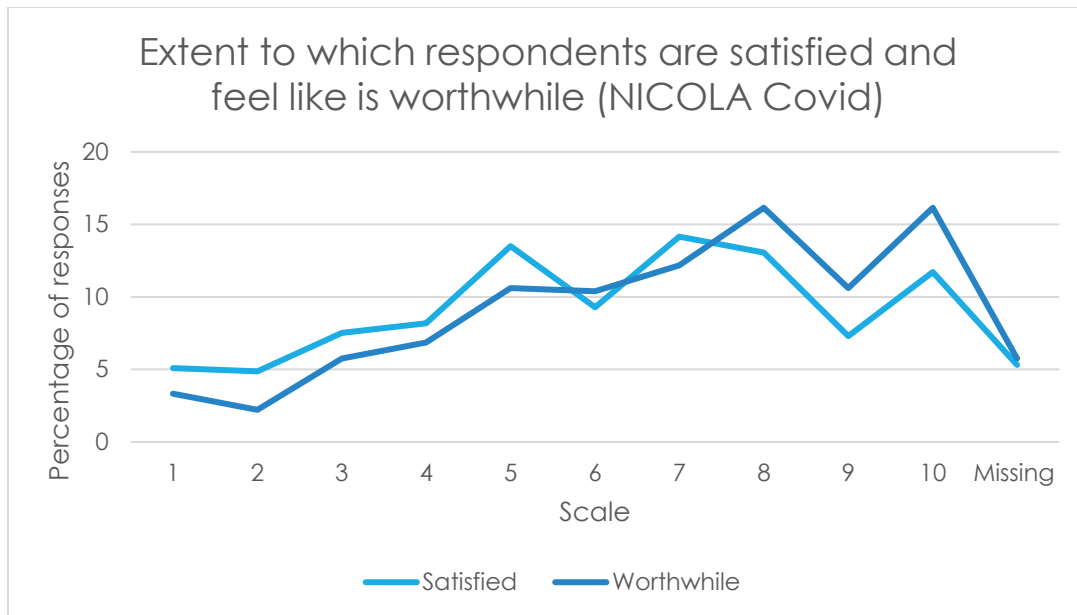
Satisfaction

According to the Health Survey Northern Ireland,²⁵ those living in the Belfast Trust area have less life satisfaction than the general NI population.



As part of the NICOLA Covid survey, participants were asked to rate the extent to which they felt satisfied with their lives and the extent to which they felt their life was worthwhile on a scale of 1 to 10. 55.5 per cent rated their satisfaction at 6 or above, while 65.5 per cent gave a “worthwhile” score of 6 or above.

²⁵ First Results 2020/21. The questions on life satisfaction were not asked in the 2019/20 or 2020/21 survey



Satisfaction with life also varies according to where people live with 94 per cent of those who live in the least deprived areas considering themselves to be satisfied or very satisfied with life compared to 79 per cent in the most deprived areas (71 of the 178 most deprived super output areas are in the Belfast City Council area).²⁶

Health

In Belfast, life expectancy at birth for males is 76.08 years and 80.96 years for females. This is less than the average life expectancy across NI, which is 78.76 years for males and 82.55 years for females.²⁷ Healthy life expectancy is projected at 61.2 for males and 62.2 for females across NI, which is less than the UK average.²⁸ People living in the least deprived areas tend to live longer and have good health for longer.²⁹

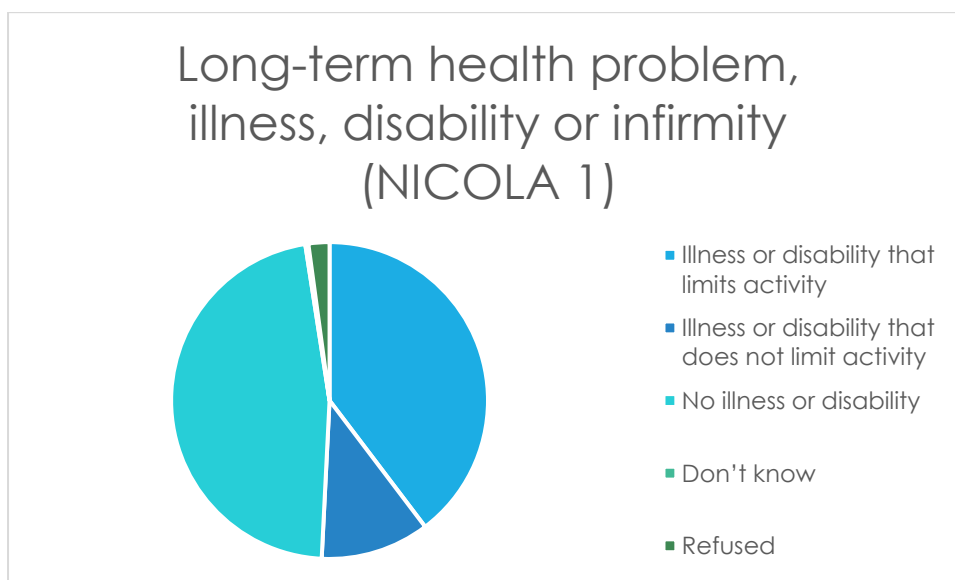
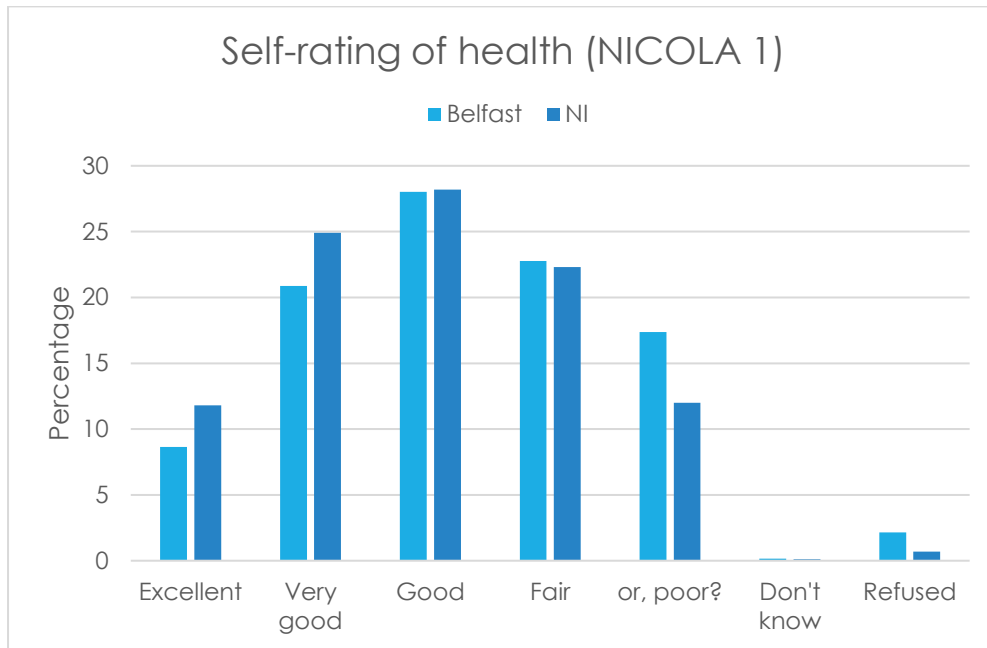
²⁶ Health Survey Northern Ireland First Results 2020/21, by quintile

²⁷ Calculated using information aggregated from 2017 to 2019. www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/PivotGrid.aspx?ds=10325&lh=73&yn=2008-2019&sk=134&sn=Health%20and%20Social%20Care&yearfilter=

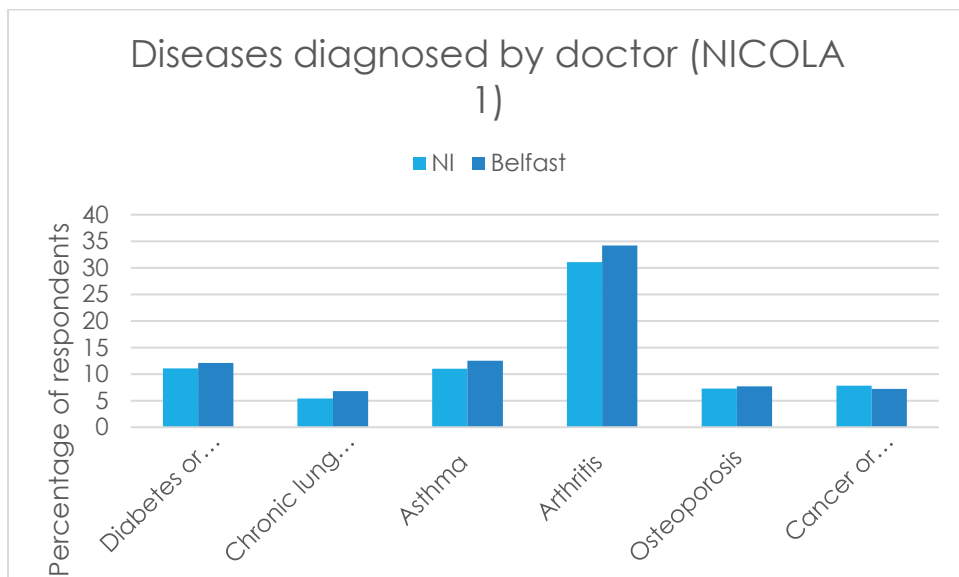
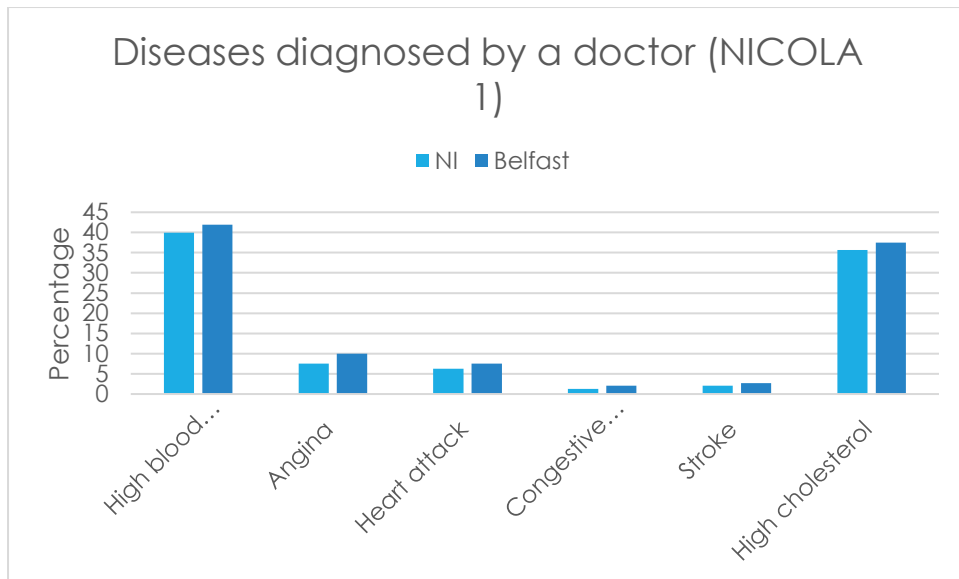
²⁸ Calculated using information aggregated from 2017 to 2019. www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/bulletins/healthstatelifeexpectanciesuk/2017to2019

²⁹ www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/pfg-2016-21-measurement-annex-gap-between-highest-and-lowest-deprivation-quintile

According to NICOLA, older people living in Belfast are less likely to rate their health as good, very good or excellent (57.6 per cent) than the whole NI population (64.9 per cent). 51 per cent had a long-term health problem, illness, disability or infirmity, including 40 per cent who agreed that the illness or disability limited their activity.



The most common diseases were high blood pressure or hypertension (41.9 per cent), high cholesterol (37.5 per cent) and arthritis (34.2 per cent). Belfast residents appear to be more likely to be diagnosed by a doctor across most common diseases (although some may not be statistically significant).



Health-based welfare support

65 per cent of recipients of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in NI are aged 65 and over.

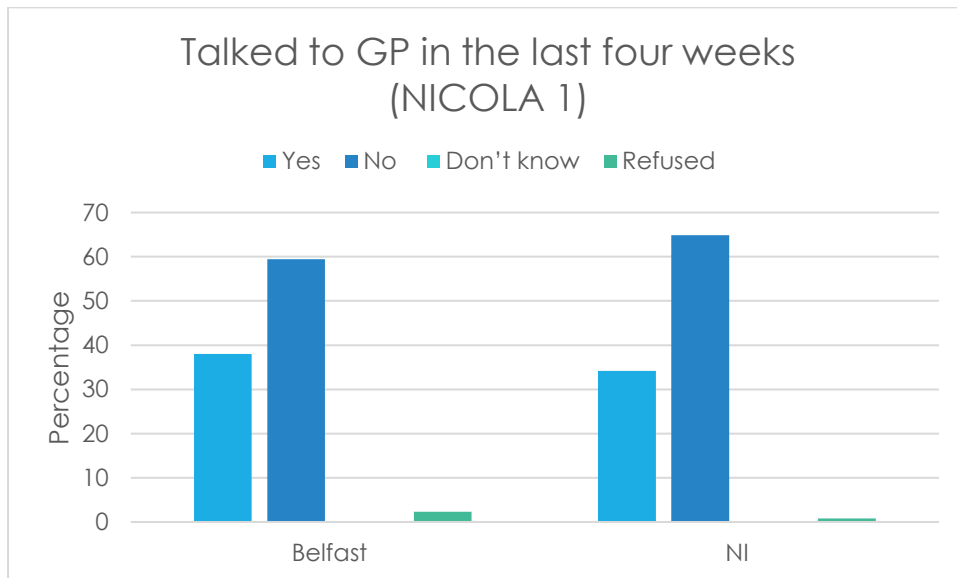
9,790 people aged 70 and over who live in Belfast receive DLA, which is an average weekly payment of £101.60.

DLA was replaced in 2016 by the Personal Independence Payment (PIP). 20,520 people aged over 50 living in Belfast receive this benefit (13 per cent of the NI total).³⁰

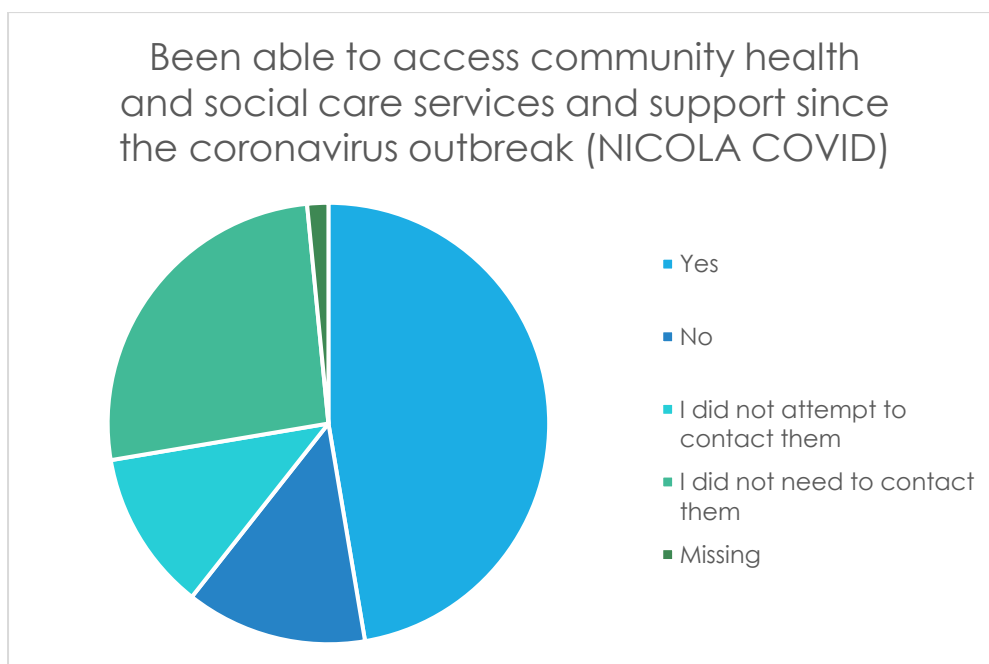
³⁰ Department for Communities Benefits Statistics Summary August 2021

Access to healthcare services

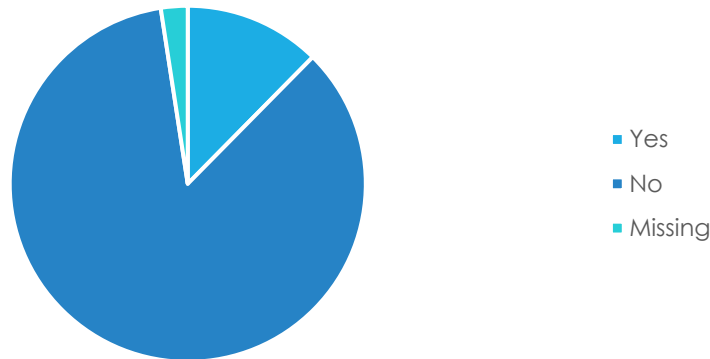
38 per cent of Belfast-based NICOLA respondents had spoken to their GP in the past four weeks.



During Covid, 13 per cent reported that they had been unable to access community health and social care services and support, such as the dentist, podiatrist, nurse, counselling and personal care, while 12 per cent “did not attempt to contact them”. 12 per cent had had a hospital operation or treatment cancelled.



Hospital operation or treatment cancelled since the coronavirus outbreak (NICOLA COVID)

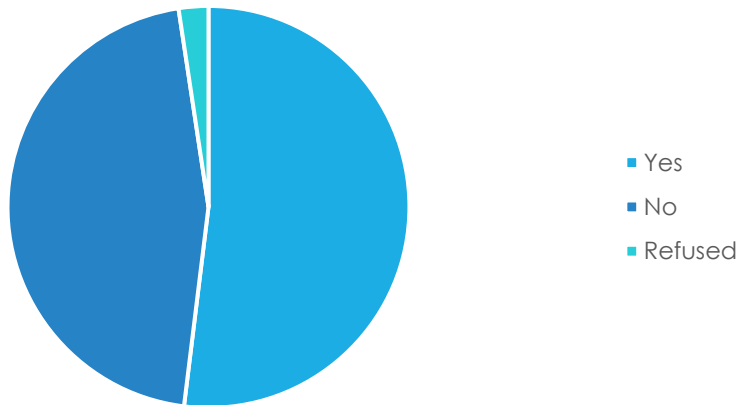


While statistics are not available for the Belfast population, results for the whole NI population show that just under 5 per cent (4.8 per cent) of NICOLA respondents stated that their ability to attend health and social care appointments was impacted by not driving or reduced driving (1.9 per cent rarely; 1.7 per cent some of the time; 0.5 per cent most of the time; and 0.7 per cent all of the time; n=2,140).

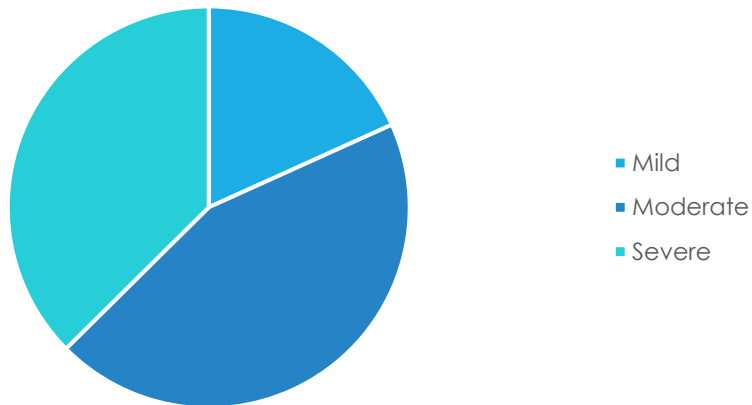
Pain

52 per cent of NICOLA respondents were troubled with pain. Of those, 37 per cent described the pain as severe most of the time; 44 per cent described it as moderate most of the time; and nearly three quarters (74 per cent) said it interfered with their usual activity such as work or household chores.

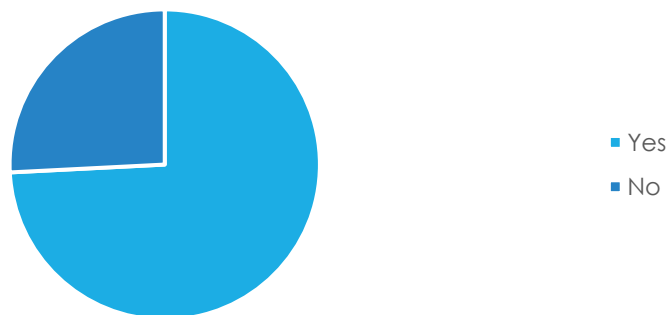
Are you often troubled with pain?
(NICOLA 1)



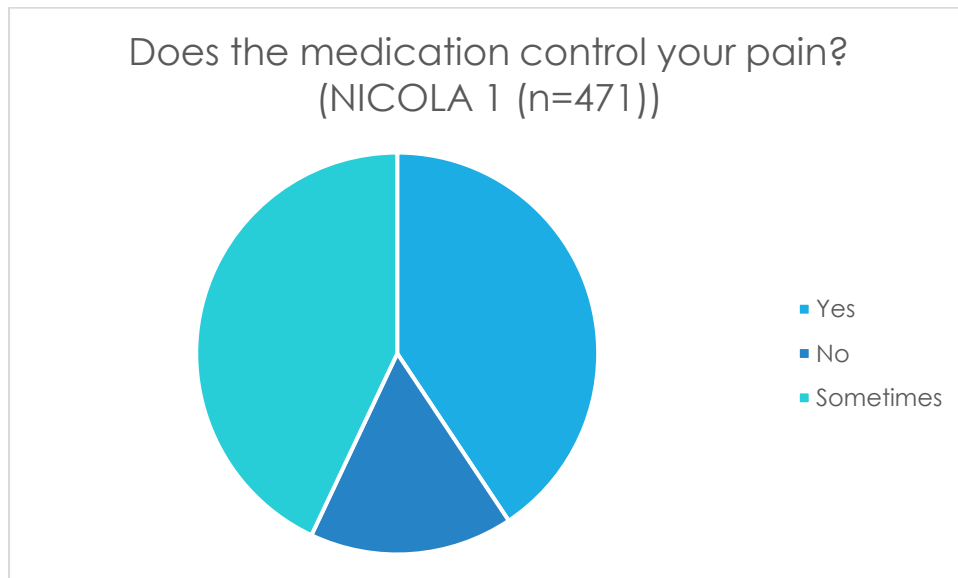
How bad is the pain most of the time?
(NICOLA 1 (n=653))



Does the pain make it difficult for you to
do your usual activities such as
household chores or work? (NICOLA 1
(n=653))



72.1 per cent of those experiencing pain take medication to control the pain. Of those, 16 per cent said that it did not control the pain and 43 per cent said it sometimes controlled the pain.



Leisure centre membership

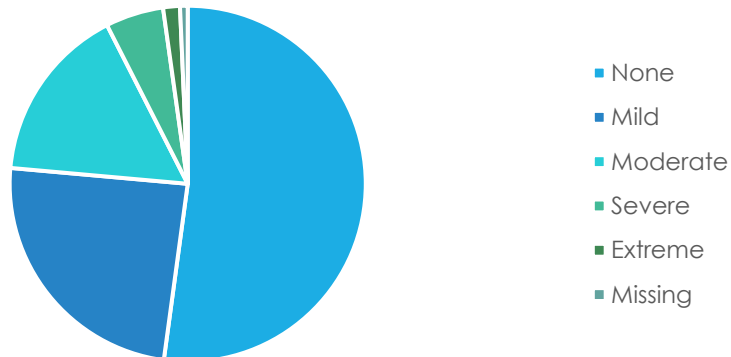
In February 2022, Greenwich Leisure Limited, which manages Belfast City Council's leisure centres, had 798 members aged 60 and over who pay a monthly direct debit and 3,502 "pay and play" registered cardholders³¹ aged 60 and over.

Mental health

According to NICOLA, 47 per cent of respondents felt sad, low or depressed in the previous 30 days. This includes 5 per cent of respondents who described their symptoms as "severe" and 16 per cent who described them as "moderate".

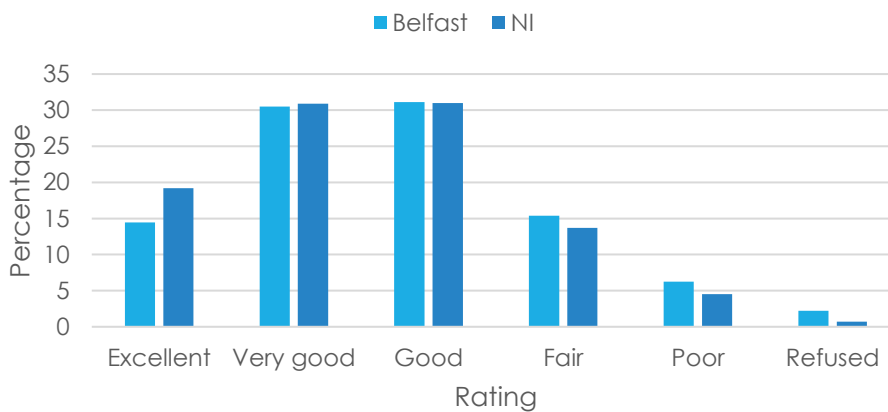
³¹ These are individuals who pay a small annual registration fee to access concessionary prices for activities which they subsequently pay for at the time of each visit or can obtain free access before 11.00am. There were 103 Boost card members aged 60 plus, benefitting from comparable access and discount, in 2014. Information provided by Belfast City Council.

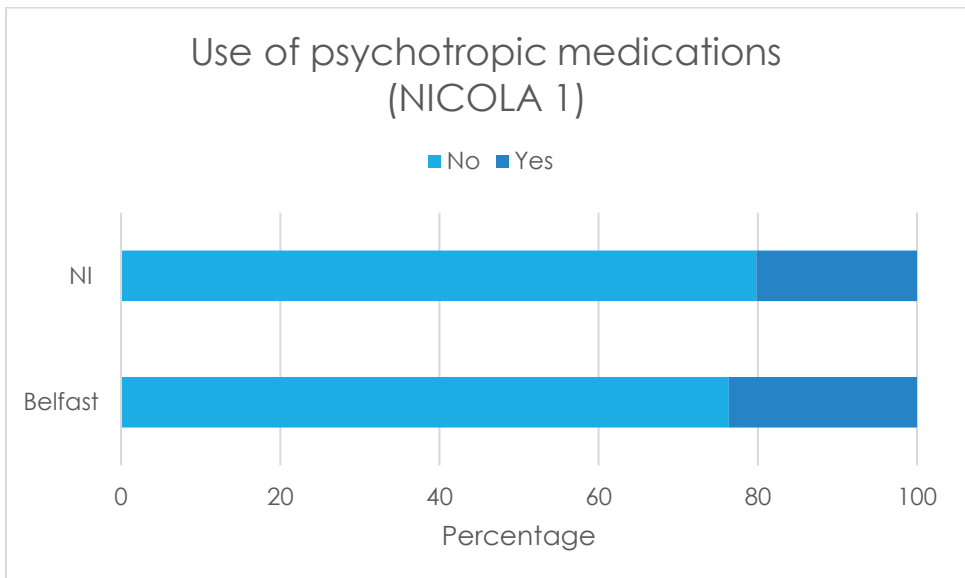
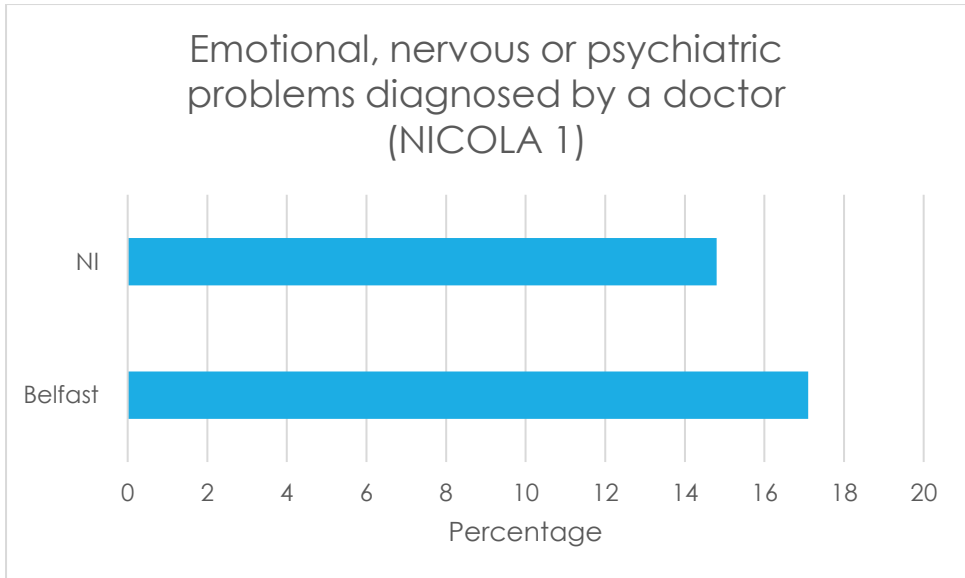
In the last 30 days, how much of a problem have you had with feeling sad, low or depressed? (NICOLA 1 (n=721))



Belfast residents are less likely to rate their mental health as excellent (14.4 per cent) than the rest of the NI population (19.2 per cent). They may also be more likely to have been diagnosed with emotional, nervous or psychiatric problems by a doctor and may be more likely to have been prescribed psychotropic medications.

Self-rating of emotional or mental health (NICOLA 1)

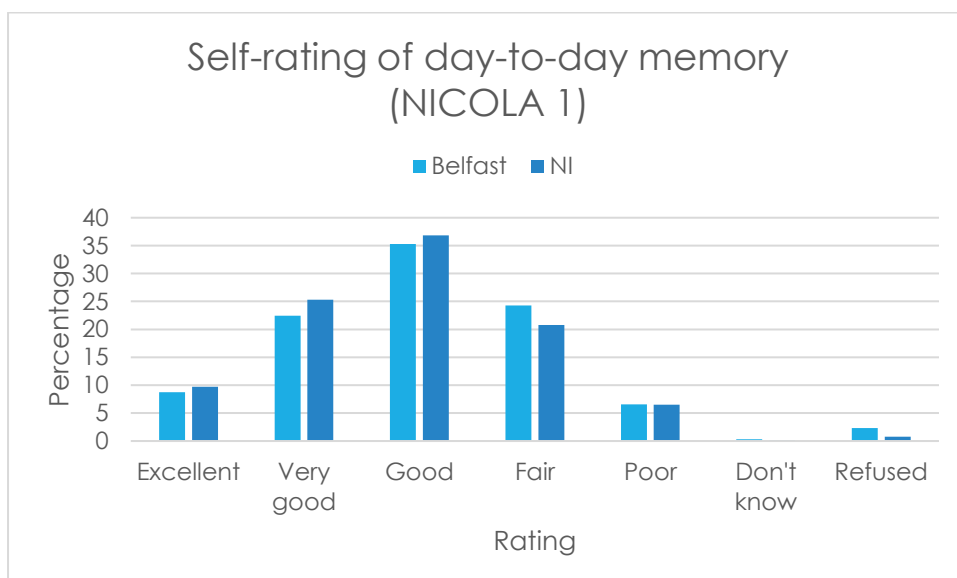
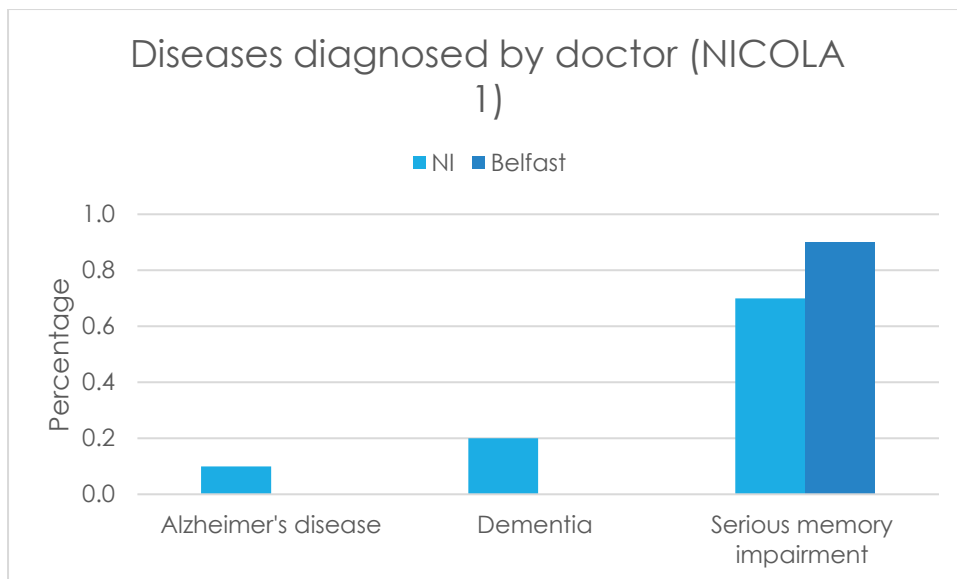




Dementia, Alzheimer's and memory impairment

There were 3,155 people on the dementia register living in Belfast in 2019/20. While this includes people of all ages, most are likely to be over 50.

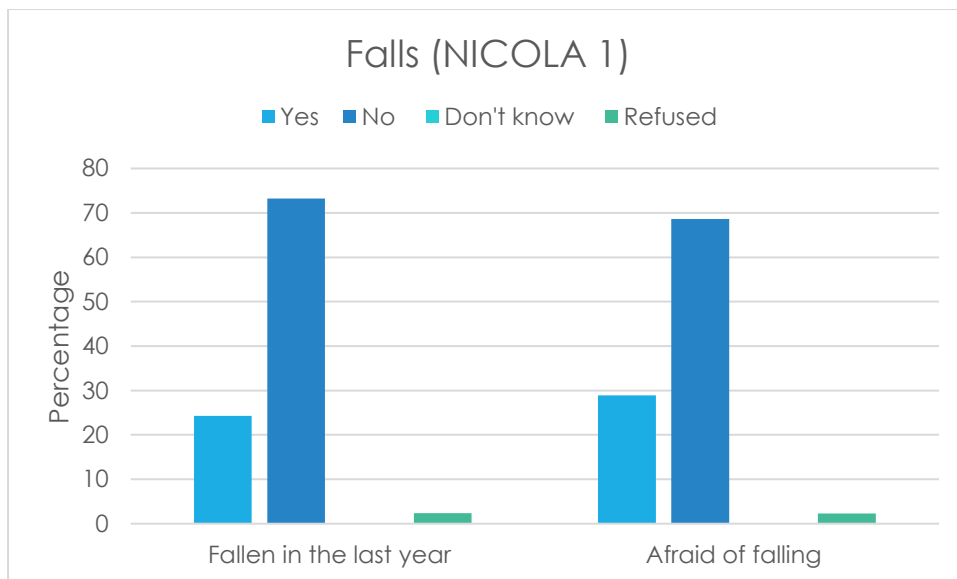
1 per cent of those surveyed by NICOLA had been diagnosed with dementia, Alzheimer's or serious memory impairment, which is on a par with the NI population as a whole.



Falls

The Health Survey Northern Ireland (2017–18) found that 14 per cent of all respondents had “fallen in or around their home” in the past two years. Older respondents were much more likely to have experienced a fall: 19 per cent of respondents aged 65 to 74 had fallen compared to 31 per cent of respondents aged 75 and over.

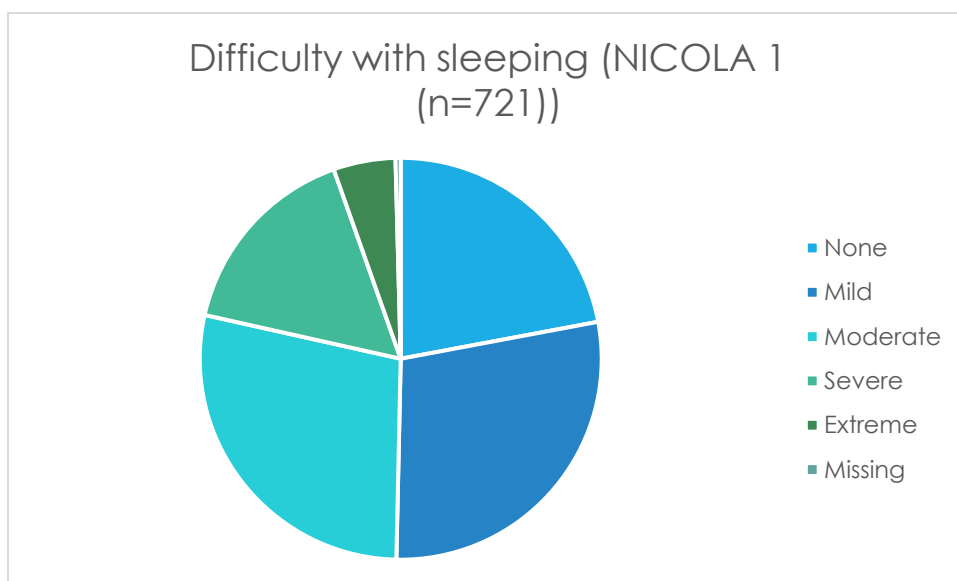
Among NICOLA respondents, 24.3 per cent had fallen in the last year and 28.9 per cent were afraid of falling.



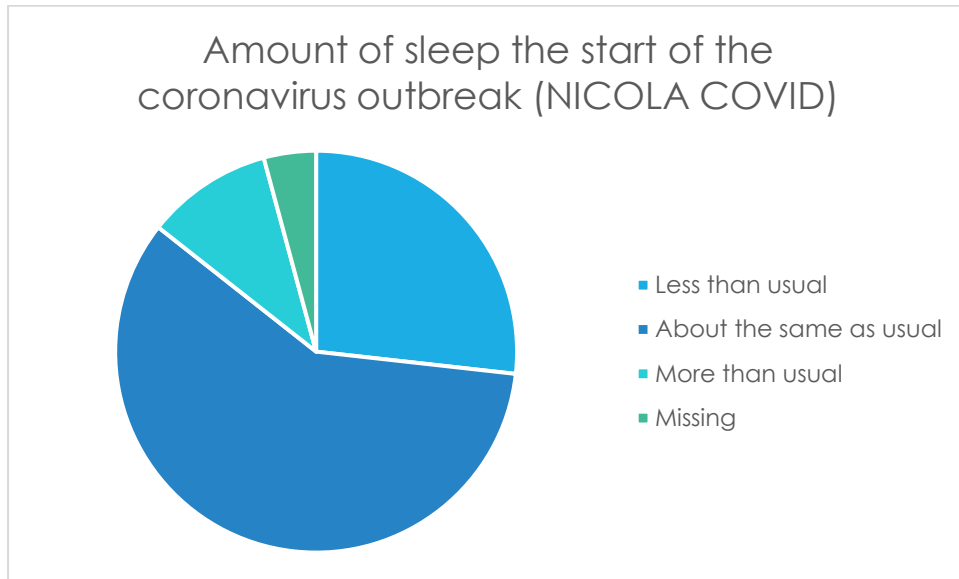
Sleep

During NICOLA Wave 1, participants reported getting an average of 6 hours 36 minutes sleep per night. The minimum recorded was 1 hour 30 minutes and maximum, 14 hours.

Participants were asked "In the last 30 days, how much difficulty have you had with sleeping, such as falling asleep, waking up frequently during the night or waking up too early in the morning?". 78 per cent reported some difficulty including 5 per cent who described their difficulty as extreme and 16 per cent as "severe".

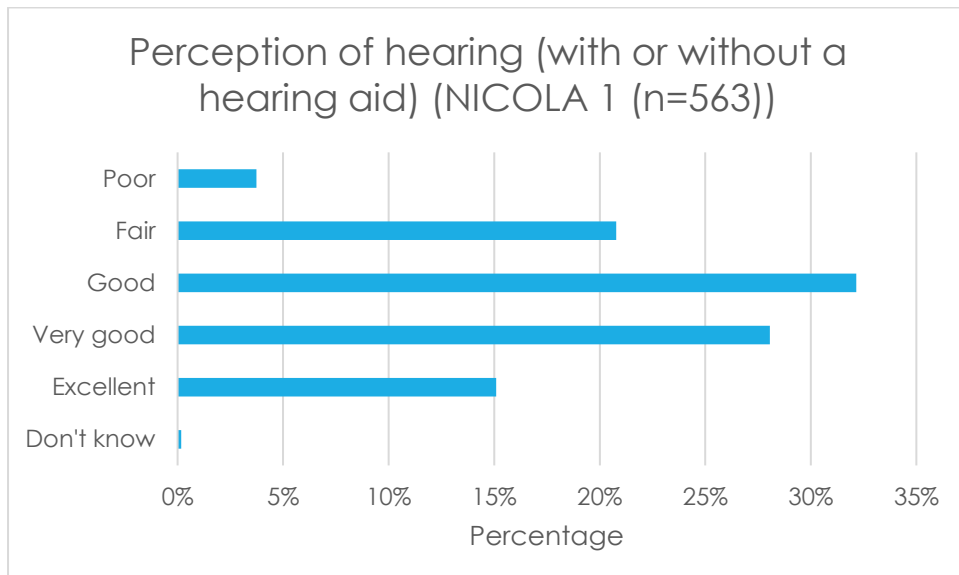


During Covid, 27 per cent reported getting less sleep and 10 per cent reported getting more than usual.



Hearing

3.7 per cent of NICOLA respondents rated their hearing as poor and 20.8 per cent as fair.



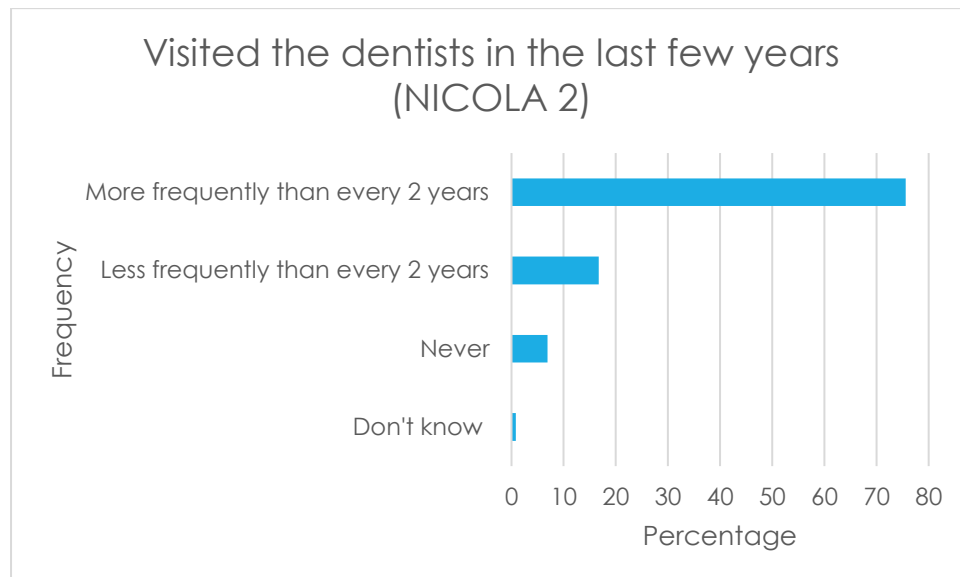
Eyesight

21.1 per cent of respondents in NICOLA WAVE 1 wore glasses or contact lenses, and 63.8 per cent had visited an optician in the last 12 months (n=564). This is substantially higher than the 27.0 per cent of the whole NI

population who had visited the optician in the last 12 months (where 20.5 per cent wear glasses or contact lenses (n=3741)).

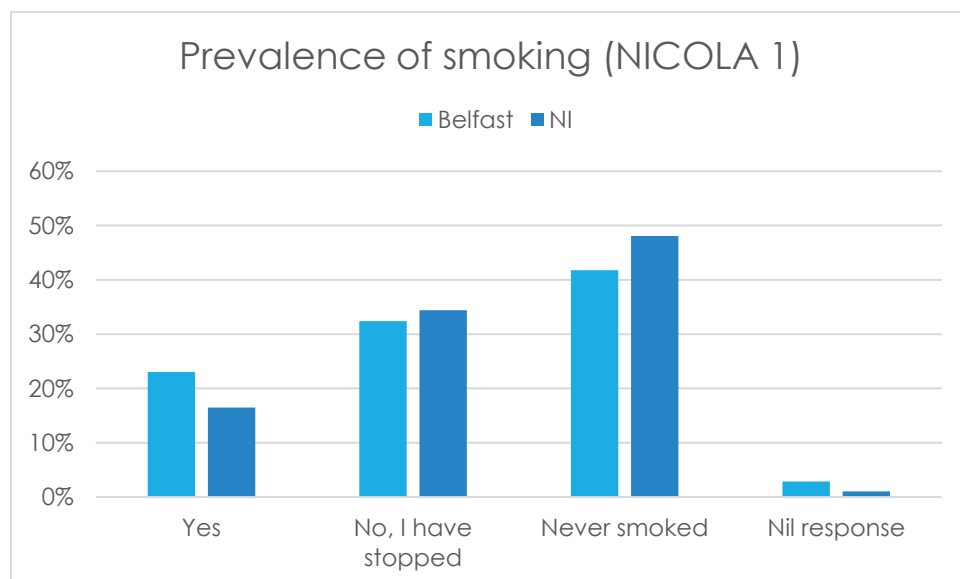
Dental health

Most people visit the dentist more frequently than every two years.



Substance use

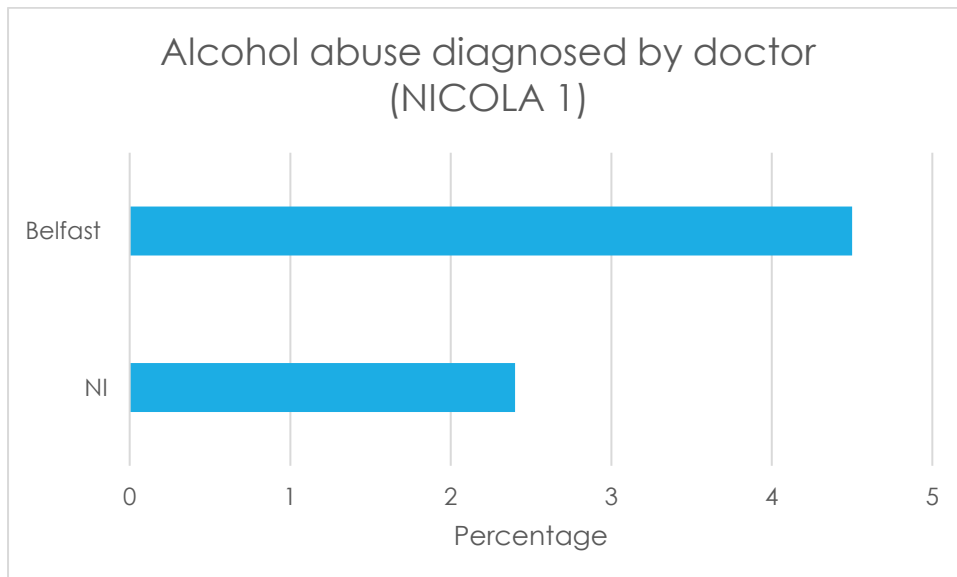
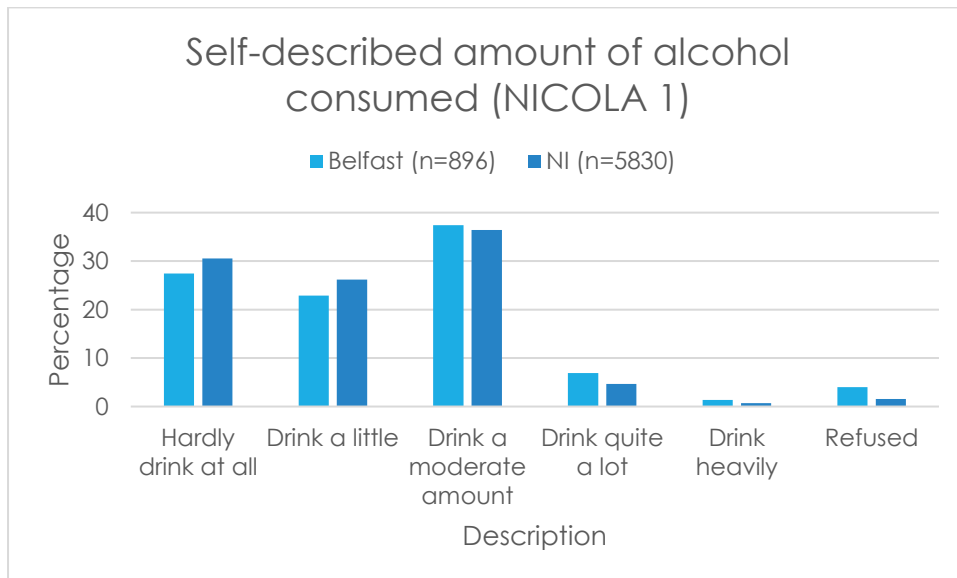
Older people in Belfast are more likely to be smokers and less likely to never have smoked than across the NI population.



60.9 per cent of people surveyed during NICOLA Wave 1 reported they drunk alcohol. Weekly alcohol consumption in the past year ranged from 0 to 378

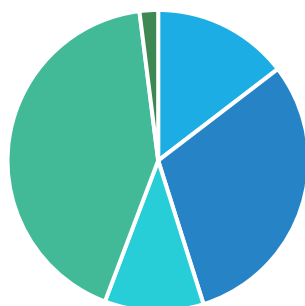
units averaging at 18.7 units per week. The UK Chief Medical Officers recommend that to keep health risks from alcohol to a low level, it is safest not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis.

4.5 per cent of Belfast respondents had been diagnosed as abusing alcohol by a doctor compared to 2.4 per cent of the NI population.



During Covid, 15 per cent of NICOLA respondents reported drinking less alcohol and 11 per cent reported drinking more alcohol.

Consumption of alcohol the start of the coronavirus outbreak (NICOLA COVID)



■ Less than usual ■ About the same ■ More than usual
■ Does not drink ■ Missing

Exercise

Participation in sport declines with age. According to the Continuous Household Survey 2019/20, 45 per cent of people in NI aged 55 to 64 and 27 per cent of people aged 65 and over participated in sport during the previous year compared to 76 per cent of 16- to 24-year-olds. 56 per cent of 55- to 64-year-olds and 47 per cent of those aged 65 and over had also walked for recreation in the previous year.³²

NICOLA Wave 1 respondents spent, on average, 2 hours and 11 minutes exercising and 3 hours 22 minutes walking.³³

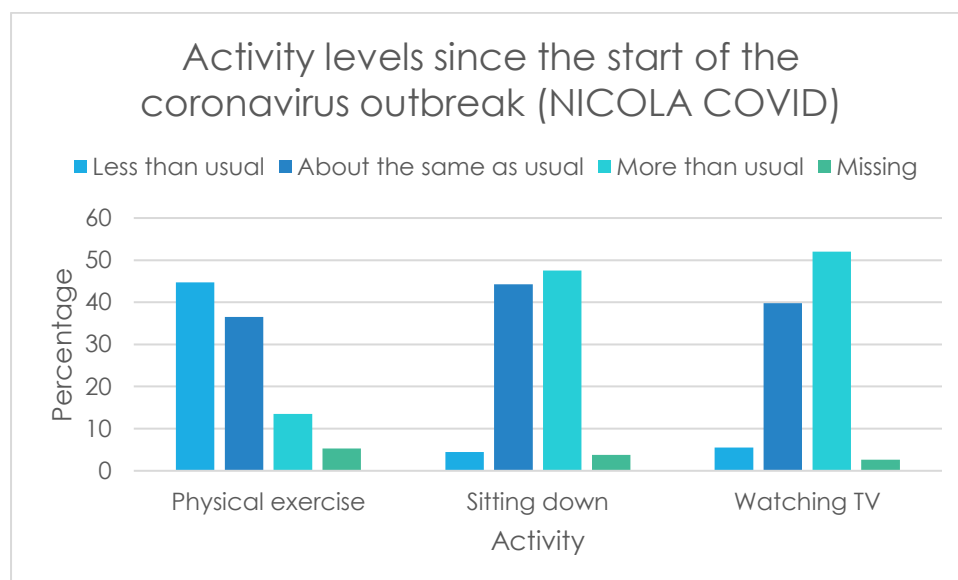
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Total minutes of vigorous exercise per week	0	1680	42.26
Total minutes of moderate exercise per week	0	1680	88.88
Total minutes spent walking per week	0	1680	202.43

³² Experience of sport by adults in NI 2019/20, www.communities-ni.gov.uk/publications/experience-sport-by-adults-northern-ireland-201920

³³ NI government guidelines advise adults to be active every day and do at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity every week.

Total minutes spent sitting per day	10	1200	415.70
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During Covid, NICOLA respondents reported taking part in less than usual physical exercise and sitting down or watching TV more than usual.



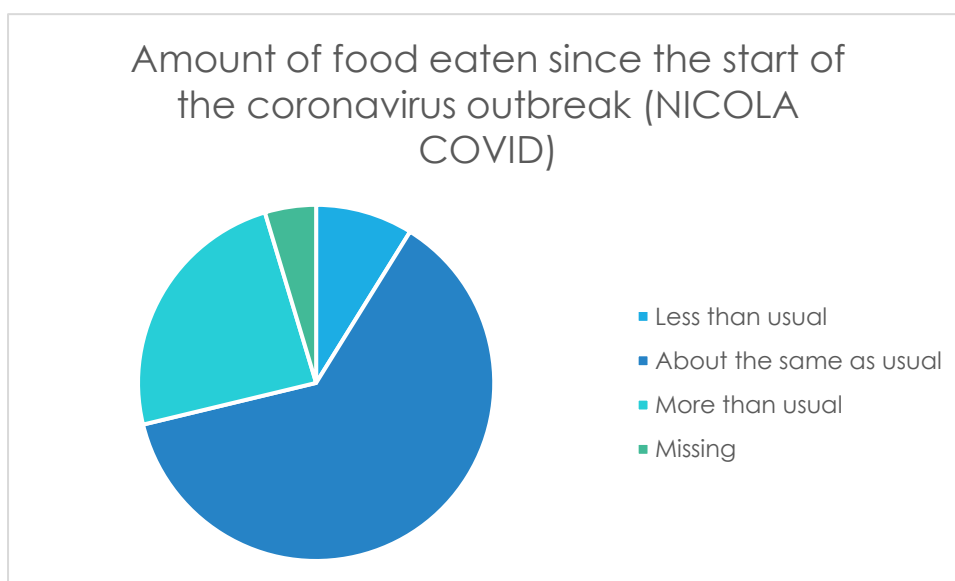
Diet

NICOLA Wave 1 participants were asked a series of questions about their weekly diet. Participants reported eating between 1 and 5 meals a day, averaging at 2.8, and between 1 and 7 snacks per day, averaging at 1.6. 30 per cent of respondents described themselves as vegetarian or vegan. The findings are summarised in the table below.

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
During the course of last year, on average, how many times a week do you eat vegetables (not including potatoes)	0	56	5.66
During the course of last year, on average, how many times a week do you eat salads	0	34	2.47

During the course of last year, on average, how many times a week do you eat fruit and fruit products (not including fruit juice)	0	45	5.79
During the course of last year, on average, how many times a week do you eat fish and fish products	0	30	2.01
During the course of last year, on average, how many times a week do you eat meat, meat products and meat dishes (including bacon, ham and chicken)	0	47	4.76

During Covid, nearly a quarter of NICOLA respondents (24 per cent) reported eating more than usual and a third reported gaining weight. Nearly 1 in 10 reported eating less than usual (9 per cent) or losing weight (11 per cent).



Body mass and weight

NICOLA Wave 1 participants recorded the following body mass index and average waist measurement.

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Body mass index	17.9	52.2	29.372
Average waist measurement (cm)	56.9	142.6	96.391

According to the NHS, a body mass of 18.5 to 24.9 falls within the normal or healthy weight range and women's waist circumference should be less than 80cm and men's, less than 94cm.

During Covid, a third of NICOLA participants reported gaining weight, while just over 1 in 10 (11 per cent) lost weight.

Acknowledgments

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