

SIR FYNWY

MONMOUTHSHIRE



Monmouthshire Well-being Assessment 2022

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Version Control

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The well-being assessment is made up of different parts:

- Gwent as a whole (see www.gwentpsb.org/well-being-plan/well-being-assessment for more details of the Gwent well-being assessment)
- Monmouthshire as a whole
- 5 local areas within Monmouthshire centred around Abergavenny, Monmouth, Usk, Chepstow, and Caldicot.

A summary of the Monmouthshire well-being assessment is also available. To see further analysis please visit www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/our-monmouthshire

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Introduction

Monmouthshire faces a number of challenges now and in the future. These include climate change, income and health inequalities and access to housing and transport. These are really complex things and we cannot pretend that we have all of the answers. To tackle them we need to work together as public services and as communities and to think far more about some of the solutions and the long-term impact of the decisions we make.

In April 2016, Welsh Government introduced The Well-being of Future Generations Act. This ground-breaking piece of legislation is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of our nation, our county and the communities that make it what it is.

The Act sets out how public services in Wales need to think more about the long-term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems, and take a more joined-up approach. These are referred to as ‘the five ways of working’. By acting in this way we stand a much better chance of creating a place that we all want to live in.

In 2021, the five local authorities in Gwent moved from having five separate Public Service Boards to having one overall Gwent Public Service Board. The four statutory members of the Public Service Board, or PSB, are the Local Authorities, Local Health Board, Fire and Rescue Authority and Natural Resources Wales. Other organisations are also invited, such as Gwent Police, registered social landlords and voluntary organisations. PSBs must prepare and publish an assessment of local well-being, produce a well-being plan and report annually on its progress. This is the Monmouthshire part of Gwent’s first well-being assessment and it will describe well-being in the county based on a broad range of evidence.

This well-being assessment has been produced following a range of engagement with people and groups across Monmouthshire. This included an online survey, young people’s workshops and stalls at community events. The draft assessment is also subject to public consultation between January and February 2022. Alongside this, the document draws on a wide range of data, reports and academic studies to develop an evidence base to help us understand well-being in our county. This is about far more than needs, it takes an asset-based approach so that we can build upon, preserve and enhance the things that make this place special while identifying future trends and potential disruptions, whether positive or negative, so that we can maximise the well-being of future generations.

The report will be finalised by May 2022. The Public Service Board will then use the Gwent level assessment, together with these local assessments, to develop a set of well-being objectives for the area. These will be published as part of a Gwent Well-being Plan in spring 2023, which will then inform partnership activity and delivery in Monmouthshire. If you’d like to be more involved then please get in touch with us using the contact details on the previous page.

The following matrix shows how the themes and topics covered in the well-being assessment contribute to multiple well-being goals. This process is a useful way of ensuring that the well-being assessment is sufficiently cross-cutting and integrated and is addressing all of the goals. Throughout the assessment, the themes covered demonstrate contributions to the goals, but the goals are not necessarily explicitly referred to throughout the text to avoid repetition. The following matrix shows the predominant goals where there is significant contribution.

	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
Jobs and employment							
Earnings and locations							
Worklessness and inequality							
The effect of Covid-19							
Health and Well-being							
Transport and access to services							
Community Safety							
Mental Health							
Loneliness and Isolation							
Housing							
Child Development							
Education							
Ageing Well							
Landscape and Countryside							
Air and Water Quality							

Themes and topics covered in the well-being assessment contribute to multiple well-being goals

Climate Change	Yellow	Orange	Red	White	White	White	Light Blue
Waste and Recycling	Yellow	White	White	White	Dark Blue	White	Light Blue
Welsh Language	White	White	White	Dark Red	Dark Blue	Medium Blue	White
Faith and Religion	White	White	Red	Dark Red	Dark Blue	Medium Blue	Light Blue
Landscape and Heritage	Yellow	Orange	Red	White	Dark Blue	Medium Blue	Light Blue
Community and Social Action	Yellow	White	Red	White	Dark Blue	White	White
Cultural Attractions	Yellow	White	Red	Dark Red	Dark Blue	Medium Blue	White
Sport and Leisure	White	White	Red	White	White	Medium Blue	White

The Communities of Monmouthshire

Monmouthshire is geographically large compared to many local authority areas in Wales. It is semi-rural in nature and is often perceived as leafy and affluent. However, headline statistics can fail to shine a light on the differences within and between communities. These differences can be all the more stark when they exist side-by-side. Assessing the well-being of each community is intended to ensure that the differences between the various communities within the board's area are analysed. Some local areas will also have, or are undertaking, their own planning through community plans or equivalent processes. These may want to consider the findings of the well-being assessment, and similarly the well-being assessment will need to continue to consider relevant evidence produced in these plans.

This assessment is based around five clusters, as shown on the map: Abergavenny and surrounding area; Monmouth and surrounding area; the heart of Monmouthshire which includes Usk and Raglan; Chepstow and the Lower Wye Valley and Severnside which includes Caldicot and Magor. Even working at this scale can mask some of the differences we see, and so from time-to-time this analysis will draw on data at ward or Lower Super Output (LSOA) level.¹

This is really important to ensure that differences between the various communities within our area are analysed. This assessment is structured so that you can read about the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of each area separately. These should be read in conjunction with the section covering the whole county as some issues are addressed more naturally at a county level, with less information available at a local community level.



Monmouthshire Profile

Located in south-east Wales, Monmouthshire occupies a strategic position between the major centres in south Wales and the south-west of England and the Midlands. The county covers an area of approximately 880 square kilometres, with an estimated population of 95,164.²

It is a predominantly rural county, with 53% of the total population living in wards defined as being in urban areas. The main settlements are Abergavenny, Chepstow, Monmouth, Caldicot, Usk and Magor/Undy. The county has a distinctive identity arising from its location in the borderlands between England and the former industrial heartlands of the South Wales valleys. An integral element of Monmouthshire's distinctive settlement pattern arises from its historic market towns and villages and their relationship with the surrounding rural areas.

The county has a rich and diverse landscape stretching from the coastline of the Gwent Levels in the south to the uplands of the Brecon Beacons in the north and the picturesque river corridor of the Wye Valley in the east. A good road network connects Monmouthshire to major population centres such as Cardiff, Newport and Bristol and many of the population take advantage of these links to commute out of the area for employment opportunities.

Monmouthshire has major landscape resources and is home to internationally and nationally designated landscapes, ranging from the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to the east and the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Blaenavon Industrial World Heritage Site to the north-west. It contains some good quality agricultural land and has a high proportion of farming land altogether – more than double the Welsh average, with 16.7% of this used for crops and horticulture.³

The county has a low population density of 1.1 persons per hectare, significantly lower than the South East Wales average of 5.3 persons per hectare, with densities much higher in urban areas.⁴ There is a higher-than-average proportion of older people in the county which is forecast to rise further. In contrast, the number of under 18s is forecast to decline by 2033.⁵

Monmouthshire is generally a prosperous area offering a high quality of life for its residents. This is reflected in the 2019 Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, with none of the lower super output areas (LSOA) in Monmouthshire in the most deprived 10% in Wales.⁶ However, as is highlighted elsewhere in this assessment, these headline figures can mask pockets of deprivation that are all the more stark when juxtaposed with areas of relative wealth.

Economic Well-being

An economy’s performance has a strong bearing on well-being. There is a perception of Monmouthshire as being an affluent county: the average annual wage is £34k, higher than the Wales average of £29k, and there is an above-average percentage of working-age people in employment (76.7%, June 2021).⁷ However, there are issues and challenges, explored below.

Jobs and Employment

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Monmouthshire has the second highest number of businesses per head of population in Wales. The largest sectors are Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities (e.g. legal, accounting, scientific research and development, veterinary, etc.), making up 16.6% of all local business units. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing support 15.5% of the businesses, above the average for England and Wales, in terms of enterprise numbers.⁸

Monmouthshire has a relatively low business start-up rate compared to the Wales average, the combined England and Wales average, and that of the Cardiff Capital Region. However, the business death rate is also below average, while the five-year survival rate is comparatively high.⁹

	Birth rate	Death rate	Active	5-year survival rate
Monmouthshire	10.4	9.7	4120	45
Cardiff Capital Region	14.3	11.4	45,480	42
Wales	12.3	10.5	98,445	43

Source: ONS, *Enterprise Demography - Percentage of active enterprises*. N.B.: the 2021 figure for active businesses in the county is 4,490¹⁰

Although slightly fewer businesses are started in Monmouthshire, relatively speaking, those that are have a slightly better chance of survival in the short term than in other authorities.

Nevertheless, between 2014 and 2019, Monmouthshire saw only a 9.4% increase in the number of active enterprises, compared to an increase of 17.2% for the South East Wales Region and 12.3% for Wales overall. A number of engagement responses to the well-being assessment express concern for the number of businesses started in the county, and propose reduced business rates to encourage more new enterprises.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development predicts that Monmouthshire will have the fastest Gross Value Added per capita growth rate in Wales, with an annual growth rate of 1.68.¹¹

In 2021, 91% of enterprises in Monmouthshire employed less than 10 people.¹² Only the manufacturing sector includes large firms (with 250 people or more), while Human Health, followed by Accommodation and Food Services, are the sectors with a proportionally larger number of small and medium-sized businesses, compared to micro-businesses.¹³ Although micro businesses are a vital part of the county's economy, since they support fewer employees, and therefore provide fewer opportunities, this may be a factor in residents seeking employment elsewhere.¹⁴ In addition, some micro businesses include farming and tourism, which can be seasonal and low paid. Monmouthshire's working population has a higher percentage of Managers, Directors and Senior Officials than Wales as a whole (12.2% and 9.6%, respectively), and a higher percentage in Professional Occupations (23.3% and 20.8%, respectively).¹⁵

Tourism is an important aspect of Monmouthshire's economy. In 2019, 2.28 million visitors contributed £245 million to the county's economy, a 2.6% increase on the 2018 economic impact figure. Tourism revenue grew in real terms by 18.5% between 2015-19, against a target of 10% for 2015-20.¹⁶ However, Covid will have had a significant impact on tourism from March 2020 onwards. (see 'Cultural Well-being' section for further information about tourism)

Agriculture is an important part of the Monmouthshire economy – data shows that there are 695 agriculture, forestry and fishing enterprises in Monmouthshire, 15.5% of the total number of enterprises in the county, the second-highest number after 'professional, scientific and technical'.¹⁷ Census data from 2011 shows that 2.8% of the county were employed in agriculture, food and fisheries.¹⁸ Forestry resources are also economically important for the county but there is a potential future timber shortage due to a lack of planting around 50 years ago and very little economic incentive to plant woodlands.¹⁹

Monmouthshire has had a slow uptake of allocated employment land, leading to pressure for it to be used for other purposes such as housing and retail.²⁰ In 2021, 19.5% of the total area of industrial and business sites identified in the adopted Local Development Plan remains available for development, although there are presently limits on development in large parts of the county as a result of high levels of phosphates in the county's waterways.²¹ There is a need to further develop employment land to promote economic growth and increased employment opportunities in the county. The impact of Covid-19 on the future demand for employment land

"I would like the town I live in to be a hub for people working from home: I would like to see the norm being home workers lunching and shopping in my town"

"Hopefully, with more working from home and less commuting, local businesses will be able to grow"

must also be considered, particularly in light of the move towards home working – already, there are higher levels of those in employment at home (15%) relative to the Wales average (11.9%).²²

Indeed, it is possible that the growth of remote working and people's desire to live in rural areas

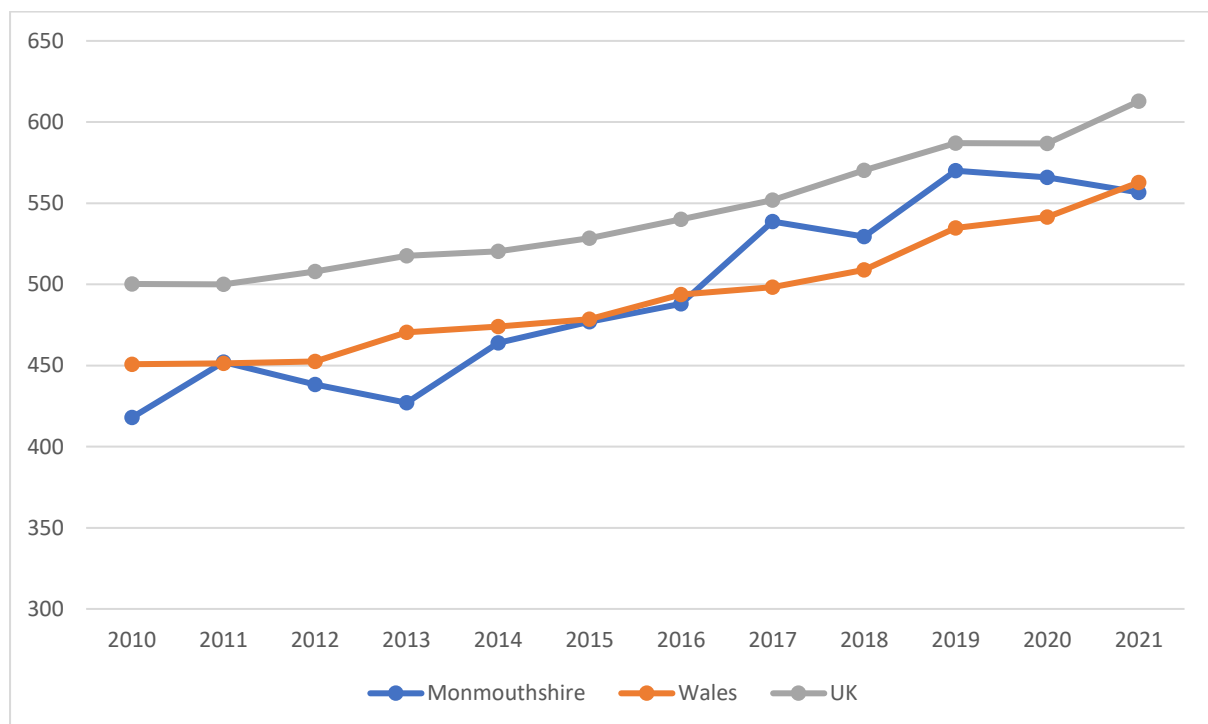
presents an opportunity to encourage entrepreneurs to start new businesses in Monmouthshire rather than in neighbouring cities such as Bristol.

Monmouthshire has a high percentage of people in employment, with 77%, compared to 72% for Wales and 74% for Great Britain.²³ However, as of 2020, Monmouthshire had a lower percentage of its population at working-age (16-64) than Wales as a whole, which may affect future economic growth.²⁴ As described in the ‘Ageing Well’ section, Monmouthshire has an ageing population, and a reducing younger population. At present, 42% of total outward migration is by people aged 15-29, which are typically education and economically driven.²⁵

The £1.2 billion Cardiff Capital Region City Deal is a collaborative programme to act as the catalyst for regional economic growth and sustainable success in the region. Its work and impact is covered in the Gwent Well-being Assessment.

Earnings and locations

In the last five years, the wages on offer in Monmouthshire have been approximately 10% below the UK average, and just under the Wales average: the average weekly wage available in the county in 2021 is £556.6, compared with £562.8 for Wales and £612.8 for the UK.²⁶



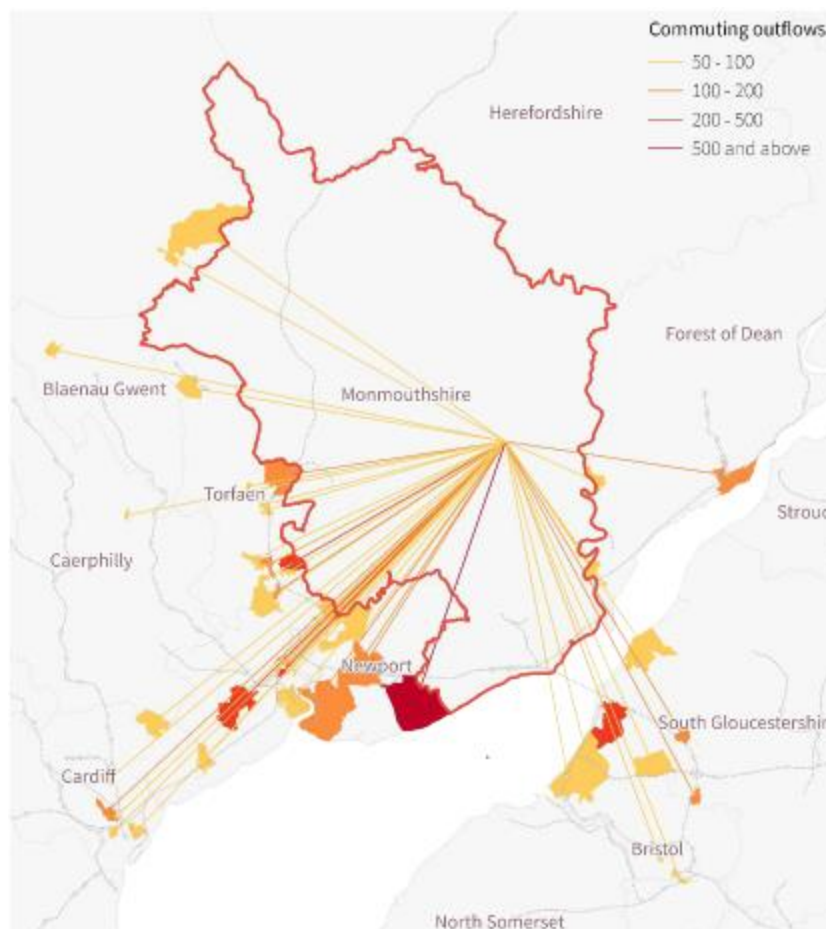
Earnings by place of work²⁷

However, overall earnings by place of residence are still higher in Monmouthshire than the Wales or UK average: £688.8, £570.6 and £613.1, respectively, and a higher Gross Disposable Household Income per head than the Wales average, but lower than the UK.²⁸

The difference between the wages on offer in Monmouthshire jobs and the wages earned by Monmouthshire residents is due to people working in higher paid jobs outside the county. 43% (19,700) of the county's economically active residents out-commute; in 2011, Monmouthshire's workers already had the highest average commuting distance of the ten south-east Wales counties.²⁹ Long commuting times can harm well-being, by reducing job satisfaction, leisure time, mental health and increasing strain in people's lives.³⁰

“There is very little possibility for young people to make a living here. Any jobs are low-paid, therefore there is no possibility of affording a house”

In 2011, almost a quarter of Monmouthshire commuting was to Newport, 13% to Torfaen and 10% to Cardiff.³¹ This data predates the removal of the Severn Bridge Tolls in 2018, which is likely to have increased commuting to and from Bristol and South Gloucestershire. There has been an increase in daily traffic across the bridge since 2019 (see ‘Severnside’ section).



Data Source: ONS, Census 2011

The direction of the most significant commuting outflows, 2011³²

The removal of the tolls is likely to have contributed to Monmouthshire's high house prices: they increased 4.1% in 2019 overall, directly after the removal, while prices in Chepstow had increased by £90k merely following its announcement (see ‘Housing’ section, and below).³³

The average incomes of economically active women who both live and work within the county is significantly lower than that of men within the same category.³⁴ As of April 2021, the mean full-time pay gap was 5.4%, though this is lower than the Welsh mean of 9.8% and the UK mean of 14.9%.³⁵

As of June 2021, the median house price was £359,159, significantly higher than the Welsh average of £216,152 (see ‘Housing’ section).³⁶ Monmouthshire has a higher average house price and a higher rate of growth in house prices compared with elsewhere in Gwent.³⁷ In 2020, the housing affordability ratio for Monmouthshire (the ratio of median price paid for a home to the median work-based gross annual earnings for full-time workers) was 8.23. This means that house prices were 8.23 times the average earnings, compared with 5.88 for the Wales average, making it harder, particularly for young people, to get on the property ladder.³⁸ The below-average wages on offer in the county, coupled with high property prices, make it difficult for young people and future generations to live and work locally.

Since 2009, the number of vacant units in Monmouthshire’s central shopping areas was relatively stable, but from 2017 there has been an increase in vacant retail.³⁹ In addition, between 2009 and 2015, 1000 retail jobs were lost in the county.⁴⁰ Since 2019/20, the four centres have recorded a rise in vacancy rates: Abergavenny (6.6% to 7.6%), Caldicot (7.6% to 13.4%), Chepstow (11.2% to 13.5%) and Monmouth (14.4% to 15.4%). For Abergavenny and Monmouth, this is an increase for the second consecutive year although there is a perception that Abergavenny is thriving at present.⁴¹ Engagement responses to the well-being assessment show residents’ concern for the county’s high streets, and their wish for more – and more varied – shops and businesses in them.

What would you like your community to look like in the future?

“Home to thriving businesses in both the manufacturing and service sectors”

“More small businesses in the countryside to support young people’s employment opportunities”

“We need to attract more high tech business and have local innovation hubs”

All town centres, except for Monmouth, are below or broadly in line with the Great Britain high street vacancy rate (13.7%, December 2020).⁴² The long-term effect of Covid-19 is not yet known.

Worklessness and Inequality

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Monmouthshire’s economy is currently ranked second in Wales, behind Cardiff, in the UK Competitiveness Index.⁴³ However, employment levels remain below their 2003 peak and, as

previously described, the largest employment sectors are those that tend to suffer from low pay, with the second-highest percentage of employees paid below the living wage in the ten local authorities in the Cardiff Capital Region, at 26.6%.⁴⁴

Despite higher levels of economic activity overall, there are pockets of higher unemployment within the county. As of the 2011 census, these were located particularly in Abergavenny, Caldicot, Chepstow and the community council areas of Llanfoist and Llantilio Pertholey.⁴⁵

In November 2018, the largest proportion of benefit claimants in Monmouthshire (excluding those claiming a state pension) were those claiming Employment and Support Allowance; however, this was considerably less than in surrounding authorities.⁴⁶

As of 2019, Monmouthshire had no areas in the most income-deprived 10% and only 26.8% (or 15 areas) in the most income-deprived 50% in Wales. Similarly, the county had no areas in the most employment-deprived 10% in Wales, and only 23.2% (13 areas) in the most employment-deprived 50% in Wales. Though this puts Monmouthshire in a positive position overall, there are areas of higher deprivation, particularly Overmonnow 2 in Monmouth, and Llanover 1, Cantref 2, Lansdown and Croesonen in Abergavenny, all of which are in the most deprived 30% in Wales.⁴⁷ The picture in Monmouthshire is therefore one of overall affluence but with stark income and employment disparities between individual areas in the towns.

Monmouthshire has seen an increase in the percentage of children living in workless households, rising from 4.9% in 2009 to 11.2% in 2019 and workless households themselves have rose from 10.8% in 2015 to 13.2% at the end of 2019⁴⁸. However, these are still both below the Welsh average. Monmouthshire's percentage of workless households has risen faster than the Wales average, and the Covid pandemic may have had an effect of these figures with a high proportion of people working in the hospitality and tourism sectors. Similarly, Welsh Government data from 2019 showed that 15% of children in Monmouthshire were living in poverty with an impact on the wellbeing of children and parents, even though this was lower than the Wales average of 24%.⁴⁹

The effect of Covid-19

In Monmouthshire, the onset of the pandemic and the resulting lockdowns saw the numbers of out-of-work benefit claimants increase significantly, from 975 (1.8% of the population) in March 2020 to a high of 2,370 (4.3%) in August 2020. As of June 2021, the number was 1,890 (3.4%).

In Monmouthshire, the number of employees on furlough ranged from a peak of 10,500 in July 2020 (27% of eligible jobs, slightly lower than the Welsh average of 29%), to 2,600 at 31st May 2021.⁵⁰ According to the Monmouthshire RLDP Review September 2020, "The socio-economic data for unemployment rates and furlough numbers suggest that Monmouthshire, while being significantly impacted by the lockdown, has been less impacted than other areas in Wales, due to its strong underlining socio-economic characteristics, such as the very low proportion of unemployment claimants pre-Covid-19 and the sectoral mix within the county."⁵¹

As might be expected, in 2020/21 the number of parcels given out at Monmouthshire’s four foodbanks increased from the previous year, which may reflect an increase in those in need during the pandemic.

Although Monmouthshire has fared relatively well as a whole, among those who are most likely to have been affected economically by lockdowns are young people and those on a low-income.⁵² It is therefore likely that the pandemic has widened the existing inequality in Monmouthshire between high and low income households.

Considering the strength of tourism in Monmouthshire’s economy, the pandemic could lead to increased employment through more internal tourism and ‘staycations’ in Wales.⁵³

Integration

It is important to understand the inter-relationship between environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being. Summarised below are how the ‘Economic Well-being’ sections integrate with other sections of the assessment to set out the relationship between the factors contributing to well-being.

Jobs and Employment

The strength of the local economy is an important factor in well-being. Employment and jobs have a significant influence on cultural, social and environmental well-being. Monmouthshire is often perceived as affluent, but these headline measures mask some clear disparities. The natural environment provides jobs and opportunities.



Earnings and Locations

The difference between wages earned inside and outside the county has a direct bearing on commuting and house prices, which in turn affect well-being. Town centre vacancy is an indicator of economic well-being, and can affect social well-being.



Worklessness and Inequality

Rural communities can be more prone to poverty than urban areas. The prevalence of low paid and fragile employment contributes to the risk of in-work poverty. This can affect people’s economic and social well-being.



The effect of Covid-19

The potential for widening existing inequalities, and the effect on employment figures have a strong bearing on well-being.



Social Well-being

Social well-being encapsulates whether people are happy, healthy and comfortable with their lives and what they do.

Health and Well-being

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Life expectancy for people in Monmouthshire is the highest in Wales, at 80.5 years for males and 84.1 years for females, compared to 78.3 for males and 82.3 for females across Wales. Healthy life expectancy for males is 69.8 years, which is the highest in Wales, and 70.7 years for females.⁵⁴

Behind the headline rates, there are notable variations, with those living in the least deprived areas of Monmouthshire expected to live longer than those in the most deprived, by on average 6.3 years for males and 3.6 years for females. Similarly, those in the least deprived parts of Monmouthshire are likely to live in good health for longer, by an average of 10.1 years for males and 11.1 years for females.⁵⁵

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to a decrease in life expectancy in England and Wales of around one year.⁵⁶ While it is too early to say, it is expected that the most and least deprived areas will experience this differently.

There are many factors that can have an impact on health including the environment, housing, early childhood education, income, lifestyles, transport and community cohesion. These factors are part of the wider determinants of health and can impact in either a positive or negative way on physical and mental health. There are some communities in Monmouthshire that are experiencing challenges related to these factors and there are health inequalities in, and between communities in Monmouthshire.

The health domain of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation shows there are variances in the communities in Monmouthshire experiencing health deprivation. While many areas in the county are ranked in the least deprived areas in Wales for health, 20 areas in Monmouthshire are ranked in the 50% most deprived areas in Wales, these are particularly areas around some of the towns in Monmouthshire.⁵⁷

The pandemic has also shone a spotlight on the need to reduce health inequalities, with some health inequalities potentially being exacerbated by the pandemic.

Further local health services and improved provision was identified by many residents in the engagement responses. Similarly, residents also identified health as being important to them and their family. The need for access to good care and local health services was a frequent response in comments, as was the need to ensure suitable care and support is available for people who need it, including older people.

What would make your local area a better place?

“Better health services – easier to access”

“Access to dentistry”

The health of the rural population in Wales is influenced by many factors such as income, housing, education, access to services and deprivation in general.⁵⁸ As a whole, the county appears to fare well compared to the rest of Wales when considering general deprivation, with no areas in the most deprived 10%, as discussed in the ‘Economic Well-being’ section. However, social deprivation and, in particular, access to services show high deprivation levels are widespread across rural areas of Wales, including Monmouthshire, as described in the ‘Transport’ section.⁵⁹

Good health and well-being are resources for life by increasing an individual’s ability to achieve their educational, economic and social potential. 80.1% of people in Monmouthshire consider their general health to be good or very good, compared to 81.4% in England and 77.8% in Wales.⁶⁰ Healthy lifestyles contribute towards good health and improved well-being: results from the National Survey for Wales show that although Monmouthshire compares favourably with Gwent and Wales on many healthy lifestyle indicators, the absolute figures still present a challenge:

	Mon	Gwent	Wales
Percentage of adults who report being a current smoker	17%	18%	17%
Percentage of adults who report average weekly alcohol consumption above guidelines	20%	17%	19%
Percentage of adults who ate at least 5 portions fruit & veg the previous day	32%	20%	24%
Percentage of adults who were active at least 150 minutes in the previous week	61%	55%	53%
Percentage of adults overweight or obese (BMI 25+)	56%	65%	60%
Percentage of adults with fewer than 2 healthy behaviours	7%	10%	10%

National Survey for Wales 2018/19 & 2019/20 – adult lifestyles⁶¹

Healthy lifestyles in childhood and adulthood allow for healthy ageing and preventing chronic disease in older age. If healthy lifestyles are adopted early, they will ensure future generations age well, with greater independence and the ability to contribute until much later in life.

Deprivation is highly correlated with unhealthy lifestyles and subsequent ill-health. Therefore, the pockets of deprivation identified in the community profiles are likely to have worse health outcomes than the overall Monmouthshire picture, leading to inequalities in health, education and employment outcomes.

Although Monmouthshire's figures for the percentage of people eating 5 portions of fruit and vegetables per day and healthy BMI are slightly better than those for Wales overall, there are still significant numbers who do not.

Community growing activities such as community gardens, Incredible Edibles and community orchards are in place across the county, but access to further land for communities and individuals who wish to start growing food would be useful and would give physical and mental health benefits. These projects could increase confidence in cooking with vegetables and fruits which could improve the diet for all, as well as giving nutrition and health benefits, mental health.

The percentage of smokers in Monmouthshire is 17%, which represents a significant number of people, and is equal to the Wales average. Children are particularly vulnerable to secondary smoke, making them more susceptible to conditions triggered by second-hand smoke. There are correlations between smoking and deprivation, and smoking is the largest single cause of preventable ill health in Wales, with high costs to the NHS and the economy.⁶²

Monmouthshire has a higher-than-average proportion of adults who report drinking alcohol above the weekly recommended guidelines. Alcohol misuse not only poses a threat to the health and well-being of the drinker, but it can also cause harm to family, friends and communities. Alcohol-related admissions to hospitals from Monmouthshire are amongst the lowest in Wales.⁶³ The problem could be more hidden in Monmouthshire, with less immediately visible effects, including loss of productivity.⁶⁴

Although Monmouthshire has one of the highest sports participation rates in Wales, 37% of adults in the county do less than the recommended 150 minutes of exercise a week, and over a quarter are active less than 30 minutes in a week.⁶⁵ People's lives are increasingly sedentary, partly as a result of technology making lives easier. Fewer people do manual work, and many jobs involve little physical effort.⁶⁶ People aged over 65 are the least active age group, with 57% of Welsh over-65s active for less than the recommended 150 minutes a week, which is significant with Monmouthshire's ageing population.

Obesity is rising in Wales, as it is globally; between 2003 to 2015 there was a 4% increase in levels of obesity among adults in Wales. Currently, in Monmouthshire, 56% of adults are overweight or obese, of which 23% are classed as obese (BMI of 30 or over). In 2018/19, 21.4% of 4 and 5-year-olds in the county were classified as overweight or obese, with 8.6% classed as

obese; the situation is feared to have worsened during periods of inactivity, school closures and lack of routine during the coronavirus pandemic.⁶⁷ As many sedentary behaviours start in childhood, such as school children being driven to school, children living with obesity are more likely to become obese adults. Obesity is a risk factor in numerous health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

The Office for National Statistics produces life-satisfaction data for the UK. The latest full annual results (from 2019/20) show Monmouthshire residents' responses score slightly higher than both the UK and Wales for all measures, including anxiety:⁶⁸

	UK	Wales	Monmouthshire
Average Life Satisfaction Score	7.66	7.67	7.81
Average Worthwhile Score	7.86	7.89	8.05
Average Happiness Score	7.48	7.44	7.55
Average Anxiety Score	3.05	3.09	3.27

The ONS weekly survey on the impact of the coronavirus on day-to-day life in Great Britain shows the effect the pandemic has had on well-being; data from March 2020 to June 2021 shows that the most recent happiness levels are similar to pre-pandemic levels, despite large decreases earlier in the pandemic.⁶⁹

Transport and Access to Services

Transport is essential for many aspects of daily life, providing opportunities for people to access jobs, leisure, and social activities as well as vital services, including education and healthcare. Crucially for the local economy, it connects businesses with their customers and suppliers. However, the modes of transport we use can have profound effects on our environment, communities, and even our health.

Monmouthshire is a predominantly rural county and transport was highlighted as a particular issue in the previous well-being assessment. When asked what would make the area where they live better, issues to do with roads, traffic and highways came out as one of the greatest concerns amongst residents.

Over 40% of the county's economically active residents out-commute, at relatively high distances. (see 'Jobs and Employment' section for further detail)

In Monmouthshire, only 4% of people commute to work using public transport. 60% of drivers, though, say that they would switch to public transport if its quality improved.⁷⁰ In addition to the potential positive effect on well-being, this would also have benefits for the environment. Affordable and accessible public transport is also important for young people to more easily attend college and further education. During the engagement for the well-being assessment,

better public transport came out extremely strongly as something that would improve the area where people live.

Overall, 8% of Monmouthshire commuters share their car; this could be increased, particularly if participation in initiatives such as lift sharing were encouraged.⁷¹ 75% of people in Monmouthshire believe we should all drive less to save the planet, according to 2021 YouGov opinion polling suggesting that car sharing could be a viable option.⁷²

The ambition of the Active Travel Act is to increase substantially the number of people who walk and cycle for everyday journeys, particularly those that are for shorter journeys. Currently, only 1% of people in Monmouthshire commute to work by cycling, for

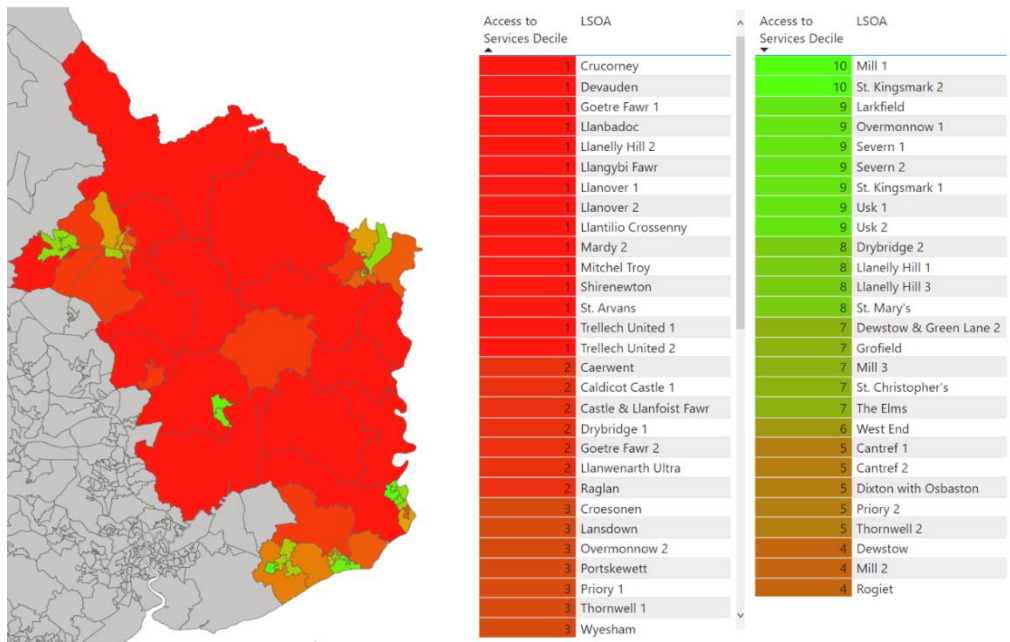
“The first lockdown demonstrated to many people in our street that we suffered from traffic problems before”

example, compared to 6% of people in the best performing similar local authority area. However, the rural nature of the county makes active travel difficult. It has been calculated that 16% of commuter journeys in Monmouthshire could be made by bike, but this will require an uptake of e-bikes and good cycling infrastructure to be made available, such as segregated cycleways.⁷³ Significant investment is being made in active travel in the county. Anecdotal evidence locally aligns with national research suggesting that walking and cycling increased substantially during the lockdowns of 2020 and 2021, and if this increase is to be maintained, every opportunity must be taken to ensure that changed behaviours during a time of disruption don't revert to previous habits.⁷⁴ Many residents from across the county said that they would like more safe walking and cycling routes for use by young and old alike.

In 2020, nearly 70,000 vehicles were registered in Monmouthshire, of which over 55,000 were cars and 7,500 were light goods vehicles.⁷⁵ This is a ratio of 663 per 1000 people, an increase since 2011 when the ratio of cars/vans was 613 per 1000 people, itself a 10% increase since 2001.⁷⁶ This may reflect the challenges of using public transport or walking and cycling in a rural county like Monmouthshire.

Currently, electric vehicles are more expensive than their petrol or diesel equivalent, making the green option hard for many people to achieve. Electric Vehicle infrastructure will also need to improve as petrol and diesel cars are phased out. The Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy for Wales sets out how the Welsh Government will invest in electric vehicle infrastructure and work with the private sector to give people in Wales the confidence to switch to electric vehicles.⁷⁷ Currently, 44 EV charging points are available in Monmouthshire. The council has installed chargers in several car parks across Monmouthshire and data shows they are being well used.⁷⁸

Public and private return travel times to services such as doctors' surgeries, libraries or leisure centres in Monmouthshire are higher than the Wales average in every category except one.⁷⁹ These times are not surprising given the rural nature of the county, but they are a concern when considering its number of elderly residents and inadequate public transport.



Access to services decile by local area in Monmouthshire⁸⁰

Community Safety

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Crime in Monmouthshire is at a lower level than in the five other local authority areas covered by Gwent Police, but there has been a marked increase in certain crime types within the county recently. In the twelve months to April 2021, there were 4677 recorded crimes in the county, a rate of 49.4 per 1000 population. The data shows an increase of 560 crimes from the previous assessment, rising from 4117 in 2016, with an increase of 4.8 from 44.6 per 1000 population. Monmouthshire accounts for 9.87% of all crimes in the Gwent area. When compared with areas with similar demographic, social and economic characteristics relating to crime, Monmouthshire's crime rate is just above average.

From December 2019 to November 2020, there was an increase in Violence Without Injury, Criminal damage and arson, and Public Order offences. Incidents of Rape increased 35% between 19/20 and 20/21, while Other Sexual Offences increased 36.9%.

Shoplifting, residential burglary, commercial burglary, thefts, and vehicle crime have mainly shown reductions over this period, which is likely due in part to

"As a family, we feel safe within our community, however, I can fully empathise that many do not. There is a level of anti-social behaviour in hot spot areas [such as] visible drug use that seems to go unchallenged, speeding and use of illegal off-road vehicles"

the lockdowns during the pandemic, with restricted shopping and more people being required to stay at home.

There is evidence that Organised Crime Groups are operating within the county, which may contribute to some of the increases in certain crime types.

Drug Offences are showing a reduction in the county, with recorded incidents reducing from 213 to 185 from November 2020 to November 2021, which could be attributed to lockdowns during the pandemic. However, substance misuse remains an ongoing issue within our younger population. A confidential report highlights that Monmouthshire pupils rank higher than the national average for smoking, cannabis use, and alcohol consumption. Further data is being explored to better understand this issue.

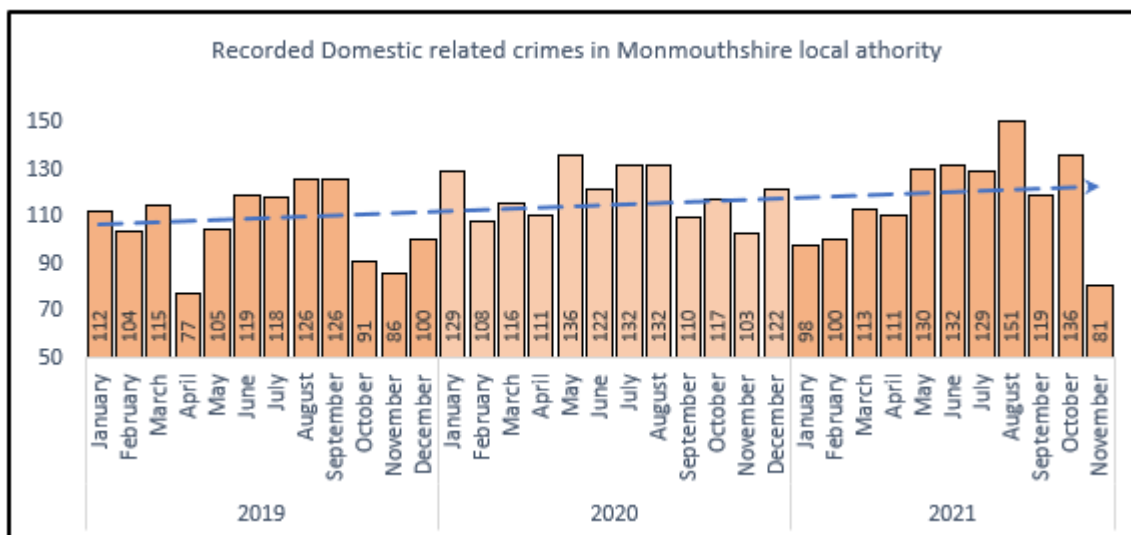
As of January 2021, the Gwent Drug and Alcohol Service (GDAS) had a total of 288 adults accessing substance misuse services across the county. Of this number, 150 were receiving support for alcohol abuse, and 138 for other substance misuse issues. The main substances for which help is initially sought are Alcohol and Heroin, which have maintained steady use across the county. A fall in the number of adults accessing support during the pandemic and lockdowns was recorded, but the latest data indicates a recovery back to pre-pandemic levels of adults seeking support for substance misuse.

Anti-Social Behaviour incidents across Monmouthshire have seen increases and decreases from 2018 to 2021, decreasing from 1044 recorded incidents in 2018/19 to 946 in 2019/20 but increasing markedly to 1135 recorded incidents in 19/20 – a 20% increase across the county. Nuisance has been the most common classification of ASB in Monmouthshire during the most recent period, accounting for 53% of all incidents. Personal incidents have accounted for 15% and environmental incidents have accounted for 15% of all non-Covid-19 related incidents.

The last full year of data from South Wales Fire and Rescue Service in Monmouthshire was April 2019 – March 2020, in which time there were notable increases in deliberate refuse fires and automatic and malicious false alarms. But, as this data is not up-to-date, and pre-Covid particularly, a fuller discussion will need to await the release of further data.⁸¹

Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)

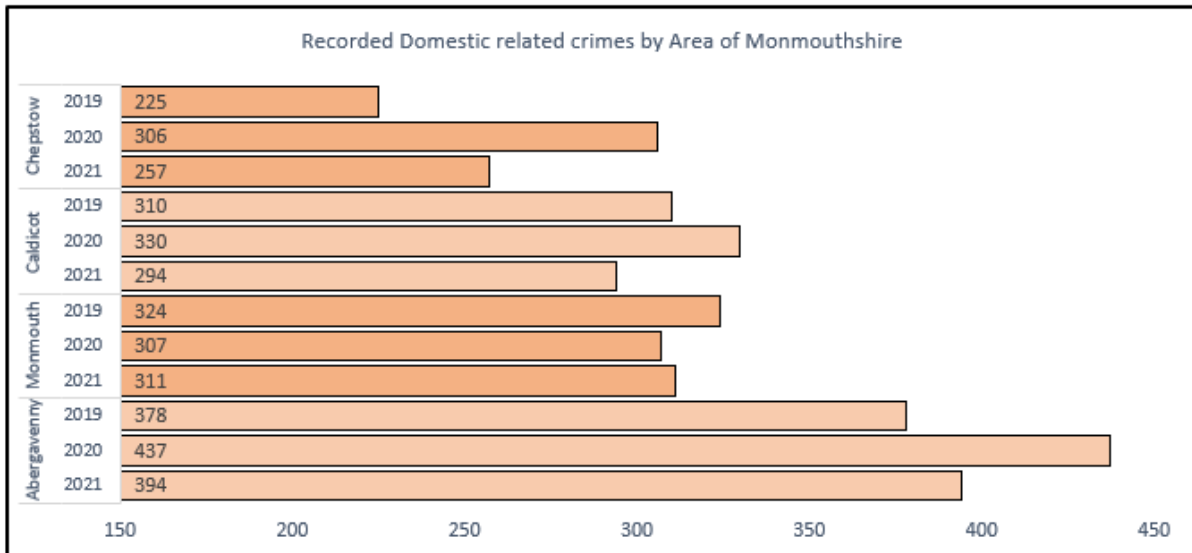
Domestic Crime in Monmouthshire has shown a steady increase since January 2019. In November 2021, the two-year average stood at 118 crimes per month. It is thought that Covid-19 had reduced the number of reported domestic crimes but the data below doesn't necessarily back this up, with only a 1% reduction in average monthly domestic crimes recorded in 2021, compared to 2020.



The rise in crimes in 2021 could be due to the encouragement by Gwent Police and other partner agencies for victims to come forward and report. It could also be down to the ability for victims to have time away from the offender to be able to report the crime as people go back out to work.

Common Assault and Battery is the most common type of domestic abuse recorded in Monmouthshire. Over the last three years it has increased year-on-year, as has the Pursue Course Of Conduct Which Amounts To Stalking offence, whereas Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm and Harassment offending have decreased year-on-year over the last three years. Offences of Controlling or Coercive Behaviour in an Intimate or Family Relationship increased by 40% in 2021.

Recorded domestic crime in Monmouthshire in the last three years has been more common in Abergavenny. All areas except Monmouth have seen a decrease in recorded crimes in 2021, looking at average crimes per month for each area over the last three years. Abergavenny makes up 30% of the average crimes per month, Monmouth 24%, Caldicot 23% and Chepstow 22% of average crimes per month. The reduction in crimes could possibly be due to the pandemic and restrictions during that period.



There have been more male offenders of domestic crime than female over the last three years, though the average monthly number of identified female offenders has increased slightly year-on-year since 2019. There was a significant increase in female offending in April 2020, which was the first month of lockdown. Over the last three years, the most common age category of overall domestic abuse offenders in Monmouthshire has been 22-60 years. Within this, age ranges of 31-40 years and 41-50 years are the most concerning, as they have shown significant rises year-on-year. Also of concern is the 71-80 years age range, which saw a huge increase of over 50% in only 11 months of 2021, compared with the full 12 months of previous year's data.

Although there is a worrying increasing trend of domestic-related crime in Monmouthshire, this could indicate that more victims are coming forward to report it. It also highlights the need for attention from all partners to support and protect the vulnerable.

Mental Health

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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In 2015, 11% of adults in Monmouthshire reported that they were currently being treated for a mental illness.⁸² The Welsh Government's 'Together for Mental Health' strategy reports that one in four adults experience mental health problems or illness at some point during their lifetime and one in six of us will be experiencing symptoms at any one time. At a time of recession and the pandemic, when levels of stress and anxiety inevitably rise, more people will be affected, and suicide rates are likely to increase.

More deprived communities often have the poorest mental health and well-being. Problems can often be passed on through generations and may perpetuate cycles of inequality. Many mental

health problems start early in life, and can be a result of deprivation including poverty, insecure attachments trauma, loss or abuse. This can be seen in the WIMD 2019 data, with the highest levels of GP-recorded mental health conditions in Monmouthshire found in the most deprived areas. In Monmouthshire as a whole, the rate of a GP-recorded mental health condition is the 9th lowest of all 22 local authorities.⁸³

The National Survey for Wales uses the WEMWBS (Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale) to evaluate mental health. Monmouthshire scored 51.7 in 2018/19, a slight increase from the 2016/17 score of 51.3, and the 8th highest in Wales. In comparison, the Wales score in 2018/19 was 51.4. The pandemic has also exposed people to greater levels of stress and anxiety, as well as bereavements, coupled with the restrictions of access to coping mechanisms, such as seeing loved ones, or exercising, so these figures are likely to be higher now. The pandemic will also have had an impact on people's ability in Monmouthshire and across Gwent to get the help and support that they need. The well-being impacts of mental health are explored more generally in the Gwent Well-being Assessment.

What things are important to you?

“Support groups for people of all ages and all needs – better support for the older generations – physical, wellbeing and mental health related”

Data collected as part of the Children in Need Census showed that parental substance or alcohol misuse was present in one quarter of children receiving care and support from Monmouthshire children's social services, and 42% of children had a parent with a mental health issue.⁸⁴

Depression is the most common mental health disorder in Britain, according to the Mental Health Foundation. The Rural Services Network points at evidence that seems to suggest mental health is probably better in rural areas.⁸⁵ However, they also conclude that there are a number of factors specific to rural areas such as demography, access to services, social exclusion and deprivation that may contribute to stress, anxiety and depression. Some rural occupations – including farming – have high suicide rates. Given the large number of farming business in Monmouthshire, this may be a significant issue.

The latest data from ONS reports that in 2020, the Wales suicide rate was 10.3 deaths per 100,000 population, of whom 79% were male.⁸⁶ In Wales, the suicide rate was 11.8 deaths per 100,000 population in between 2018-2020, with 964 deaths. In Monmouthshire over the same period, the rate was marginally higher than the rate in Wales, at 12.0. Caution is needed when interpreting suicide data, particularly annual fluctuations, because the small numbers, delays in registration and recording differences can produce unreliable rates.

Loneliness and Isolation

Evidence suggests that loneliness and social isolation can impact physical and mental health significantly.⁸⁷ Different factors can place individuals at greater risk, including major life transitions, personal characteristics, and health conditions, but it can affect both young and old and those living in rural or urban areas.

“Having a community relationship with a primary school is vital. Community activities for older people are vital to avoid the feeling of loneliness”

An increasingly older population is the single most significant factor in the increasing prevalence of rural isolation. As described in the ‘Ageing Well’ section, Monmouthshire has an ageing population.

As of the 2011 Census, 5,515 people aged 65 and over in Monmouthshire lived alone.⁸⁸ Rural areas have a unique set of circumstances that can exacerbate the social isolation of older residents, leading to poor health, loss of independence and lower quality of life. Decreasing availability of rural public transport, greater reliance on car ownership and rises in the costs of fuel all have an impact on rural isolation. Transport plays a vital role in keeping older people connected to local communities and services but also family and friends. Being unable to get out and about due to a lack of transport can result in older people losing independence, leading to feelings of loneliness and a lack of independence.⁸⁹

Loneliness among older people is exacerbated by distance from family members. Factors such as affordable housing and employment opportunities increase pressure on families to disperse. As further explored in the ‘Housing’ section, such pressures are significant in Monmouthshire. The Royal Voluntary Service states that older people who see their children once a month or less are twice as likely to feel lonely than those who have daily contact with their children.⁹⁰

Broadband connectivity continues to be an issue for Monmouthshire. With the exception of Powys, the county has the lowest proportion of properties with Superfast UK broadband in Wales, and the lowest proportion of properties with Superfast EU broadband.⁹¹ Overall, Superfast availability is 87% in Monmouthshire, compared to 94% for Wales, reflecting the rural nature of the county.⁹² In 2019, the county had a digital deprivation rate of 12.5% (approximately 8,000 premises), but work has continued to install better fibre broadband to areas of south Wales, including Monmouthshire.⁹³ Nevertheless, given the county’s elderly and rural population, and the fact that single pensioner households are the least likely to have internet access (at 51%), it is likely that digital exclusion currently affects many residents in Monmouthshire.⁹⁴

The accessibility of local village shops and services such as post offices often act as community hubs and provide a place for daily interaction. In 2020/21 three quarters of Monmouthshire residents agreed they have a feeling of belonging to their local area.⁹⁵

Housing

A person's health is directly affected by the quality of their home and the environment in which they live. Poor housing is associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases and depression and anxiety, while those with mental health conditions are one and a half times more likely to live in rented housing when compared with the general population.⁹⁶ Over the last 10 years, housing conditions in Wales have improved but several factors still disproportionately affect those experiencing social or economic disadvantage, including homelessness, fuel poverty, unaffordable housing, and lack of safety and green spaces.⁹⁷

Compared to the Wales average of £216k and the UK average of £255k, the average house price in Monmouthshire is high, at £359k.⁹⁸ Overall prices have risen 35% in the last 5 years, with a jump of £23k in the Monmouthshire average just between September 2020 and June 2021; this is likely due to a greater demand in rural areas following the increased ability to work from home as a result of Covid-19, though there is an indication that prices have recently started to plateau.⁹⁹ The removal of the Severn bridge tolls will have made the county more appealing to the residents of Bristol and south West England as it has lowered commuting costs. Nevertheless, prices are very high when related to earnings, with a ratio of 8:1, though in Abergavenny and Monmouth it is as high as 11:1.¹⁰⁰ As outlined in the 'Jobs and Employment' section, Monmouthshire's high house prices make it very difficult for young people, particularly, to live and work locally, leading many to move out of the county.¹⁰¹

Of the approximately 40,000 households in Monmouthshire, 75% are owner-occupied, which is 5% above the Wales average.¹⁰² Studies suggest that the rental properties available reduced by almost 50% between 2010-19 and the private rental market is highly unlikely to be a viable option for those in receipt of Local Housing Allowance – an inability to access private rented accommodation due to high prices is one of the issues leading to people in Monmouthshire being unable to form households and to leave the county.¹⁰³ Between 2010-19, the rental values across Monmouthshire saw an average increase of almost 25%.¹⁰⁴

The difficulties in buying or renting a house create a large demand for affordable housing within the county.¹⁰⁵ There are approximately 5,700 units of affordable housing across Monmouthshire, mostly owned and managed by Monmouthshire Housing Association, Melin Homes and Pobl.¹⁰⁶ The affordable housing waiting list in Monmouthshire stands at more than 3,500 households, of which 2,400 have a recognised need.¹⁰⁷ In the engagement responses for the well-being assessment, residents throughout the county stressed the need for more affordable housing, and the risk that young people in the county are unable to live and work locally.

2018 Welsh Government projections indicate that the overall number of households in South East Wales would increase by 11.8% (77,400) between 2018 and 2043; Monmouthshire will need to accommodate a share of this growth while meeting the needs of an ageing population and trying to retain younger age groups.¹⁰⁸ In the immediate future, it has been estimated that 468 additional affordable homes will be needed per annum up until 2025.¹⁰⁹ However, new build

homes are not the total solution to the supply of affordable homes in the county e.g. increasing the supply of private rented homes and bringing empty properties back into use by other methods.¹¹⁰

Over the last 6 years, the total number of affordable dwelling being built (495) has been below the delivery target of 672 affordable units, required by the local development plan adopted in 2014. However, in the most recent monitoring periods housing completions have been much closer to the annual average requirement, due mostly to the speed with which the allocated strategic sites have come forward.¹¹¹

Despite this progress though, several factors currently affect the delivery of additional affordable housing in Monmouthshire. The first is the high levels of phosphates in the River Wye and River Usk, which mean that any new developments in those areas must demonstrate that the levels will be neutral or will improve as a result of the development. At present, this is preventing new developments in the areas of Abergavenny, Monmouth and Usk. Second, due to limited land available for development, there is high competition for land coming forward. Third, high land values and increased costs of building materials are affecting viability and deliverability. The National Development Framework sets out Welsh Government's policy, and will restrict housing development – including affordable homes – in Monmouthshire as it seeks to concentrate new developments in Newport, Cardiff and the valleys. Finally, it is difficult to deliver affordable housing within town centres due to heritage requirements, the cost and extent of renovation work often required, and significant flood risks.¹¹²

What would you like your community to look like in the future?

“A town where there is more public/social housing for young families, and better employment opportunities for our young people”

“Opportunities for young people to get on the housing ladder if they wish to”

“With house prices accelerating all the time we need to make sure that everyone can afford to live and remain in our community”

Approximately 15% of the existing stock of affordable housing is located in rural areas, equating to around 870 units. However, the majority of these properties do not benefit local communities, as they are not covered by the rural allocation policy that requires people to demonstrate a local connection to that community. Additional affordable housing is needed in these rural areas to enable people to remain in their local communities, particularly younger households and first-time buyers who are often priced out of the open market and have to move away to access housing.¹¹³

In rural counties, second homes are often a factor that compounds housing supply issues; however, of the 42,114 households in Monmouthshire, only 0.5% are second homes, low when compared to several other local authorities in Wales.¹¹⁴

In August 2021, Welsh Government committed £250m for 20,000 new low carbon homes for rent within the social sector in the next few years, of which Monmouthshire has been allocated

£7.5m.¹¹⁵ Social housing is generally more energy-efficient due to being newer and because of improvements made to social housing for Welsh Housing Quality Standard.¹¹⁶

A household is considered to be living in fuel poverty if the occupant is living on a lower income in a home that cannot be kept warm at a reasonable cost.¹¹⁷ 10% of the households in the county are in fuel poverty; this is below the Wales average of 12%, but high considering the county's overall affluence, working out to around 4,000 households.¹¹⁸ Households in rural areas are more likely to be in fuel poverty, which could reflect a greater proportion of rural households not having central heating; in the 2011 census, over 600 households (1.6%) in Monmouthshire had no central heating.¹¹⁹ While fuel poverty is predominantly experienced by households with low incomes, the occupants are also generally older, as are the buildings themselves, which is relevant to Monmouthshire given the older population and housing stock.¹²⁰ In addition, rural properties are often not on the gas network so depend on more expensive oil or bottled gas for heating.

The current homelessness situation in Monmouthshire is extremely challenging due to the lack of temporary and permanent accommodation and the continuing level of need for homeless support.¹²¹ The average stay in temporary accommodation is longer than normal due to a lack of suitable alternative accommodation because existing temporary accommodation is at capacity and the supply of permanent accommodation vacancies is insufficient to meet demand.¹²² Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Monmouthshire County Council has experienced a significant increase in demand for homelessness accommodation, as Welsh Government guidance required it to ensure nobody had to sleep rough or was at risk of sleeping rough. This issue has been exacerbated due to citizens not being able to stay with family or friends.¹²³ As of August 2021, there were 147 households in temporary accommodation, including 73 households in bed and breakfast accommodation. Many of these are single homeless people with multiple support needs.¹²⁴

Of those assessed as homeless in Wales in 2019/20, 41% were successfully helped to secure accommodation, whereas in Monmouthshire in 2020/21 the prevention figure is only 35%, illustrating the scale of the county's problem.¹²⁵ However, despite the challenging situation, Monmouthshire County Council is increasing both accommodation and housing support; in 2019/20 the county had only 5 rough sleepers, making it the joint 6th lowest in Wales.¹²⁶

Providing appropriate housing to meet the needs of the population in Monmouthshire, including older people and disabled people, is essential so that people are able to access suitable accommodation that meets their needs, are not trapped in unsuitable accommodation or need to move from their communities to access more suitable housing. Planning for flexible, adaptable accommodation with the whole life course in mind will improve the ability of older people and those with disabilities to live independently at home.

Child Development

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Children born into secure, loving families are more likely to grow up to be better educated, more financially secure and healthier, and are more likely to give their children the same good start in life. The first thousand days of a child's life from conception to their second birthday have a significant effect on their outcomes and those of future generations.

Teenage pregnancy is both a cause and a consequence of health and education inequalities and is associated with poorer outcomes for children. Monmouthshire has a rate of 26.6 per 1,000 conceptions under the age of 20. This is far below the Welsh average of 37.2 per 1,000 and the second-lowest in Wales.¹²⁷

Birth weight is an important determinant for future health, as it is inversely associated with infant mortality and life expectancy, and is predictive of disability and educational achievement as well as diabetes, stroke and heart disease in adults.¹²⁸ Monmouthshire had 4.7% of low birth weight live single births in 2015 compared to the Welsh average of 5.5%.¹²⁹ Using data available at a smaller geographical area, it appears that the rates are highest in Portskewett, Priory 2 in Abergavenny and West End in Caldicot.

In Monmouthshire, 43.8% of babies are breastfed at 10 days following birth, which compares favourably with the Welsh average.¹³⁰ This is important, as breastfeeding has long-term benefits for babies, lasting into adulthood, and health benefits for mothers, while promoting early bonding and attachment between mother and baby.

Flying Start is the Welsh Government's Early Years programme for families with children less than four years of age, and includes free quality, part-time childcare for two to three-year-olds, an enhanced health visiting service, access to parenting programmes and speech, language and communication support. The Monmouthshire Flying Start service is available to families in defined areas of Abergavenny, Monmouth, Chepstow and Caldicot.

Legislation requires the provision of, as far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient childcare to meet the requirements of parents in their area who require childcare to work, to undertake training or education, or to prepare for work. Parents have reported a lack of adequate childcare for children with a disability, including after school clubs, child minders, and holiday provisions. They struggle to find adequate suitable carers when using direct payments, and there is a lack of places at after school clubs.¹³¹

On the whole, the quality of childcare provision in Monmouthshire is very good and there is sufficient provision to meet the needs of most families; however, there are some gaps in

provision that have been identified and need to be addressed (such as Welsh Language provision).¹³² An action plan was drawn up to address highlighted gaps and to reduce the barriers to accessing childcare that were identified.

“I also worry how our young families can afford to work and pay for nursery provision with very little affordable childcare provision in place”

Some responses to the engagement survey identified the affordability of childcare as being an issue and the potential impact that this has on their parents being in employment.

Play is important to children’s development; further information on play provision and the latest Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) for the county is in the sport and leisure section of the Culture assessment.

The main oral disease of childhood is tooth decay which, like many other diseases, is associated with social deprivation. This is largely preventable, for example by reducing intake of sugary and starchy food and drinks. The most recent data shows that, on average, Monmouthshire children aged 5 have 0.9 decayed, missing or filled teeth, just below the Welsh average of 1.22. At age 12, the average number of decayed, missing or filled teeth for Monmouthshire children is 0.5, below the Welsh average of 0.6.¹³³ There are concerns that children’s oral health may have been negatively affected during the coronavirus pandemic, with access to dental care being limited.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are chronic stressful experiences in childhood that can directly hurt a child (such as abuse or neglect) or affect them through the environment in which they live (such as growing up in a house with domestic violence or with individuals with alcohol and other substance use problems). ACEs tend to be ‘passed down’ through families and lock successive generations of families into poor health and anti-social behaviour. Unfortunately, data on ACEs for Monmouthshire is not available.

Monmouthshire has seen an increase in the number of looked after children over recent years. The number of looked after children has increased from 173 at the end of 2018/19 to 219 at the end of March 2020. Despite a slight decrease in the number of looked after children in March 2021 to 213, there has been a sustained increase. The rate in Monmouthshire of 123 children looked after per 10,000 child population remains higher than the equivalent Wales rate which is 115 per 10,000.¹³⁴ The number of children on the child protection register in Monmouthshire has fluctuated but the overall remains higher than a few years ago. As a result, there is significant demand on Children Services in Monmouthshire.

Education

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Monmouthshire has 30 LEA funded primary schools including two Welsh-medium, six Church in Wales and two Roman Catholic primary schools. There are four secondary schools and a pupil referral unit. Across the authority, 16.6% of compulsory school age pupils are eligible for free school meals.

In 2018, the Welsh Government began the process of developing new evaluation and improvement arrangements to align and help the realisation of the new Curriculum for Wales and associated reforms. These arrangements include a new set of measures for Key Stage 4 to support a broader learner choice, valuing learner needs and achievements, along with a move away from gathering this information on a school-by-school basis.

Amendments to the regulations relating to teacher assessment information supported the Welsh Government's decision to cease publishing comparative information about end of phase or key stage teacher assessment data and National Reading and Numeracy Test data at a school, local authority, or regional consortium level.

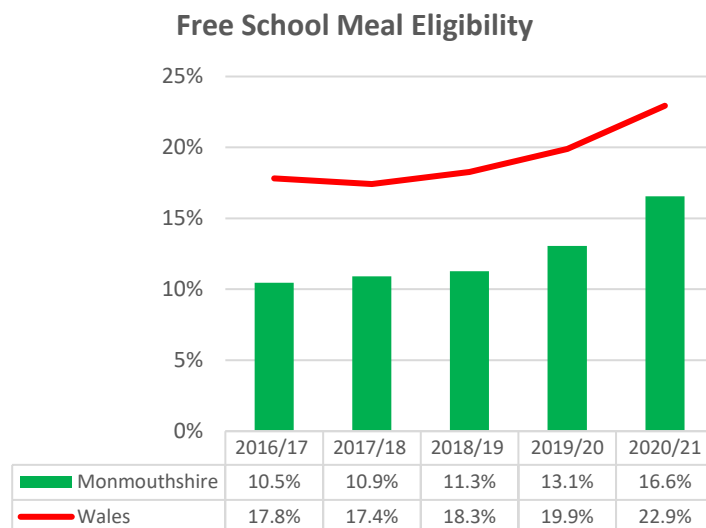
In 2019, further modifications were made to some of the regulations underpinning the reporting and collection of school information to take account of the disruption to schools as a direct result of coronavirus and the disproportionate administrative burden they may have posed during these challenging times, including school reporting requirements in relation to the 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/2022 school years. This means the local authority is unable to provide school academic performance information at this time.

Skills and qualifications are important for progression into further education or employment. Having good local schools and education provision was identified as being important to Monmouthshire engagement respondents and their families.

School attendance is a critical factor in student achievement. Attendance in Monmouthshire primary schools during the last year of available data (2018/19) was the highest in Wales, with 4.6% of half-day sessions missed due to all absences, with the Wales average being 5.4%.¹³⁵

Attendance in secondary schools tends to be slightly lower than in primary schools. As with primary schools, attendance in Monmouthshire secondary schools during 2018/19 was the highest in Wales, with 5% of half-day sessions missed due to all absences (compared to 6.2% for Wales).¹³⁶

An increasing number of Monmouthshire children are eligible for free school meals although not all parents who are eligible claim for them. The coronavirus outbreak has resulted in a further increase and as a result, the percentage of compulsory school-age children eligible for free school meals in Monmouthshire in 2020/21 is 16% and lower than the Welsh average of 22.9%. In Monmouthshire, however, the percentage of children eligible is increasing at a faster rate than the Welsh average:



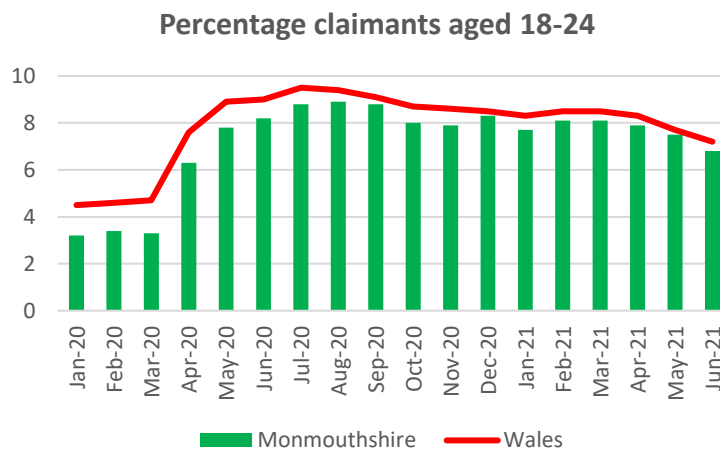
Percentage pupils aged 5-15 eligible for free school meals¹³⁷

In considering effective school support for disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils, Estyn defines vulnerable pupils as those who may be more likely to experience emotional, social and developmental barriers to learning, for example pupils with special educational needs, pupils with mental health issues and medical needs, and looked after children. Disadvantaged pupils are considered to be pupils who may have barriers to succeeding in school because of detrimental circumstances beyond their control; for example, pupils eligible for free school meals and pupils from low-income families.¹³⁸ The latest annual report produced by Monmouthshire’s Chief Officer for Children and Young People highlights that securing better outcomes for our learners eligible for free school meals remains an important area of focus.¹³⁹ The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation also highlights that there are different levels of attainment between different communities where pupils are attending the same school.¹⁴⁰ Further assessment of children and young people with health conditions, disabilities and sensory impairments – including the predicted number of children with a disability in Gwent – is included in section 3 of the Gwent Population Needs Assessment.¹⁴¹

Studies have shown that time spent NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) can have a detrimental effect on physical and mental health, and increase the likelihood of unemployment, low wages, or low quality of work later on in life.¹⁴² Careers Wales data shows the percentage of year 11 school leavers who were NEET in 2020 was 1.4% in Monmouthshire and for year 13 school leavers 3.9%. This compares favourably with the Wales figures of 7.4% of 16-18 year olds.¹⁴³

Almost one-third of Monmouthshire Key Stage 4 pupils entered higher education in the following three years after leaving Year 11 compared to 29.9% for Wales.¹⁴⁴ A lack of high-quality graduate jobs in South Wales means that the healthy and better qualified often leave the area for better opportunities, leading to a ‘brain drain’ effect. As more people that are qualified leave, it becomes more difficult for the area to recover and attract the employment opportunities that people seek.¹⁴⁵

The coronavirus outbreak has particularly affected the labour market status of young people: the percentage of claimants aged 18-24 in Wales rose from 4.7% in March 2020, peaking at 9.5% in July 2020. Monmouthshire followed this trend, although below the Welsh average. By June 2021, claimant rates were lower than the peak in summer 2020 but still some way above pre-pandemic levels:



Percentage claimants aged 18-24¹⁴⁶

Qualifications of working-age adults at both NQF levels 3 and 4 in Monmouthshire are both above the Welsh average. Working-age adults with no qualifications are 3.8% and below the Welsh average of 7.3%.

The 21st Century Schools Programme is a long-term investment for schools to develop as hubs for learning and reduce buildings in poor condition. Monmouthshire has benefitted from the programme, with new secondary schools in Caldicot and Monmouth, for example.



Monmouth Comprehensive School

As described in the Gwent assessment, the coronavirus pandemic has had a disruptive effect on schools and education.

The usual process of awarding Key Stage 4 and 5 results were altered for the academic years 2019/20 and 2020/21, leading to uncertainty for students, resulting in some leaving education or going on to university without having sat a formal exam at GCSE or A Level. Consequently, some students may feel less confident and lag behind previous years in terms of their readiness for the next challenge in their lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact upon attendance at schools across Wales. Monmouthshire has been no exception, with attendance rates in 2020/21 being 94.4% at primary phase and 92.8% at secondary phase which is 1.0pp and 2.2pp respectively below the latest published Monmouthshire data contained in the National data releases in 2018/19.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the well-being of students. The local authority has allocated funding from Welsh Government to address this issue, with a programme of support developed to commence in Spring Term 2022.

The Covid pandemic also contributed towards the rise in learners who were home educated by their parents. The number of pupils whose parents who have chosen to ‘Elect to Home Educate’ has increased from 57 at the start of the pandemic to 93 pupils as of December 2021 (though Covid is not the sole cause of this increase).

Equipping our children and young people with the skills they will need to enter a rapidly

What would you like your community to look like in the future?

“Improved chances for future generations achieved by both children and adult learning and training advances”

changing workplace is vital. Many low skill, routine tasks are likely to be automated while emerging sectors such as smart technology, artificial intelligence, and robotics are likely to grow.

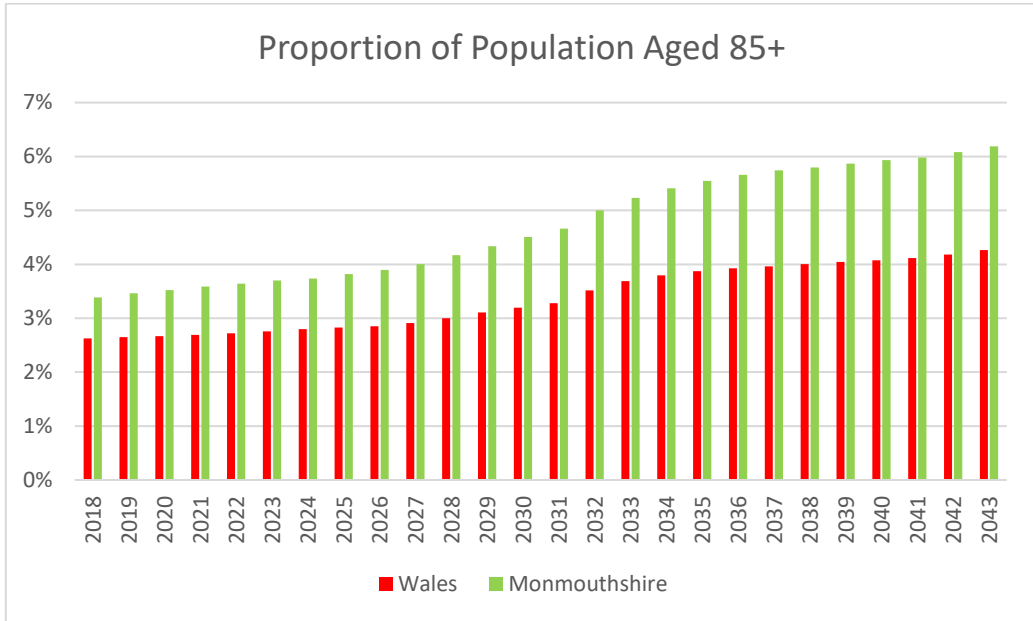
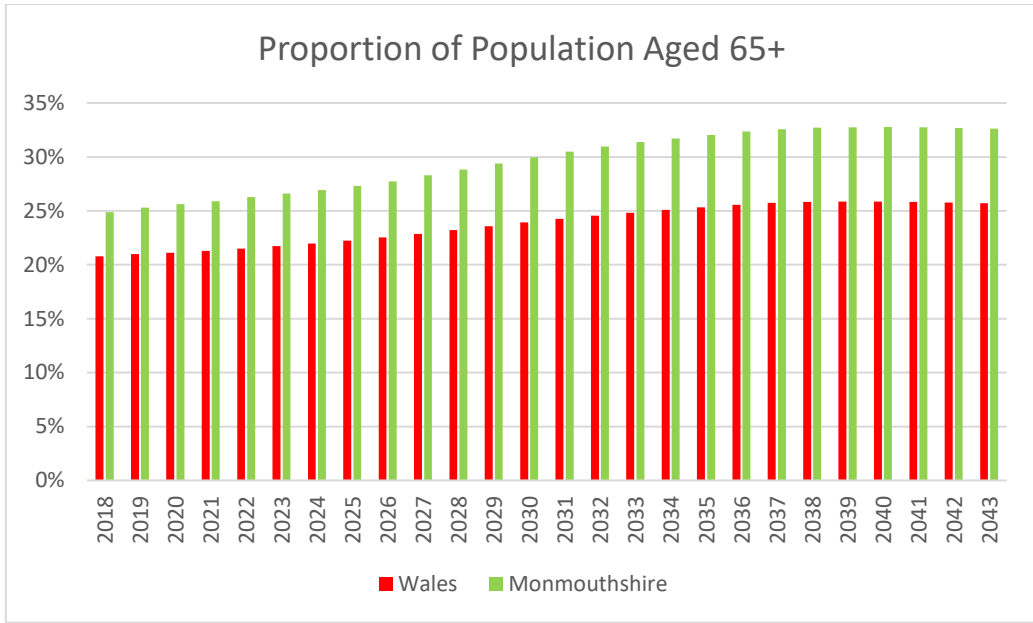
Respondents to the engagement exercise in Monmouthshire identified education as an important part of the future of their community.

More information on future skills is considered in the Gwent well-being assessment.

Ageing Well

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Monmouthshire’s population aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 41% and, more significantly, those aged 85 and over by 96% by 2043.¹⁴⁷



As the age of the population increases, so too does the number of unpaid carers. Social Care Wales estimates that 12% of the population of Wales are unpaid carers, a figure that could increase to 16% by 2037. Wales also has the highest proportion of older carers and carers providing more than 50 hours’ care a week; this is particularly relevant to Monmouthshire, given its ageing population. Better support for unpaid carers was identified by some respondents to the engagement exercise.

What would make your area a better place?
“More respite support services for unpaid carers”

The most common health problems amongst older people, and causes of hospital admission and mortality, are respiratory and heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes and fractures. Falls are the most common cause of serious injury in older people and the most frequent reason for hospital attendance.¹⁴⁸ Elderly fallers account for 10% of all 999 calls to

the Welsh Ambulance Service.¹⁴⁹ A reluctance to leave home due to a fear of falling comes across strongly in Monmouthshire County Council’s survey of social care users.

Monmouthshire has integrated health and social care teams, with a mix of skill sets, which provide people with the most appropriate professional when needed. Reablement is a vital service delivered by the integrated teams over a six week period that aims to restore people to independence at home after a fall or other crisis event. During 2020/21, Monmouthshire’s reablement service delivered 291 periods of reablement, at the end of which 58.8% of people had no requirement for long term services.

Referrals to Adult’s Social Services in Monmouthshire have increased over recent years, and services are facing unprecedented pressure as a result of a range of factors. In March 2021, 1,813 adults had care and support plans detailing the support required. During 2020-21, 80 people began a service in a residential care home and 1,324 adults started a domiciliary care service, which may include new additional care hours to existing provision.¹⁵⁰ Monmouthshire has specific challenges in adults social care due to rurality and demographics in the county. Demand has increased significantly during the pandemic and people are often presenting with needs that are more complex. Some of this has been attributed to the effect of coronavirus lockdowns, in particular, some people are now experiencing reduced confidence and physical frailty. Recruitment and retention of care staff is also considerable challenge. There is a key challenge of the fragility of the whole health and social care sector and balancing demand pressures and staff retention to provide the care required.

Dementia UK estimates that 1 in 14 people over the age of 65 have dementia, and the condition affects 1 in 6 people over 80. The number of people with dementia is increasing as people are living longer; it is estimated that by 2025, more than 1 million people in the UK will have dementia.¹⁵¹ With Monmouthshire’s ageing population, there will therefore be increasing levels of dementia in the county in the future.

There were many responses to the engagement exercise on the importance of, and concerns related to, the provision of care for older people and ensuring older people can remain involved in their local community and supported at home for as long as possible.

“Older people want to stay in their own homes so there needs to be sufficient services to support this – health, mental health support – and they may need help to continue to be involved in the community, such as transport”

“Domiciliary services are vital for those older people who wish to stay living in their homes”

Older people and their contribution to their communities are often undervalued: in 2017, Age UK estimated the economic contribution of employment, informal caring (including childcare) and volunteering by people aged 65 or over amounted to £160 billion.¹⁵² In 2019/20, Welsh Government’s National Survey for Wales reported that 30% of people aged 65-74 volunteered.

It becomes even more important to remain involved and active in older age, in order to stay healthy and remain independent. Continuing to learn throughout life can improve and maintain

our mental well-being. Daily physical activity is recommended for older adults, carrying very low health and safety risks for the majority. In contrast, the risks of poor health as a result of inactivity are very high. Across Wales, 59% of adults participate in a sport or physical activity. However, this figure drops to 44% of people aged 65-74 and further to 19% of those aged 75 and over.¹⁵³ Further assessment of activity rates is provided in the ‘Cultural Well-being’ section.

The pandemic has undoubtedly affected the well-being of older adults, as shown in the results of the ONS survey on the social impact of the coronavirus pandemic on older people in Great Britain. Being worried about the future, feeling stressed or anxious, and being bored had most commonly affected older adults’ well-being.¹⁵⁴

Integration

It is important to understand the inter-relationship between environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being. Summarised below are how the ‘Social Well-being’ sections integrate with other sections of the assessment to set out the relationship between the factors contributing to well-being.

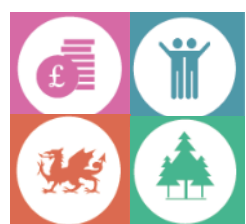
Health and Well-being

Good health and well-being is a resource for life by increasing an individual’s ability to achieve their educational, economic and social potential. The environment has an important role in contributing to people’s health and well-being.



Transport and Access to Services

Transport whether public or private is an essential for people to access the jobs, services and activities they need. The environment in Monmouthshire is impacted upon by transport but also provides opportunities for active travel.



Community Safety

Social and economic circumstances can lead to crime, while perceptions of crime and safety can impact on people’s well-being in communities, many residents in Monmouthshire see Anti-Social behaviour as a priority.



Mental Health

People's Mental Health and well-being will be impacted upon by economic, social, environmental and cultural factors both as reasons for and treatment of mental health problems and promoting people's well-being.



Loneliness and Isolation

An increasingly older population is the single most significant factor in the increasing prevalence of rural isolation. Rural areas have a unique set of circumstances that can exacerbate social isolation, such as poor transport options, which can in turn lead to poor health, loss of independence and lower quality of life.



Housing

Having a secure home is a prerequisite to well-being. Economic and social circumstances impact on the availability of housing, with Monmouthshire house prices are amongst the highest in Wales. This could also affect the long-term viability of some communities, though housing developments need to be balanced against environmental impacts, but can also deliver environmental benefits through design, quality and green infrastructure.



Child Development

Children born into secure, loving families are more likely to grow up to be better educated, more financially secure, and healthier adults and they are more likely to give their own children the same good start in life. The first thousand days of a child's life from conception to their second birthday has a significant impact on their outcomes and those of future generations.



Education

Equipping young people with the skills and education they need for future employment, to fulfil their potential and maximise their social and economic well-being.



Ageing Well

The challenges of the well-being of an ageing population are well documented and mainly cover economic, social and cultural factors. However, older people are also a significant asset to the county, while community-based assets in the county provide an opportunity to improve the well-being of older people.



Environmental Well-being

Natural resources, such as air, land, water, wildlife, plants and soil, provide our most basic needs, including food, energy and security. They help to keep us healthy and help people and the economy to thrive, while reducing flooding, improving air quality and supplying materials for construction. Natural resources also provide a home for wildlife, give us iconic landscapes to enjoy, and boost the economy through tourism.¹⁵⁵

However, they are also under pressure from development, climate change, the need to produce energy, and more. Managing our natural resources responsibly is essential to ensure our long term social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being.

Landscape and Countryside

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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One of Monmouthshire’s greatest assets is undoubtedly its landscape and natural environment. Monmouthshire is recognised for its rich and diverse landscapes, stretching from the flat open coastline of the Gwent Levels in the south, to the exposed uplands of the Black Mountains within the Brecon Beacons National Park in the north and the picturesque river gorge of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the east. The benefits of the natural environment and landscape for health and well-being are well-documented, for both physical health and mental health, and this has never been more evident than through the 2020 and 2021 lockdowns.¹⁵⁶ Local landscapes can also provide an important link to our sense of national pride, culture and local identity, and are important for tourism, recreation and economic activity.¹⁵⁷ During the engagement for the well-being assessment, when asked what is good about where people live, the second most cited reason was the landscape, countryside and green spaces.

Green infrastructure (GI) is a term used to refer to high quality natural and semi-natural areas, such as trees, parks, gardens, woodlands, verges and rivers, which together make a living network of green spaces, water and other environmental features in both urban and rural areas. In Monmouthshire, the council uses a green infrastructure approach for delivering biodiversity and ecosystem resilience, supporting landscape setting and quality of place, addressing health and well-being, identifying solutions for tackling climate change, supporting active travel, managing public rights of way, and providing the framework for partnership working.¹⁵⁸

People enjoy the landscape of Monmouthshire for many reasons. This includes for its tranquillity, and Monmouthshire also has 5 Dark Sky Discovery Sites for astronomy.¹⁵⁹



Walking down the Sugarloaf

Landscape and countryside are also important contributors to the economy in Monmouthshire, including through tourism, agriculture and forestry. These are explored more in the ‘Jobs and Employment’ and “Landscape and Heritage” sections.

As well as having an important role to play in health and well-being and economic well-being, the condition of our green spaces in

Monmouthshire gives an important

indication of environmental well-being. Agriculture has a significant effect on environmental well-being, with the way land is managed having a direct impact on soil and water quality, biodiversity, habitats and landscape. In the future it is likely that there will be significant impacts on agriculture and land management as a result of subsidy changes that come into place following Brexit.

Monmouthshire has large numbers of sites with local, national, European and international recognition of their value for wildlife and biodiversity, including a Ramsar Site, Special Areas of Conservation, National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest. These are explored more in the Local Well-being Assessment section. The number of local Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation has increased significantly from 589 sites in 2016 to 759 sites in 2021 as a result of funding to survey sites as part of a Resilient Greater Gwent Project.¹⁶⁰ However, the quality of the earlier designated sites is not fully known; sites may have been degraded in quality or lost. A number of key sites are known to have been lost due to changes in management and development.

In addition to these designations for biodiversity (and geology), there are also protected landscapes within Monmouthshire. The east of the county is part of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and parts of the county outside Abergavenny form part of the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Blaenavon World Heritage Site and Clydach Gorge Landscape of Special Historic Interest. To the east is the Wye Valley Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest, and in the south of the county, the Gwent Levels is designated as a Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales.¹⁶¹

However, despite these designations, there are still numerous threats to environmental well-being. NRW’s SoNaRR2020 report assesses the extent to which Wales is achieving the sustainable management of natural resources, illustrating that Monmouthshire, like Gwent as a whole, is not meeting the four long-term aims of Sustainable Management of Natural Resources (further information in the Gwent Well-being Assessment).¹⁶² A wide range of issues that are

difficult to manage or regulate are contributing to reducing the resilience of Wales' ecosystems, which affect the delivery of ecosystem benefits and impacts on people's well-being, and the loss of biodiversity and decline in quality of many species, habitats and designated sites is continuing.¹⁶³ Many local residents said that wildlife and biodiversity was important to them and they wanted to make sure that it was protected.

In Monmouthshire, some of the threats to the natural environment are contributing to the species decline highlighted in the Gwent State of Nature Report.¹⁶⁴ For example, numbers of lapwing have greatly reduced and the range of the adder has declined, making isolated populations more vulnerable and less resilient. Threats to species include tree disease, in particular ash dieback and larch disease, causing fragmentation of ancient woodland parcels, pollution and over-abstraction on the Rivers Usk and Wye and their tributaries, and development pressures reducing habitats and increasing habitat fragmentation, which means that wildlife cannot easily move from one area to the next.¹⁶⁵ There are many partnerships in Monmouthshire which are attempting to address some of these issues, such as the Wye Catchment Partnership, the Living Levels Project, the Black Mountains Partnership and the Monmouthshire and Newport Local Nature Partnership. Initiatives such as Nature Isn't Neat and the Monmouthshire Pollinator's Policy are examples of work aiming to improve biodiversity and protect pollinators.¹⁶⁶

There is also extensive regional working through the Gwent Green Grid and the Resilient Greater Gwent partnerships.¹⁶⁷ These regional partnerships offer a key delivery mechanism for the Gwent PSB and South East Wales Area Statement and support ecosystem management and climate adaptation at a scale which is appropriate to the habitat or landscape and exceeds political boundaries.

Invasive Non-Native Species in Monmouthshire are another threat, such as American signal crayfish, Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed. As well as being detrimental to native wildlife, there is a significant financial impact. Research suggests that such species cost Wales £125 million per year from damage to crops, ecosystems and livelihoods.¹⁶⁸ There are projects by Resilient Greater Gwent and the Wye Valley AONB which aim to address Invasive Non-Native Species.

The resilience of ecosystems means how well they can deal with disturbances, either by resisting them, recovering from them, or adapting to them.¹⁶⁹ Although there are some important wildlife corridors in Monmouthshire, such as the Rivers Usk and Wye and the Severn Estuary which allow species to migrate if under pressure, the county also has isolated pockets of habitats, such as grasslands and ancient and semi-natural woodlands that are scattered and poorly connected. This could result in the loss of certain species to Monmouthshire, with a subsequent loss of overall biodiversity.

Loss of woodland and tree cover is also an issue of concern in Monmouthshire, which affects economic, social and environmental well-being. The county has extensive broadleaved woodlands in the Wye Valley, small blocks of farm woodland, rural estates and some commercial

forest blocks, resulting in 15.2% of the county being wooded (slightly above the Wales average of 14%).¹⁷⁰ As well as the importance of woodlands for biodiversity, they are important for our local economy, through tourism and recreation and employment, for building resilience through carbon storage, reducing flooding, stabilising soils, and improving health and well-being by improving air quality, reducing noise and providing green space for recreation. Threats from tree disease, particularly ash die back and larch disease, a burgeoning deer population, conflicting recreational pressures and little economic incentive to plant and manage woodlands on farmland means that some woodlands are now in a poor condition, of small size, and are fragmented.

Trees are also an essential component of our urban Green Infrastructure, delivering a range of services to help sustain life, promote well-being, and support economic benefits. They make our towns more attractive to live in – encouraging inward investment, improving the energy efficiency of buildings – as well as removing airborne pollutants and connecting people with nature. They can also mitigate the extremes of climate change, helping to reduce storm water run-off and the urban heat island. However, Monmouthshire has only 15% urban tree cover, less than the Wales average, with some areas as low as 8.4%. 12 hectares of woodland were lost in Monmouthshire between 2011 and 2014, while every town lost tree cover between 2009 and 2013 (county tree cover has fallen by 1.2% between 2009-13), reducing the many benefits they bring.¹⁷¹ Work is underway to increase tree cover; for example, Monmouthshire County Council has exceeded its commitment to plant 10,000 trees in three years in its Climate Emergency Strategy, funding tree planting through the profits made through Monmouthshire's two Re-use Shops, and the extremely ambitious community project Stump Up for Trees.¹⁷² New i-Tree Eco technology is being used in Severnside and Chepstow to understand more about the benefits that urban trees bring in order to develop priorities for a tree plant plan.¹⁷³

Perhaps surprisingly, much of rural Monmouthshire does not have easily accessible natural or semi-natural green space or easy access to amenity green spaces such as sports pitches.¹⁷⁴ For example, the average number of parks, public gardens, or playing fields within a 1000m radius is 2.67, well below the Wales average of 3.4.¹⁷⁵ Less available good quality public green space is usually associated with economically deprived areas but some of these areas in Monmouthshire are some of the least deprived in the county, so the figures are mostly due to the area's rurality and the small size of the respective towns/villages.¹⁷⁶

There are over 3,850 hectares of mainly rural commons in Monmouthshire, where there is usually a right to roam on foot, plus 24 village greens. Excluding the Brecon Beacons National Park there is also about 150 hectares of land designated as Open Access, plus 3,550 ha of open access woodland managed by Natural Resources Wales.¹⁷⁷

Monmouthshire has approximately 2,165 kilometres of public rights of way, including several long-distance paths such as the Wales Coast Path and Offa's Dyke trail. These rights of way are important for leisure and recreation, as well as for tourism, active travel and to improve health and well-being. However, 89% of these are footpath only and don't provide for cyclists or horse riders. Monmouthshire's Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2020-2030 sets objectives for

the county’s rights of way network, countryside sites and wider public access, and recognises the importance of access to quality green spaces for physical and mental well-being for residents and visitors.¹⁷⁸ A Regional Access Forum for Gwent is also being established to help improve the countryside access network regionally and locally.

Air and Water Quality

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Air pollution is the biggest environmental threat to health in the UK, with between 28,000 and 36,000 deaths a year attributed to long-term exposure.¹⁷⁹ There are significant health and social care costs associated with air pollution.

Air quality across Monmouthshire varies. Although less than some other parts of Gwent, as a whole, pollution is still relatively high given the rural nature of the county. Monmouthshire does not have a significant industrial contribution to air quality, so the air quality in the county is almost completely due to transport-related emissions, with high levels of nitrogen dioxide and particulates from vehicles, which are particularly detrimental to health.¹⁸⁰ Monmouthshire has two Air Quality Management Areas, the details of which are given in the area chapters. In 2020, due to the impact of the Covid pandemic and lockdowns, air quality in Monmouthshire improved compared to 2019 at all air quality monitoring locations, and 2020 concentrations were the lowest to date.¹⁸¹ The data is not yet available since lockdowns were eased, but anecdotal evidence suggests that this air quality improvement was only temporary and that emissions have likely returned to pre-Covid levels.



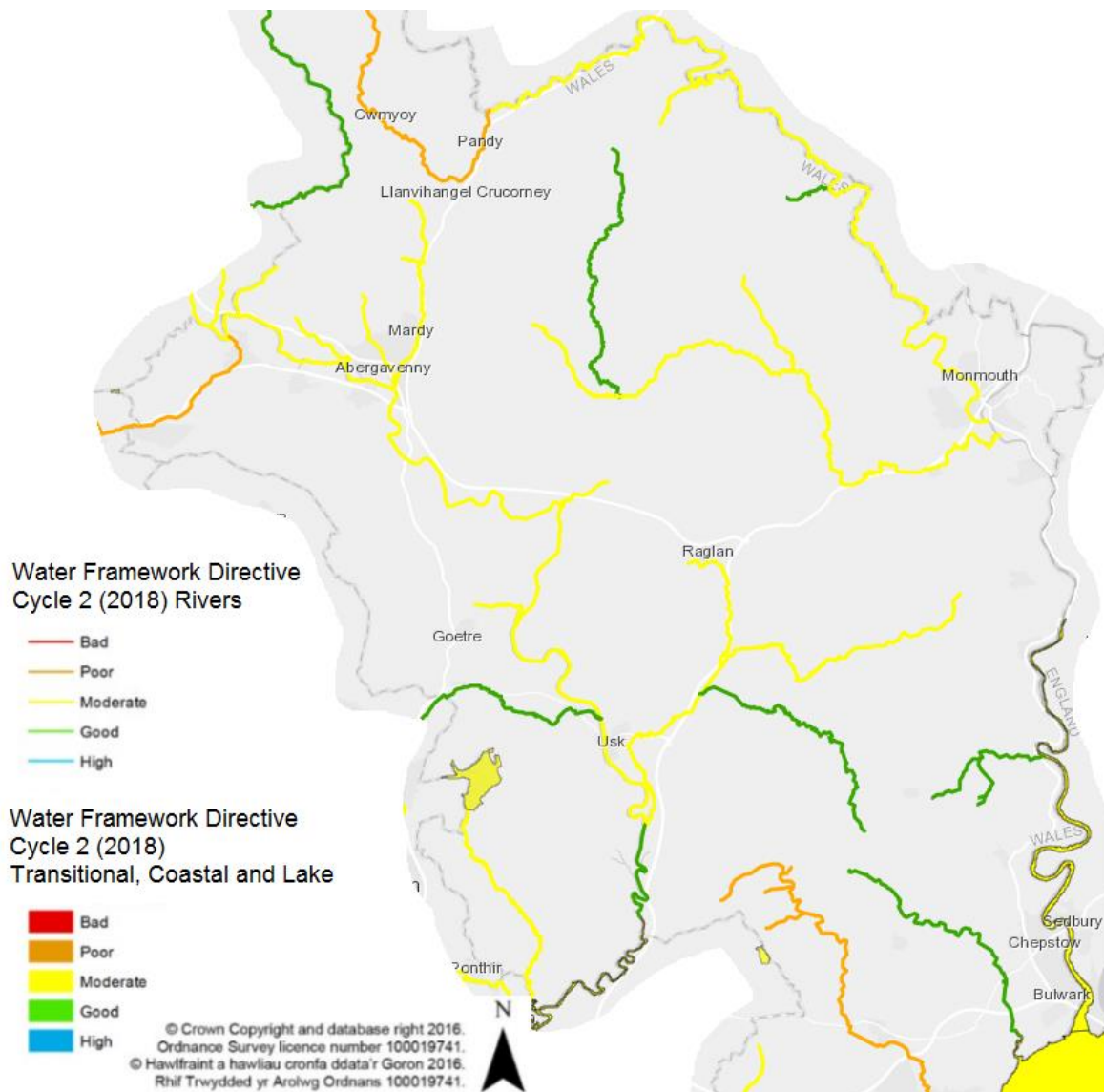
One of the winning anti-idling poster designs

Complaints about cars idling their engines, particularly outside schools, has led to an anti-idling campaign being run in 2020/21, with children designing posters to be made into road signs.

Rivers and water form some of the most attractive features of the Monmouthshire landscape. They are seen as popular routes for walking and cycling such as the Usk Valley and Clydach Gorge and are visitor destinations such as the Wye Gorge, Llandegfedd Reservoir and the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. The river valleys have high ecological value as well as being the foci of historical settlements. However, pressure from development, increases in recreational use, changes in agricultural practice and climate change continues to affect these attractive landscapes.¹⁸²

Water quality varies across the county. Waterways assessed under the EU Water Framework Directive as bad, poor or moderate are deemed as failing the standards and need to be improved to at least good by 2027. They are assessed on a combination of ecological and chemical monitoring. The NRW map below shows the water quality of each waterway in Monmouthshire with further details given in each of the 5 local area assessments. Several water bodies in Monmouthshire face a range of diffuse rural, industrial and sewage pollution.

Water pollution from rural sources, particularly phosphates, nitrates and sediment, is identified by NRW as a significant threat to wildlife and plants within the county. NRW has brought in detailed planning guidance to ensure that new developments don't increase phosphate levels in the Rivers Wye and Usk Special Areas of Conservation.¹⁸³ Monmouthshire has 3 designated Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) where groundwater has, or is at risk of, high levels of nitrates.¹⁸⁴ The main area is around Raglan, and there is also a small area of Trellech and a small section that crosses the border near Monmouth. High levels of nitrates are linked to agricultural practices, such as a change in agriculture away from extensive livestock farming to more intensive arable farming, horticulture and poultry production.



Water quality in Monmouthshire (Source: NRW)¹⁸⁵

As a result of the pollution threat to water supplies, Monmouthshire has a total of 19 Groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZ) which seek to protect underground aquifers that are an important source of drinking water such as wells, boreholes and springs, in areas where the risk of contamination of ground water is high. SPZs aim to ensure that pollution by waste water or sewage, slurry, pesticide, herbicides, oil or other chemicals doesn't take place.¹⁸⁶

Many partnerships work together to balance demands on the rivers and catchments. Nutrient Management Boards are an important mechanism to reduce the effects of nutrients on catchments such as the Wye Nutrient Management Board and the River Usk Nutrient Management Board, which is now being set up.¹⁸⁷ Although both the Rivers Usk and Wye are protected as Special Areas of Conservation because of their water quality, both are now failing to meet water quality standards.¹⁸⁸ Due to concerns raised by the evidence of algal blooms in the River Wye in 2020, NRW reviewed three years of data and in January 2021 published evidence showing that 88% of the River Usk catchment and 67% of the River Wye catchment failed to

meet the required phosphate target. Eutrophication, which is the increase of nutrients in the water, can result in changes to vegetation, increased algae and less oxygen, making the water unsuitable for fish and other animals, or recreation. NRW have suggested that the high phosphate levels result from a range of issues including the release of sewage and overgrazing, although many of the public campaigns blame the water quality issues on the proliferation of poultry farms.¹⁸⁹ The recent UK Government decision around tightening restrictions on water

What would make your area better?

“Cleaner rivers and a strong rejection of polluting developments upstream”

“A river Wye that’s clean and unpolluted”

“Rivers free from pollution with local residents empowered to monitor and report on the state of the rivers in their area”

companies releasing sewage into watercourses has brought the issue even more into the public eye, with strong public reaction.¹⁹⁰ As we face more extreme weather as a result of climate change, and additional house-building practices using the same sewerage network, the likelihood of sewage pollution in the future increases.

Monmouthshire’s water supply comes from a variety of sources, including surface water reservoirs, such as the Talybont on Usk reservoir, river abstractions from the Wye and the Usk and private water supplies such as

boreholes, wells and springs. 95% of Wales’ water supply comes from rivers and reservoirs, which are vulnerable to drought and low rainfall, conditions which are predicted to become more frequent with climate change.¹⁹¹ As a rural county, Monmouthshire has around 1000 properties with private water supplies.¹⁹²

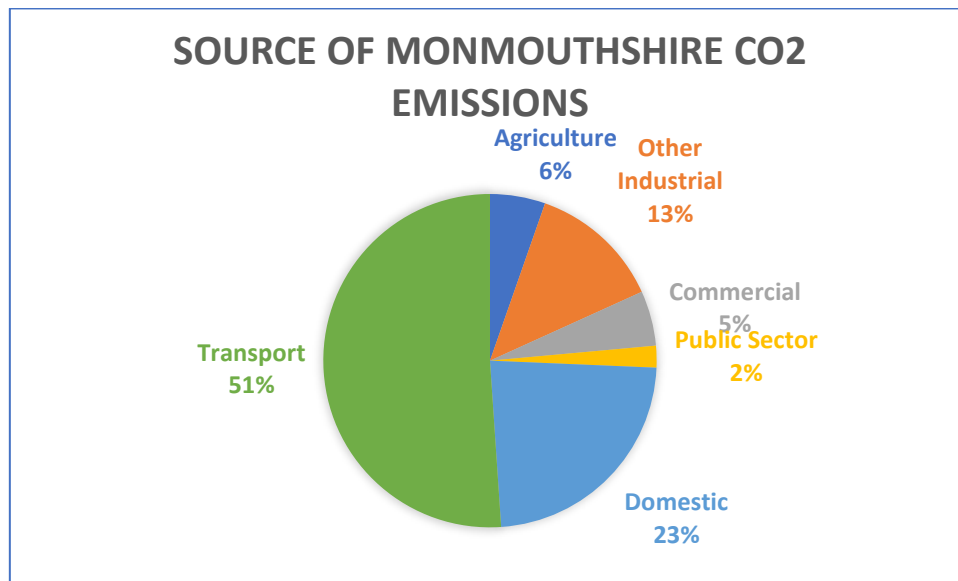
Climate Change

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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When contemplating climate change, it is important to consider both how Monmouthshire is contributing to climate change, and how resilient the county is to its likely effects. Climate change is a global issue; Monmouthshire’s emissions contribute to global emissions and don’t stay within our boundaries. How the county works to reduce carbon emissions is a significant part of our contribution to being globally responsible.

In 2019, carbon dioxide emissions (the principal man-made contributor to climate change) per Monmouthshire resident were 6.6 tonnes.¹⁹³ This figure has gone down steadily each year since 2010, probably due to the increasing share of energy being generated by renewables. When carbon figures are examined more closely, it is clear that emissions from transport due to the rural nature of the county and the poor public transport provision are the reason for the high

overall emissions.¹⁹⁴ This is also reflected in Monmouthshire having the largest carbon footprint in Gwent.¹⁹⁵



UK local authority dioxide emissions, National Statistics

Emissions from the domestic sector are also higher than neighbouring authorities. This is probably because, in comparison, Monmouthshire has more houses that are older and with solid walls, so are harder to insulate, and because the rural nature of the county means that many properties rely on oil for their heating, rather than mains gas. This also contributes to people living in rural areas finding themselves in fuel poverty (see ‘Housing’ section).¹⁹⁶

Steps are being taken to reduce emissions through the rollout of renewable energy technologies across the county. By the end of 2019, there were 3,655 renewable energy installations in Monmouthshire, the vast majority of which were photovoltaic solar.¹⁹⁷ The installed renewable energy capacity in Monmouthshire was 85.3 MW and the amount generated was 105,288MWh, up from 61,204 in 2015. However, the UK Government reductions in Feed-In Tariffs means that these figures have not increased as rapidly in recent years, although anecdotal evidence from local solar installers is that business is booming as more people are working from home as a result of Covid, and want to make the most of daytime electricity generation. During our engagement with residents, there was strong recognition of the importance of using renewable energy to help reduce climate change. Future energy security in the UK is a significant concern since by 2050, 50% of the UK’s oil will come from potentially unstable countries, and 80% of fuels will come from overseas – so increasing the uptake of renewables is extremely important, both to reduce our carbon emissions and for energy security.¹⁹⁸

“Focus on reducing things that exacerbate global warming, support to insulate homes, introduce solar panels, solar water heating, non-fossil fuel heating etc”

“I think very assertive action on climate change is very important. What kind of world are we passing on to younger generations?”

Although walking and cycling tourism in Monmouthshire is high, limited access to safe, off-road cycle routes for families and day-to-day commuting is likely to contribute to our carbon emissions. This, combined with poor public transport provision, contributes to Monmouthshire's high carbon dioxide emissions. (see 'Transport' section for information about Active Travel and measures being taken to increase walking and cycling)

There is much third sector activity on climate change being carried out by Transition Towns and many other Monmouthshire groups to reduce carbon emissions and build local resilience to climate change. One of Monmouthshire's greatest assets is its strong culture of volunteering and active third sector involvement, as described in the 'Cultural Well-being' section, which includes environmental and sustainability groups. There has been a significant increase in public awareness of climate change in the last few years, reflected in the increasing number of campaigns and campaigning groups such as Extinction Rebellion Abergavenny, and the School Strikes for Climate.¹⁹⁹



Youth 4 Climate Abergavenny strike (source: Youth 4 Climate Abergavenny)

Public pressure from these groups was one of the factors in Monmouthshire County Council declaring a Climate Emergency in May 2019, following presentations to the council from community groups and young people. A Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan were published in October 2019, the latest progress report was June 2021, and a refreshed Action Plan was agreed in November 2021.²⁰⁰

The 2021 3rd UK Climate Change Risk Assessment for Wales anticipates hotter, drier summers, warmer, wetter winters and more extreme weather events.²⁰¹ The risks associated with these future changes in weather patterns are significant and include an increase in flooding risk, heat related death or illness, health impacts, risk to ecosystems, food and timber production, pressure on water supply and so on.²⁰²

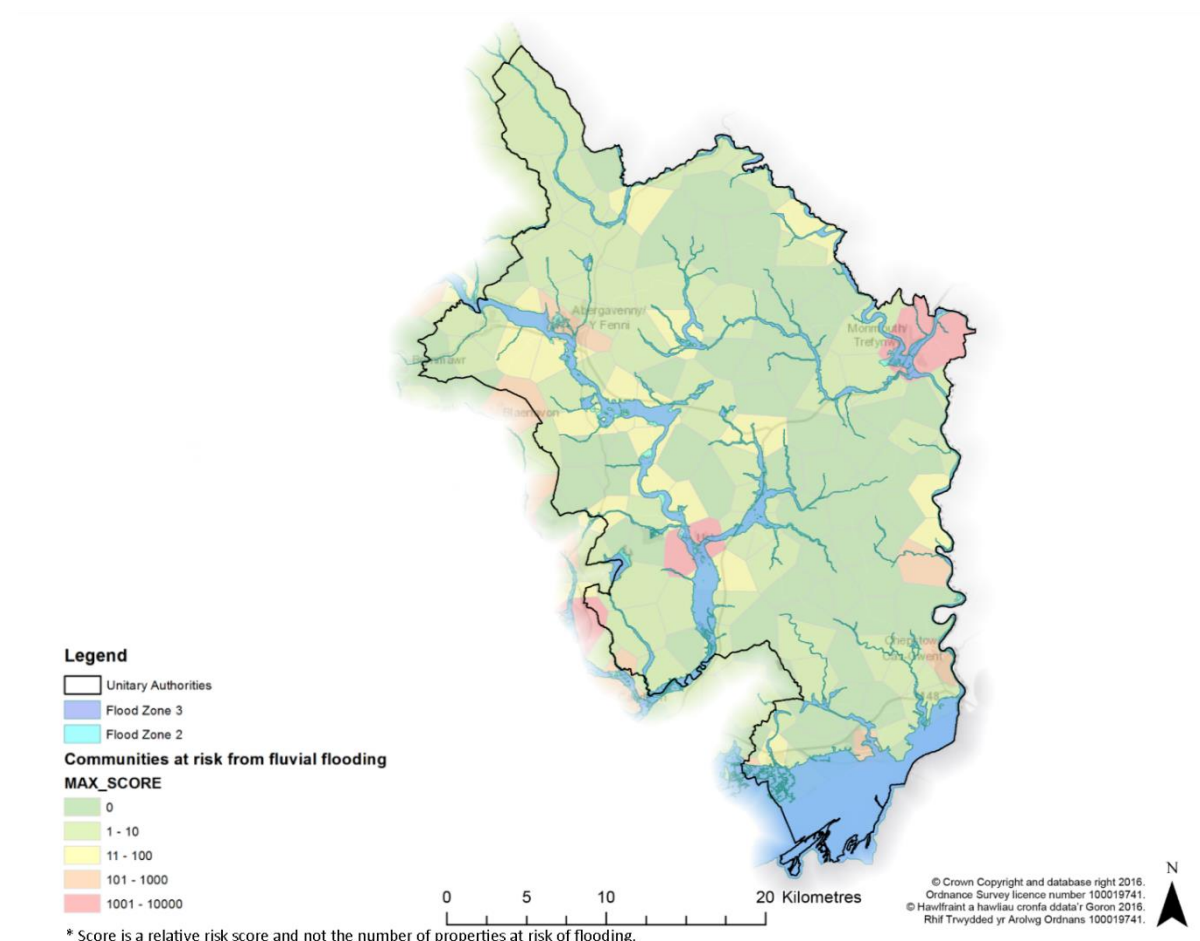
The potential for an increase in flooding will be a particular issue of concern in Monmouthshire. The impacts of flooding are being increasingly felt across the county. In the winter of 2019/20 alone, a total of approximately 180 residential properties and 50 commercial properties are known to have been flooded across the county.²⁰³ This flooding happened in: Skenfrith, Monmouth, Usk, Llanbadoc, Abergavenny, Caldicot, Llanvihangel Gobion, Llanwenarth and

Tintern, with some of these properties (in Skenfrith and Monmouth) flooding twice in less than six months. Flooding has significant effects on physical and mental health, insurance, economy and infrastructure.



The extent of flooding in Usk in February 2020

The following map from Natural Resources Wales shows that Usk and Monmouth are the communities most at risk of river flooding, but Abergavenny, Chepstow and Caldicot are also at risk. Parts of Tintern also flood regularly at high spring tides. These effects are explored in more detail in the Local Area Assessments.



These figures don't take surface water flooding into account though, so the risk of flooding is actually higher. Monmouthshire's Flood Risk Management Plan data estimates that approximately 1,344 people and 292 properties are at high (1 in 30 years) or medium (1 in 100 years) risk of flooding from surface water, clustered mainly around Caldicot, but also in Abergavenny, Monmouth and Chepstow.²⁰⁴

National Flood Risk Data from 2021 (as yet unpublished) shows the following number of properties at present day risk of flooding in Monmouthshire:

	Tidal			Fluvial (River)			Surface water		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Residential	435	671	167	1754	252	80	1347	162	168
Non - Residential	54	163	15	474	58	25	154	32	31

Source: National Flood Risk Data (as yet unpublished)²⁰⁵

Although surface water flooding is likely to remain an issue, especially with more rainfall and extreme weather, legislation has been introduced in recent years that aims to reduce the extent to which future developments worsen surface water flooding: all new development given planning consent after January 2019 requires sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) for surface water to be approved before construction work begins.²⁰⁶ In addition, a new planning policy initially due to be introduced in December 2021, but now deferred to June 2023, recognises the varying degrees of the river and coastal flood risk, now and in the future, and will require planning authorities to prevent risk exposure when considering the location of new developments.²⁰⁷

“The water systems we have were not made or built to cope with climate change and such heavy rainfall that we now see. We must work to adapt and extend services such as these to avoid further flooding and damage to our village”

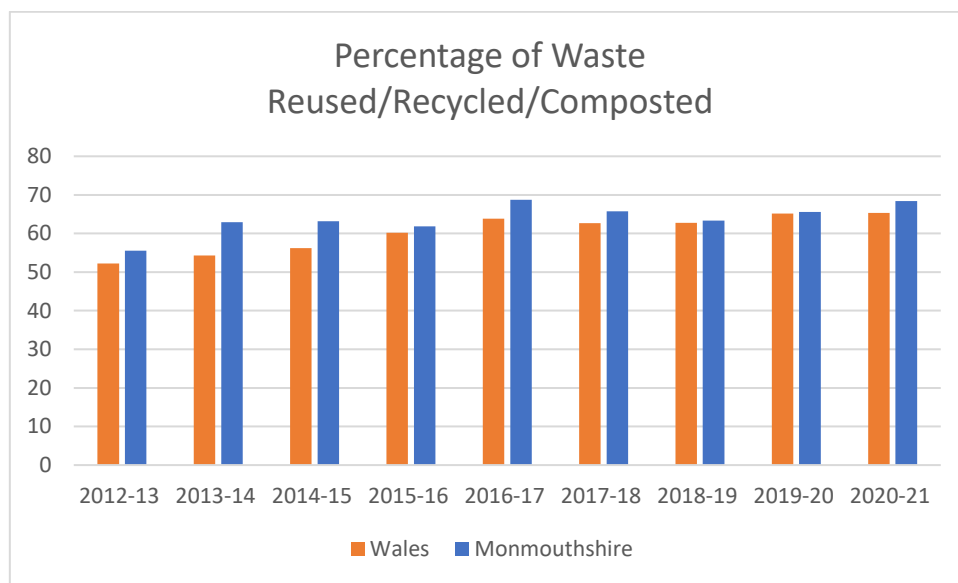
As well as the impact on homes, the effects of flooding on business can be significant, and damaged infrastructure can cause huge disruption to business and community life. Effects such as these require significant funding to mitigate and repair. For example, Monmouthshire County Council received almost £1.7 million from Welsh Government in 2020/21 for repairs to bridges, culverts, landslips, footpaths and footbridges that were damaged in Storm Dennis.

Waste and Recycling

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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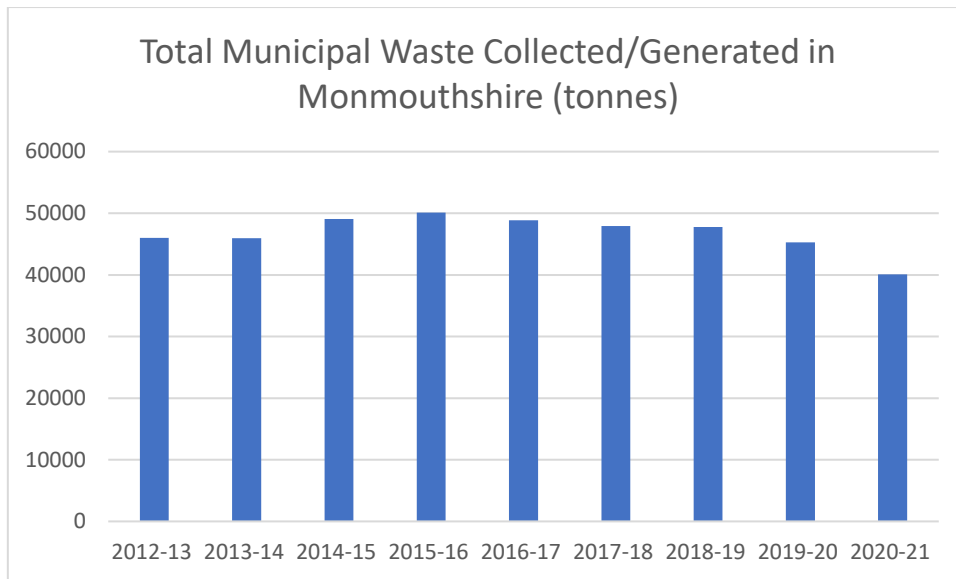
Monmouthshire is fortunate to have a great deal of goodwill from the public towards recycling, which has resulted in our good recycling rates.

In 2016, changes to wood waste reporting across Wales were introduced and combined with a reduction in funding for national and local recycling campaigns, recycling figures in Monmouthshire, along with many authorities, fell back slightly. However, by 2020/21 this figure was back up to 68.4% of municipal waste in Monmouthshire being sent for reuse, recycling or composting, higher than the Welsh average over this period.²⁰⁸ This is due to kerbside recycling rates increasing when the Household Waste Recycling Centres shut during the Covid lockdown, when the first quarter of 2020/21 saw the highest recycling rate ever in MCC of 74%, with record numbers of residents using kerbside recycling collections.²⁰⁹



% of waste reused/ recycled/ composted (Source: StatsWales)

The overall amount of municipal waste collected has decreased steadily each year from 2016/16, with a significant drop to 40,082 tonnes in 2020/21.²¹⁰ It is likely that this reflects the better participation in the kerbside recycling scheme during lockdown, and also perhaps lower levels of consumption and waste during this period.



Total Municipal Waste collected/generated (tonnes) (Source: StatsWales)

Flytipping incidents in Monmouthshire decreased steadily year-on-year from 846 incidents in 2006/07 to 303 incidents in 2015/16, and then stayed low for a few years, but seem to have increased in 2019/20 to 572.²¹¹ There is dissatisfaction about levels of litter in the county. In 2018/19, only 60% of those surveyed in Monmouthshire were satisfied with the levels of litter, although this is higher than the Welsh average of 54%.²¹² However, despite this, actual levels of street cleanliness are high, with 97.2% of streets inspected in 2018/19 considered to be of a high or acceptable standard of cleanliness, so satisfaction doesn't necessarily match with people's perceptions.²¹³

In response to high levels of littering across Wales, Welsh Government has invested in Caru Cymru, which is working with each local authority on campaigns to reduce litter.²¹⁴ In Monmouthshire, this has included establishing litter champions, setting up litter picking hubs and increasing signage in locations like laybys, car parks and picnic sites, as well as high profile local campaigns.²¹⁵ Monmouthshire observed increasing levels of litter, particularly as lockdown eased and more people were congregating and meeting outdoors to socialise.



Monmouthshire's anti-littering campaign

Public awareness of the effect of single-use plastics has increased enormously in recent years. In Monmouthshire, this has resulted in the subsequent burgeoning of plastic-free town initiatives in the county, and in 2018, Monmouthshire County Council unanimously agreed to work towards becoming Plastic Free Monmouthshire.²¹⁶ Work to reduce single-use plastic has included moving from school milk in plastic bottles to delivery from a local dairy in glass bottles, a move from disposable recycling bags to reusable polypropylene sacks, and a ban on disposable cups in council offices.

There has been a noticeable move towards an increased emphasis on re-use and repair, known as the circular economy, both at a local and national level. The council has helped to facilitate the establishment of community Repair Cafes in Abergavenny and Monmouth, and the availability of Welsh Government Circular Economy funding has resulted in the establishment of 2 re-use shops at Household Waste Recycling Centres, 4 Benthg Library of Things, and supported other initiatives such as setting up community fridges to take waste food and further repair cafes. In addition to clear environmental well-being benefits by reducing waste and consumption, there are significant social and economic well-being benefits as local communities work together, share skills and save money.

What would make the area better?

“More emphasis on green issues - encouragement to recycle and reuse”



Llanfoist Re-use Shop opened in 2019

Integration

It is important to understand the inter-relationship between environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being. Summarised below are how the ‘Environmental Well-being’ sections integrate with other sections of the assessment to set out the relationship between the factors contributing to well-being.

Landscape and countryside

One of Monmouthshire's greatest assets is undoubtedly its landscape and natural environment, which is an integral element of the county's economy through agriculture, forestry and tourism. The county's green infrastructure network promotes health and well-being, is critical to resilience, and sustains multiple social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits.



Air and Water Quality

Natural resources, such as air, land, water, wildlife, plants and soil, provide our most basic needs, including food, energy and security. They keep us healthy and help people and the economy to thrive. The local economy and transport use all affect air and water quality, which can affect people's health and environmental well-being.



Climate Change

It is important to consider both how Monmouthshire is contributing to climate change, and how resilient the county is to the likely effects of climate change. A huge range of social, economic, environmental and cultural factors affect, and are affected by, climate change.



Waste and Recycling

Economic, social, environmental and cultural factors all have an impact on how much waste is produced within Monmouthshire and on how much is recycled. They also affect the cleanliness of the county. Many third sector groups are working in the environment and sustainability fields, which include many volunteers.



Cultural Well-being

The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act considers improving cultural well-being aimed at achieving the 7 well-being goals. The broad areas of well-being related to culture that contribute to their achievement in Monmouthshire have been considered in the assessment, along with strong connections and interactions between cultural well-being and social, economic and environmental well-being.

Welsh Language

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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In 2017, Welsh Government set out its ambition to achieve 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050 in the Cymraeg 2050 Strategy. The strategy sets challenging targets for both the long and short-term; these include increasing the proportion of learners in Welsh-medium education and increasing the number of teachers able to teach through the medium of Welsh.

Given Monmouthshire’s location in the South-East corner of Wales, as well as its shared border with England, there is a general perception that Welsh language use is low. However, the 2011 Census showed that Monmouthshire was one of only two local authorities in Wales to see a rise in Welsh language speakers over the previous decade, from 9.7% to 9.9%.²¹⁷ A likely factor in this rise is the growth of the two Welsh-medium primary schools, based at either end of the county: Ysgol Gymraeg y Fenni in Abergavenny, and Ysgol Y Ffin in Caldicot.

However, more recent data from the National Survey for Wales has shown a decline in Welsh language use. The percentage of those who understand spoken Welsh in Monmouthshire was 8% in 2019/20, having been 11% (2018/19) and 15% (2017/18) in previous releases.²¹⁸ These fluctuations should be interpreted with caution, based on the sample size of the survey. The survey also shows a decline for Wales in 2019/20, reporting 22%, having been 29% in the previous 3 releases. The forthcoming Census 2021 data will provide a more comprehensive picture of the Welsh language skills within the county.

The demand for Welsh-medium education in the north of the county has seen proposals being consulted on, with regards to relocating the primary school to a bigger site. The proposals are referenced in the county’s WESP (Welsh in Education Strategic Plan), a plan that seeks to review and implement measures to increase the level of Welsh throughout the education sector in Monmouthshire.

Pre-school groups such as Cylch Ti a Fi provide children and their parents an opportunity to meet once a week in an informal Welsh environment; provision in Monmouthshire is scattered across the county with groups in Abergavenny, Caldicot and Monmouth. There is a Meithrin playgroup also located in Abergavenny that provides daily sessional care and education for children aged 2 to 5. The availability of such groups is a positive sign for the presence of the Welsh language in Monmouthshire and allows the language to thrive at an early age.

However, there is currently no in-county Welsh medium provision at the secondary school level. Pupils travel to Ysgol Gyfun Gwynllyw in Pontypool or to Ysgol Gyfun Gwent Is Coed in Newport – this lack of local provision is a barrier for some parents in sending their children to Welsh-medium schools.

Welsh language community groups exist in each of the towns. They hold regular meetings for various activities, such as coffee mornings and reading groups, and allow Welsh speakers and learners an opportunity to socialise through the medium of Welsh. Other groups with regional/national footprints are also active within Monmouthshire, such as the Urdd and Menter Iaith BGTM, which work with schools and within communities to promote the use of the language. Active Welsh language groups are also located in neighbouring authorities, so are easily accessible to Monmouthshire residents, many of whom take this opportunity to use, learn or develop their skills. There is an increasing interest in the language, as evidenced by the growing popularity of Welsh for Adult education provision; indeed, there is a recognised shortage of Welsh-speaking tutors to meet the current demand.

The engagement responses contained mixed views on the language, with some wishing to have more opportunities to use the language on a day-to-day basis, whereas others believed there should be less emphasis on it.

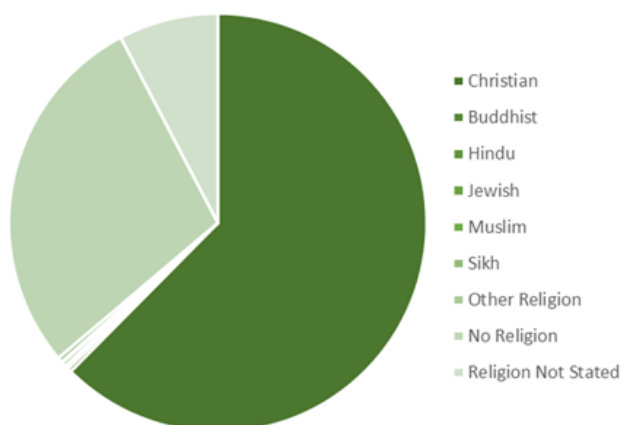


Faith and Religion

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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The data from Census 2011 remains the most comprehensive data source for faith and religion.

Religion in Monmouthshire



These figures show that 62.5% of Monmouthshire residents are Christian, close to 5 percentage points higher than Wales overall. The other major religions were represented by figures of less than a percentage, as shown in the graph.

Monmouthshire has a Buddhist Centre located in Raglan, but the nearest Mosque is located in either Blaenau Gwent or Newport, and many of the nearest houses

of worship for other religions are in Cardiff or Bristol. In 2021, a community venue was identified to establish a multi-faith cultural centre in Abergavenny, with plans to pilot Friday prayer sessions for the Muslim faith. A few comments from the engagement responses noted the lack of local halal shops, as well as the distance needed to travel to the nearest Mosque.

Census figures from 2011 show that 98% of Monmouthshire’s population are of white ethnicity. There are only small numbers of black and other minority ethnic residents in Monmouthshire, with Asian being the largest group, at 1% of the population (900 persons).

Many people in Monmouthshire have a strong sense of belonging to their local area. In 2018/19 the National Survey for Wales showed there has been an increase in many of the indicators in the community cohesion section. The graphics below show how Monmouthshire compares to the rest of Wales in the Future Generations Indicators that make up part of the section.

Satisfaction with the local area - Monmouthshire		
2016/17	2018/19	Rank in Wales
90.8%	91.8%	4/22

Have a sense of community - Monmouthshire		
2016/17	2018/19	Rank in Wales
53.4%	61.3%	3/22

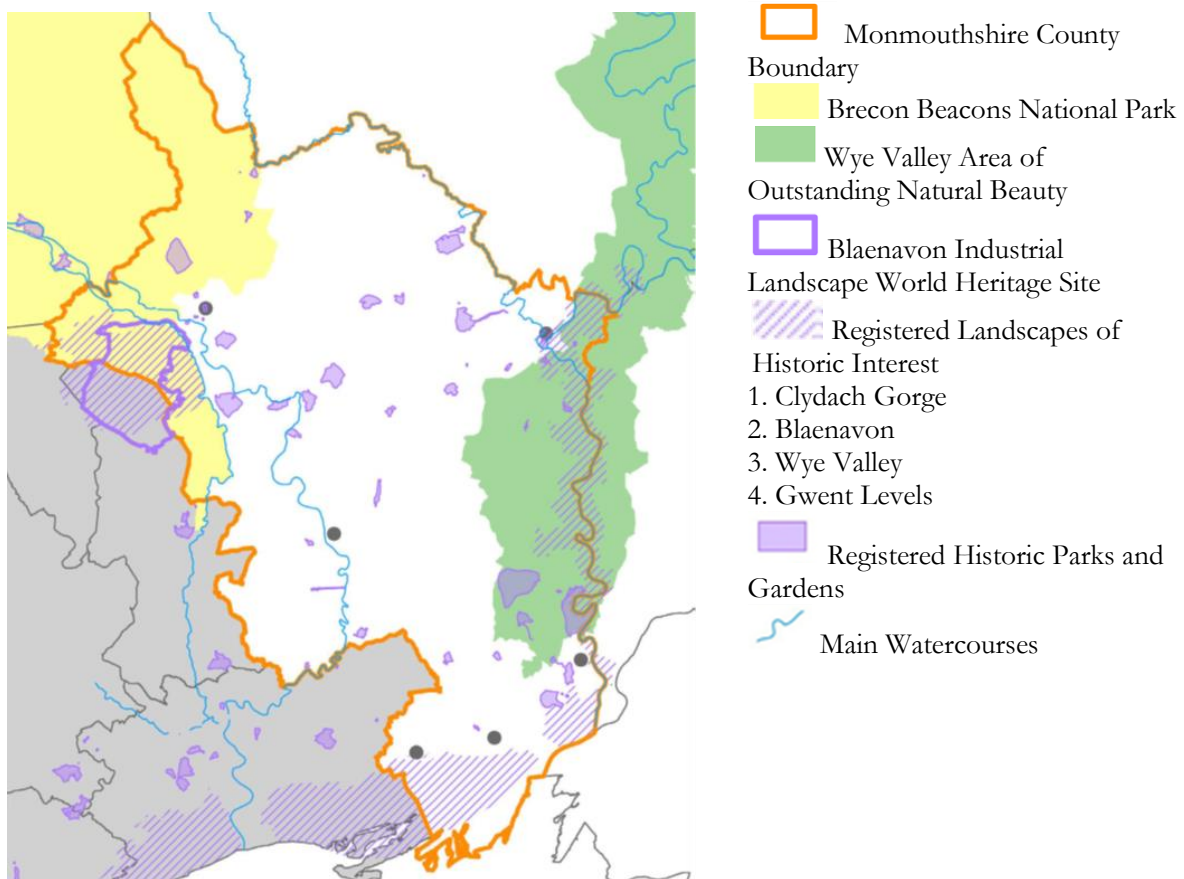
Landscape and Heritage

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Monmouthshire has a distinctive identity arising from its location in the borderlands between England and South Wales, and geography of historic market towns and villages and their relationship with the surrounding rural areas. Landscape and environment are assessed in detail in the ‘Environmental Well-being’ section of this report.

The varied landscape of the county of Monmouthshire is the product of natural and human influences over thousands of years. The following map shows the key landscape assets in Monmouthshire.²¹⁹ Many features and areas of historical and cultural value in Monmouthshire are recognised as important heritage assets, including conservation areas designated for their special historic or architectural interest, registered Historic Parks and Gardens, scheduled ancient monuments and Listed Buildings. These include iconic built heritage sites such as Tintern Abbey, industrial heritage sites like Blaenavon World Heritage Site (partially in Monmouthshire), and Clydach Ironworks, and a significant number of castles and churches.

Key landscape assets in Monmouthshire



The draw of such iconic and historical assets in Monmouthshire is demonstrated in the results of the 2019 Visitor Survey, which showed that 41% of people had come to the county to visit historical and religious sites or attractions; this was slightly more likely to be a factor in visiting Monmouthshire than visiting Wales as a whole (36%).²²⁰ Tintern Abbey (37%) and Chepstow

Castle (36%) were the most likely sites to be visited. The short and long-term effects on tourism in the county as a result of the pandemic will need to be monitored.

Landscape and Countryside was the second most popular theme mentioned when asked what is special about where respondents live. Across all 5 of the local areas, many references were made to the beauty of the landscape and the ability to access green spaces.

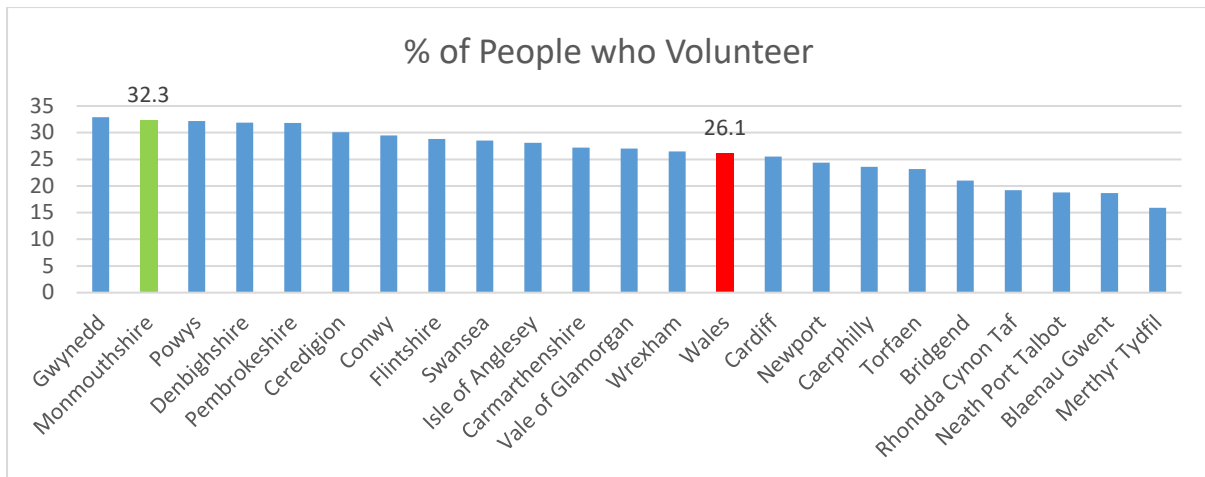
It is important to promote and protect this landscape for future generations, not only for its importance to Monmouthshire’s heritage but for its recognised contributions to the economy, environment and health and well-being in Monmouthshire, as identified elsewhere in this assessment.



Community and Social Action

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Monmouthshire has a long and healthy history of volunteering and local social action. People choose to volunteer for a variety of reasons, including the chance to give something back to the community or make a difference to the people around them, provide an opportunity to develop new skills, or build on existing experience and knowledge.²²¹ National Survey for Wales data in 2019/20 revealed that 32.3% of people in Monmouthshire volunteered, the second-highest figure in Wales.²²² Volunteering has been shown to have a positive effect on social networks and inclusion within communities. ‘Monmouthshire, A County That Serves’ (ACTS) volunteering programme is helping to highlight and support volunteering opportunities available within the county. It recognises that the social capital in Monmouthshire can be further developed to support well-being.²²³



The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a tremendous response with the mobilisation of volunteering and community groups. These efforts have been integral in supporting those most in need in our communities during the pandemic. In July 2020, the Monmouthshire PSB agreed to formally adopt the place-based partnership working model of Community Support Networks across the county as a mechanism that would aim to deliver the aspirations of the well-being plan, “to build sustainable and resilient communities”, placing communities and active citizens across the county at the heart of what ‘we do’ through leading a relational place-based, multi-agency support structure.

Cultural Attractions

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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Monmouthshire offers a wide range of arts and cultural attractions, including museums, theatres, and libraries. The county hosts many long-established, as well as new and expanding, events, and festivals, including agricultural shows, food festivals, music festivals and cycling races. There is increasing research showing an association between engagement with sport and culture and an individual’s subjective well-being measured as happiness.²²⁴

There is limited data to fully assess the situation of arts and events and their subsequent link to well-being in Monmouthshire. Arts bring meaning, authenticity, and enjoyment to our everyday life. They create and sustain jobs, enrich education services, bring people together and improve quality of life.

The Arts Council for Wales identifies the roles that the arts play in contributing to the well-being goals. These include a contribution to jobs, wealth and tourism through the cultural sector – for example, Borough Theatre in Abergavenny, which is being redeveloped, and the Wye Valley

River Festival – equipping young people with skills of creative imagination and entrepreneurial vision, benefits to emotional health and wellbeing, and supporting a thriving Welsh language.

In 2019/20, 75% of Monmouthshire residents said they have been to an arts event in the last 12 months, the 3rd highest percentage in Wales.²²⁵ A similar percentage (76%) of people said that they had attended or participated in arts, culture or heritage activities at least 3 times a year, higher than the Wales figure of 71%.

Museums and heritage attractions play an important part in preserving the history of Monmouthshire for communities and visitors, providing individuals with a sense of place through the history and heritage of collections and heritage assets, strengthening community links by involving local groups in projects and contributing to the local economy. Collections and the stories they tell are also important for well-being, for example, by supporting those living with dementia and their carers.²²⁶ Council-run museums and heritage attractions are located in Abergavenny, Chepstow, Caldicot, Tintern and Monmouth.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound effect on culture and the arts, with initial lockdowns preventing attractions from opening and people gathering. Income streams were paused for a long time, and once reopened, it is likely a hesitancy to return alongside increasing operating and staff costs to adapt to new guidelines will continue to affect the businesses. To evolve, many museums and historical/cultural attractions are actively increasing their level of digital content, and reaching new audiences as a result.

Tourism is vital to Monmouthshire's economy and generates income to support a wide range of businesses that benefit from spending by visitors. The location of the county presents key opportunities as a gateway to Wales – offering the chance to make a great first impression, especially now that Severn Bridge tolls have been removed. There is significant evidence that the development of cultural attractions also has considerable economic development potential, beyond direct tourism, leading the regeneration and increased footfall in towns, and added vitality for town centres, which is one of the reasons for the council's investment in Abergavenny Library and Borough Theatre, plans for Shire Hall Museum Monmouth and recent funding bids.²²⁷

According to the 2019 visitor survey, visitors to Monmouthshire are more likely to be on a day trip than visitors to Wales as a whole (at 90%, compared to 89% across Wales). The average number of nights staying in Monmouthshire is the same as the Wales figure. According to the survey, visitors to Monmouthshire were most likely to have come to the area to visit historical and religious sites or attractions (41%).

Libraries play a key role in providing information, promoting knowledge and developing skills for people of all ages and all walks of life. There are six community hubs in Monmouthshire, that also include library services, offering both physical and digital services to all. Schemes such as Reading Well provide books that are recommended by health experts and provide information and advice on dementia and mental health. 2018/19 statistics show that the libraries saw over

400,000 visitors across the 6 sites and home delivery.²²⁸ The Covid-19 pandemic has seen a greater emphasis in library services on the digital offer available, as well as remote services.

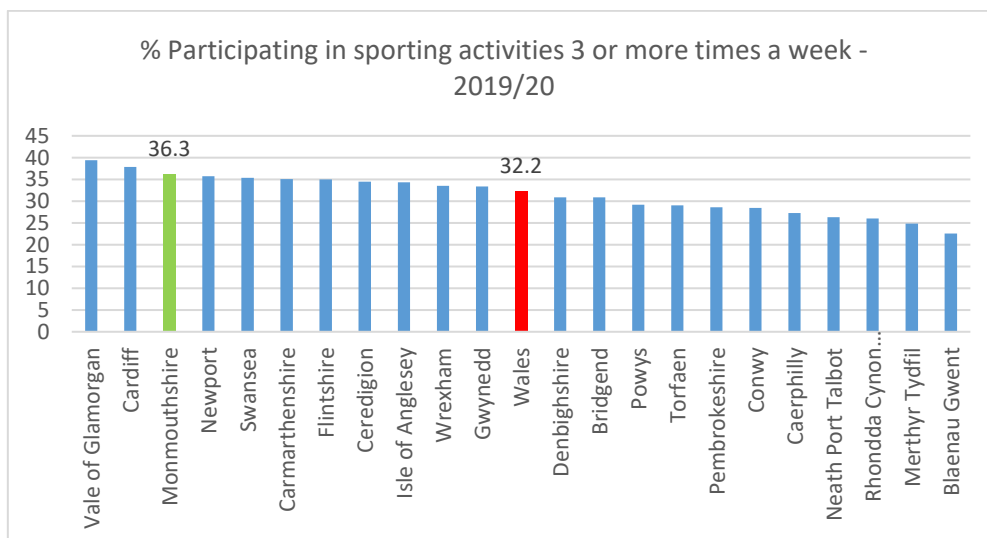
Sport and Leisure

Contribution to well-being goals	Prosperous Wales	Resilient Wales	Healthier Wales	More equal Wales	Wales of cohesive communities	Vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language	Globally responsible Wales
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There is considerable evidence that supports the health and well-being benefits of healthy and active lifestyles for both adults and children.²²⁹ Guidance from the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) recommends that adults should aim to be active daily.²³⁰ An active lifestyle is important in reducing levels of obesity and other chronic conditions, as discussed in the ‘Health and Well-being’ section. Key findings from research by The Department for Culture Media and Sport showed that arts engagement, frequent library use and sport participation are all associated with higher well-being.²³¹

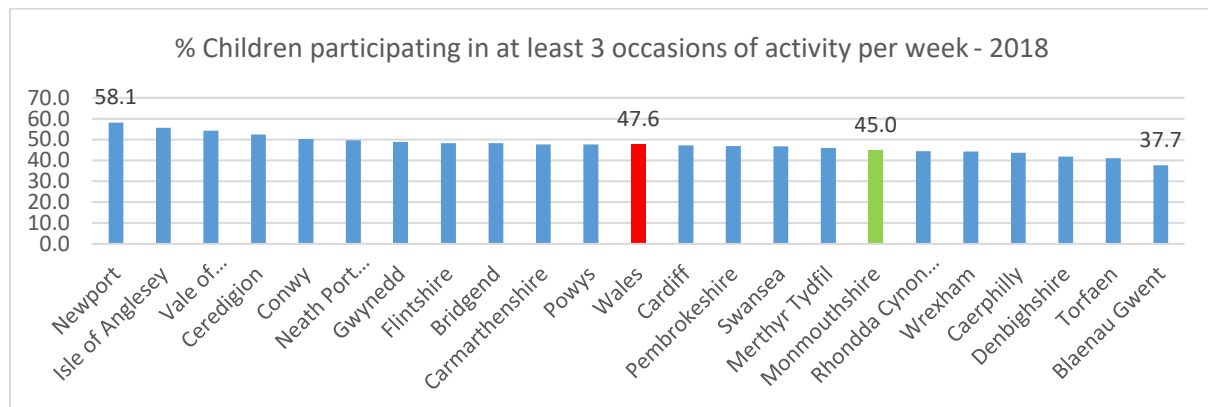
Monmouthshire is a county with a range of Green infrastructure, including open space areas, cycle paths and walking routes as well as a range of indoor and outdoor activities, sports clubs, societies, and community facilities across the county. There are leisure centres in Abergavenny, Monmouth, Caldicot and Chepstow which play a pivotal role in the promotion of physical activity, well-being, and mental health. All leisure centres have swimming pools, fitness provision and outdoor playing pitches.

The latest data from the National Survey for Wales in 2019/20 shows that 36% of adults in Monmouthshire reported participating in sporting activities three or more times a week, which is amongst the highest levels of participation reported in Wales.



In 2017, Sport Wales research showed that 31% of respondents in Monmouthshire had a sports club membership, the highest across all local authorities in Wales.²³² The data showed that males were more likely to have a membership (a Wales high 37%) than women (25%, 3rd in Wales).

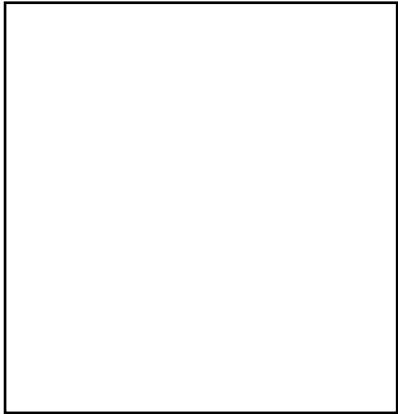
The Department of Health recommends that all children and young people, aged 5-18 years old, should engage in moderate to vigorous-intensity physical activity for at least 60 minutes, and up to several hours, every day.²³³ The School Sport Survey, undertaken by Sport Wales most recently in 2018, has captured a detailed picture of the frequency of participation. In Monmouthshire, 45% of pupils across Years 3 to 11 took part in organized sport activity other than in curriculum time (i.e. extracurricular or club sport) on three or more occasions per week, while 25.7% take part in no frequent activity. Compared to 2015, the number participating 3 or more times a week has dropped from 48.8%, whereas those who take part in no frequent activity have dropped from 27.3%



Understanding the makeup of participation in different settings can help to identify the different access, provision and opportunities that children and young people have to participate in sport. In Monmouthshire, participation in extracurricular sport is lower than the Wales average (Monmouthshire 47%, Wales 49.9%), whereas participation in community sport outside school is higher (Monmouthshire 67.5%, Wales 65.1%).

There are also targeted schemes to encourage exercise for health reasons. Monmouthshire National Exercise Referral Scheme is more than ten years old and has received more than 10,000 direct referrals from health practitioners for a range of specific chronic condition pathways, obesity, cancer, chronic obstructive disorder, and mental health.

Participation in sporting activity has been affected throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Less participation in physical activity may have longer-term impacts on health and well-being. A survey conducted in Wales throughout the pandemic showed that 47% of respondents felt that their physical fitness has declined over the past 12 months, and 40% reported weight increase.²³⁴



Several comments from the engagement questionnaire referenced the desire for better leisure facilities. Being able to access local clubs, gym facilities or swimming pools were some of the examples given.

The latest Play Sufficiency Assessment (PSA) for the county, completed by the council in March 2019, took into account a range of existing evidence, as well as a child questionnaire, which highlighted the barriers to greater play, including opportunities for play, time for play (including competing

demands on children's time) and attitudes to play (of parents and others). To inform the 2019 PSA, Year 5 pupils from the county's schools were surveyed; 2/3 of pupils confirmed that their school participated in the Daily Mile, with 84% of pupils believing it helps to contribute to a healthy lifestyle. When asked if they preferred to play in a playground or green spaces, 70% preferred green space. Some of the key actions arising from the assessment for action in 2019 are space for play, supervised provision, providing for diverse needs, policy integration and community engagement.

There is a range of provision for young people from 11-25 in Monmouthshire through the council's youth service. This includes youth clubs, youth centres, school holiday events and activities, Duke of Edinburgh Award and other types of support, and complements activities for young people such as uniformed groups and the voluntary sector.²³⁵

In a rural county like Monmouthshire, access to leisure and cultural services is important. The Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) shows that the average public transport travel time to a sports facility is 88 minutes, and a public library is 53 minutes.²³⁶ For private transport, travel time is 14 minutes for a sports facility and 13 minutes for libraries. For some areas, travel times will be significantly longer and much higher than the average across Wales; the area profiles provide an assessment of more local issues in Monmouthshire.

Integration

It is important to understand the inter-relationship between environmental, social, economic and cultural well-being. Summarised below are how the 'cultural Well-being' sections integrate with other sections of the assessment to set out the relationship between the factors contributing to well-being.

Welsh Language

The promotion and protection of the Welsh language are important for the social, economic and cultural well-being of Welsh language speakers and learners. It is also important for tourism as part of the cultural experience for visitors.



Faith and Religion

There is a strong sense of community spirit in Monmouthshire, which is an important factor in people's well-being. Faith and religion play an important role in well-being, and people benefit from feeling a sense of belonging.



Landscape and Heritage

One of Monmouthshire's greatest assets is undoubtedly its landscape and natural environment. The landscape and natural and built heritage of Monmouthshire is an important part of the quality of life and an integral element of social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being in Monmouthshire.



Community and Social Action

Monmouthshire has a high level of social capital and rates of volunteering. This high level of community action makes an invaluable contribution to social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being in the county.



Cultural Attractions

There is increasing evidence showing the association between culture and an individual's subjective well-being measured as happiness. Cultural attractions in Monmouthshire affect social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being, while levels of wellbeing can also be a barrier to participation in arts and cultural events.



Sport and Leisure

Healthy and active lifestyles for adults and children have many health and well-being benefits, and sport and leisure opportunities are important contributors to the Monmouthshire economy. Barriers to participation can be due to economic, social, environmental or cultural reasons.



Key Emerging Issues:

Economic

- Monmouthshire has a competitive economy with excellent potential for growth. There is, however, a low rate of business start-ups compared to the capital region and Wales as a whole. The growth of remote working and people's desire to live in rural areas presents an opportunity to encourage entrepreneurs to start new businesses in Monmouthshire rather than neighbouring cities like Bristol.
- There is a slow uptake of employment sites in the county alongside issues of poor broadband speed which could be interconnected with the low rates of business start-ups. The potential growth in co-working spaces could offer start-ups a low risk option to locate in the county.
- The below-average wages on offer in the county, coupled with high property prices, make it difficult for young people and future generations to live and work locally.
- We are seeing an outward migration of young people, driven by employment and higher education opportunities elsewhere, which are not available in the county.

Social

- There is a lack of affordable housing in the county. This will be exacerbated by the National Development Framework which could limit the development of new homes in Monmouthshire, reducing our ability to tackle homelessness. In the short term this is compounded by the level of phosphates in rivers which has resulted in a block on new developments.
- There are significant income inequalities within communities, with wealth sitting alongside relative poverty on a scale not seen in other parts of Wales. Research suggests that gaps between rich and poor within a community have negative repercussions for a whole range of things from educational attainment to physical health.
- Monmouthshire enjoys high levels of social capital. Large numbers of people volunteer which helps build connections and is a major contributor to well-being. There is an opportunity to capitalise on the energy we have seen in communities during the pandemic but also a risk that as the pension age changes and people retire later, the number of active volunteers could decline.
- We have an ageing population; while this has many advantages, it will create additional pressure on health and social care. With high property prices and limits on development it will be difficult to attract the workforce needed to meet the needs of residents.
- Both adult and children's social care are facing acute pressures with escalating demand, increasing complexity and workforce shortages all contributing. While there is pressure to free-up hospital beds, the care system does not have the capacity to accommodate

this, meaning that more resources will be drawn into the acute settings to meet short-term needs rather than being directed towards a sustainable long term model of provision.

- There are significant differences in life expectancy, and action is required to address health inequalities and ensure that a range of programmes are in place to increase the opportunities people have to live health lives and reduce health harming behaviours such as high alcohol consumption, smoking and diet.
- Children, particularly the most vulnerable, whose learning has been disrupted by the pandemic may be at a disadvantage as they enter the workforce or higher education, and other aspects of their well-being may have been affected.
- There are good levels of educational attainment in the county but some groups, such as those eligible for free school meals and vulnerable children, are not achieving at the same level as the wider population and the gap is not narrowing. There are also differences in attainment between different communities, where pupils are attending the same school.
- One in four adults and one in ten children are experiencing mental health issues. This is exacerbated by loneliness and the challenges many have faced during the pandemic placing pressure on stretched services such as CAHMS. Resources such as Melo, to help people manage their own mental health and well-being, offer an opportunity to address this but will only be part of the solution.
- We are seeing increasing levels of crime and anti-social behaviour in the county and concerns about the level of substance misuse amongst younger people.

Cultural

- The county has good levels of sports participation compared to other parts of Wales but levels of exercise are still too low and obesity is increasing, which have implications for health.
- There is an increasing opportunity to use Monmouthshire's culture, heritage and landscape to capitalise on the potential of the UK holiday market, with fewer people travelling abroad, which also has positive impacts on the climate by reducing the number of people flying.
- The pandemic has reduced visits to cultural attractions that play an important role in well-being, such as museums and theatres, which will affect their viability.

Environmental

- Monmouthshire has a high carbon footprint per head of population.
- The rural nature of Monmouthshire means that transport is a significant contributor to the county's carbon emissions, with some areas also experiencing poor air quality. There is high car ownership and the rural nature of the county means active travel is not an option for many people, while many do not have a driveway which, along with

affordability, will slow the adoption of electric vehicles. There needs to be a move away from private cars to more active travel, public transport and low-emission vehicles in order to reduce carbon emissions and improve air quality.

- The effects of climate change are becoming apparent in Monmouthshire, particularly flooding, which has impacted many communities in recent years. This is likely to get worse as the build-up of greenhouse gases continues to affect global weather patterns.
- Water quality in many parts of Monmouthshire is under threat due to a combination of sewage releases into watercourses and run-off from agriculture.
- There is an opportunity to capitalise on the growth of the sharing economy to reduce consumption and waste which will also increase the ability of people on low incomes to borrow rather than buy.
- Tree disease is a significant threat to the landscape and biodiversity of Monmouthshire, with large areas of ash and larch having to be felled, meaning many more trees need to be planted to sequester carbon. There are opportunities through work with community groups, the Welsh Government and the Queens Green Canopy to increase tree coverage in the county.
- Like elsewhere in Wales, biodiversity is declining due to threats and pressures on species and habitats.

Monmouthshire Engagement Responses



What was our approach to community engagement for the well-being assessment?

Involvement is a key principle of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The engagement as part of the well-being assessment, which in Monmouthshire was built on the previous 'Our Monmouthshire' engagement, helps us to understand people's views on well-being in the county to consider this alongside the data and evidence available.

The community engagement has been undertaken using a consistent framework across Gwent and a common set of questions. During the Summer of 2021, Monmouthshire, along with neighbouring Gwent areas published a questionnaire which asked residents to answer a series of questions on their experiences with their local area. As well as asking whether the current Monmouthshire well-being plan objectives remain important, we wanted to understand more about residents' views on current well-being and to draw on the strengths and assets of the county. The compiled responses have helped us to understand the issues that matter to people in Monmouthshire.

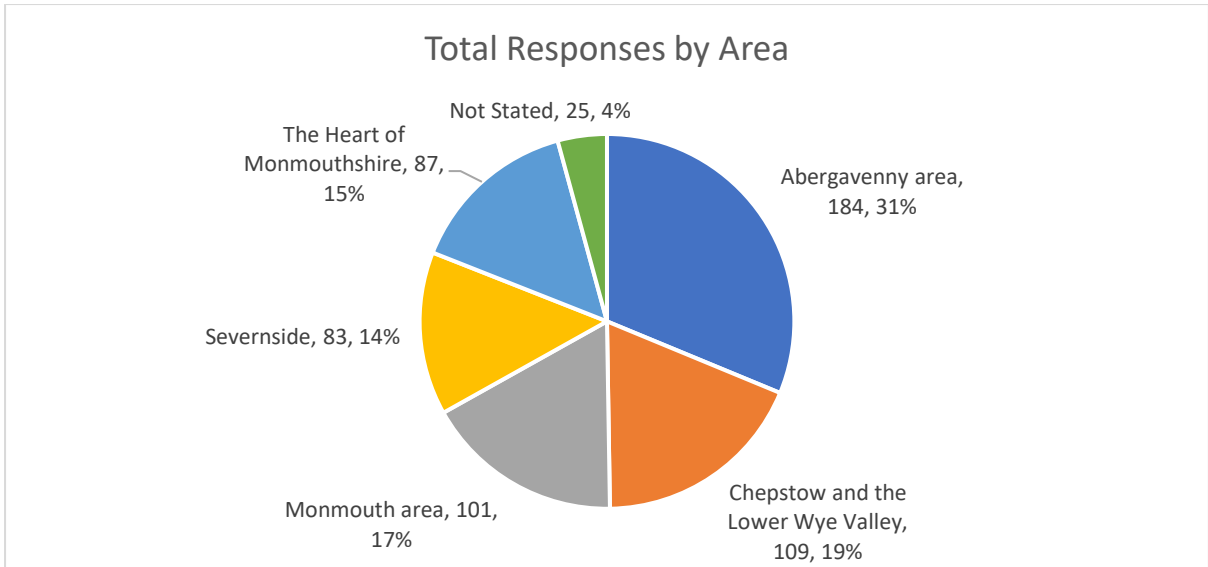
The questions asked included:

- What is special / good about your community / where you live?
- What would make it a better place?
- What things are important to you and your family?
- What would you like your community to look like in the future?

We were conscious that although data and statistics may tell us one story, people's perception and understanding of well-being may be different.

The questionnaire was publicised through a number of social media platforms to try and engage with as many people as possible, including Twitter and Facebook pages. Alongside the questionnaire, a range of different engagement methods were used including young people's workshops and stalls at a community event. The ongoing pandemic reduced the range of opportunities available to undertake the engagement. Effort was made to involve people from as wide a cross-section of the community as possible.

A total of 589 responses to the questionnaire were received. The chart below shows the proportion of responses that came from each of the 5 areas in Monmouthshire:

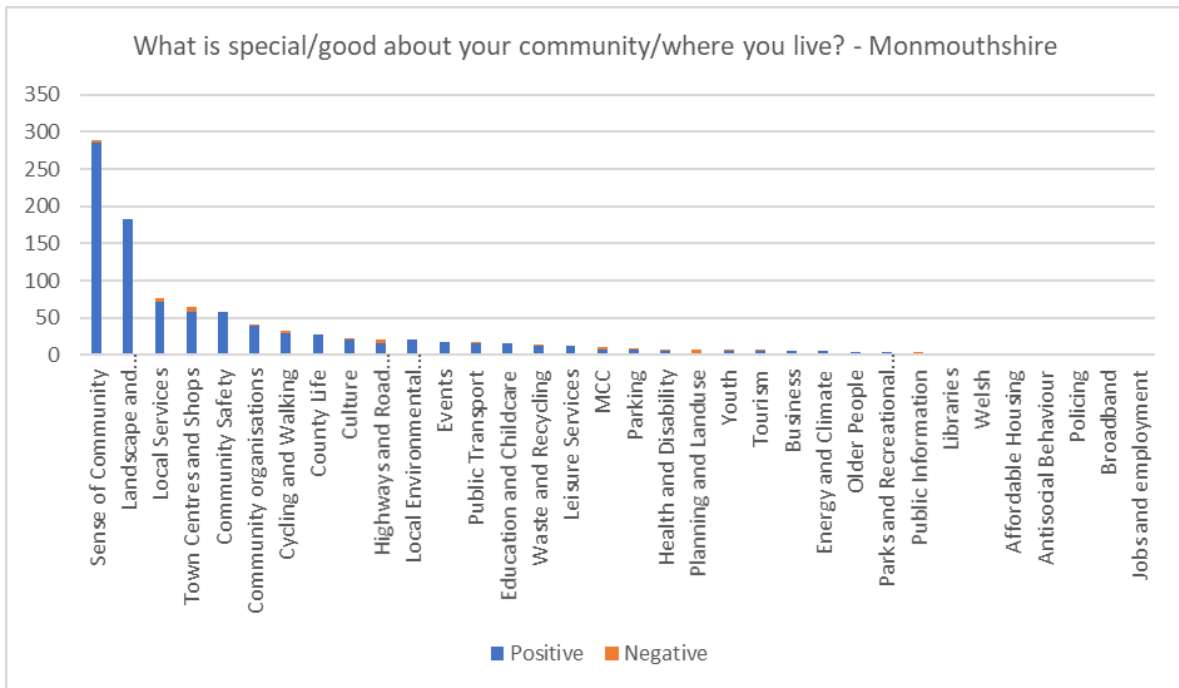


What have people talked about as part of *Our Monmouthshire*?

To make it easier to analyse the many diverse comments that were received to the open-ended questions that were asked, comments were grouped into categories or themes. This allows us to identify some of the most common themes that respondents mentioned. A summary of the responses across Monmouthshire to some of the questions is provided. The well-being issues raised in response to the engagement also reveal some variation by location, with some issues being more prevalent in some areas than others.

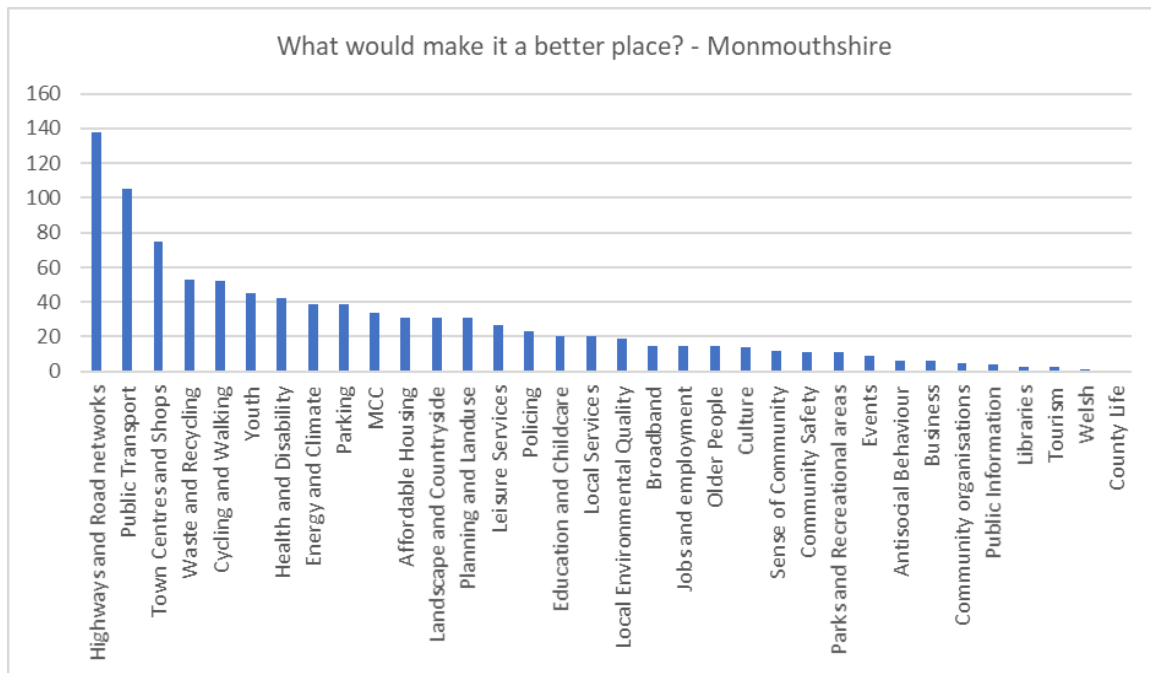
The following graphs show the themes that were used to categorise the comments, and where appropriate, whether these were more positive or negative in response is provided.

Question 1. What is special/good about your community/where you live?



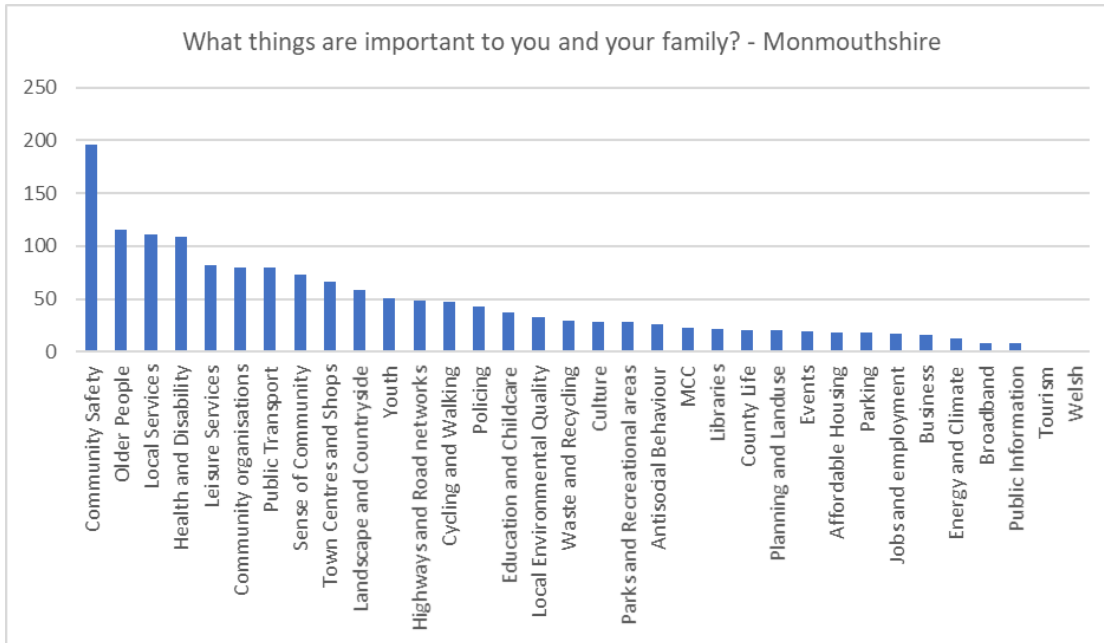
Most comments could be categorised under Sense of Community, which includes comments on how friendly the area is, highlighting neighbourliness and community spirit. Landscape and Countryside was the next most popular category, capturing comments such as those on natural beauty and green spaces. Local Services, Community Safety and Town Centres and Shops were also amongst the most commented themes. Whilst the vast majority of comments were positive, some concerns were raised in the comments on areas such as Highways and Road networks, Local Services, Planning and Landuse, and Town Centres and Shops.

Question 2. What would make it a better place?



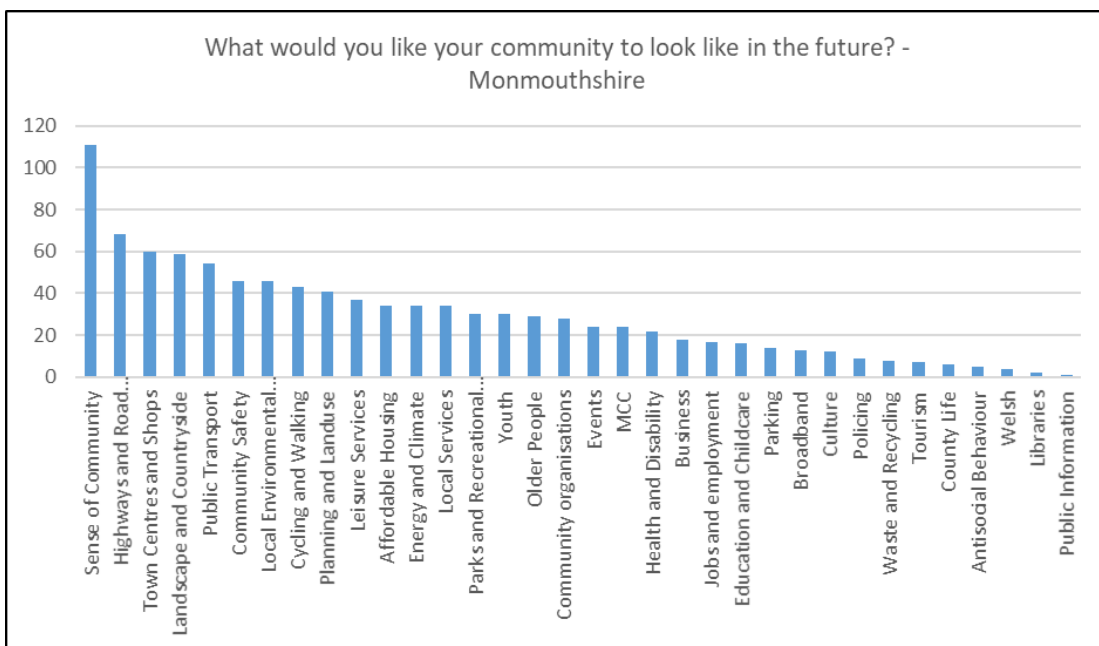
Responses covered a wide range of categories. Some of the areas with a higher number of responses included Highways and Road Networks, including volumes of traffic and speeding. The Public Transport category contained many references to bus and/or train services available, and the Town Centre and Shops comments tend to focus on having a greater variety of shops available locally.

Question 3. What things are important to you and your family?



Many of the responses focussed on the examples provided in the question including places, local services, local facilities, community groups/activities, safety and support and care for older people.

Question 4. What would you like your community to look like in the future?



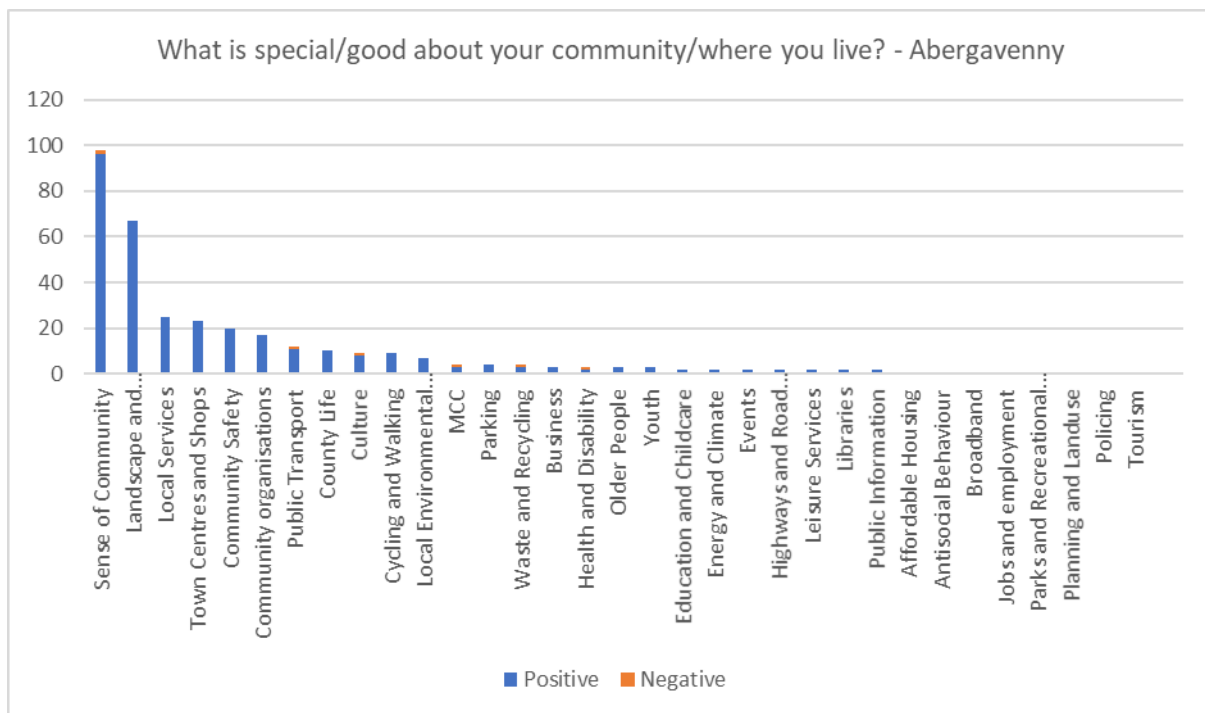
Many comments related to a sense of community, with respondents' desire for friendly communities, with people looking out for each other. Highways and Road Networks were raised frequently, including traffic, along with vehicle pollution and speeding. Landscape and Countryside was also raised often, common themes included a desire for more greenspace and areas to walk and cycle. Town Centres and Shops were amongst the highest 12 category of

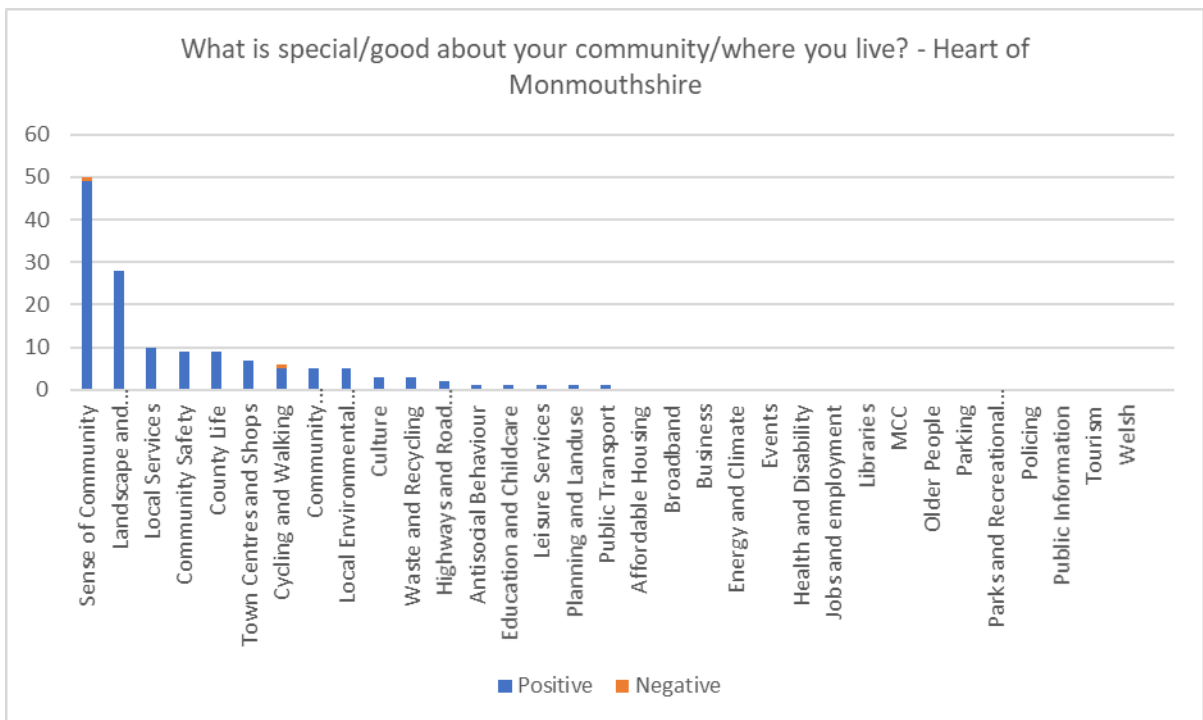
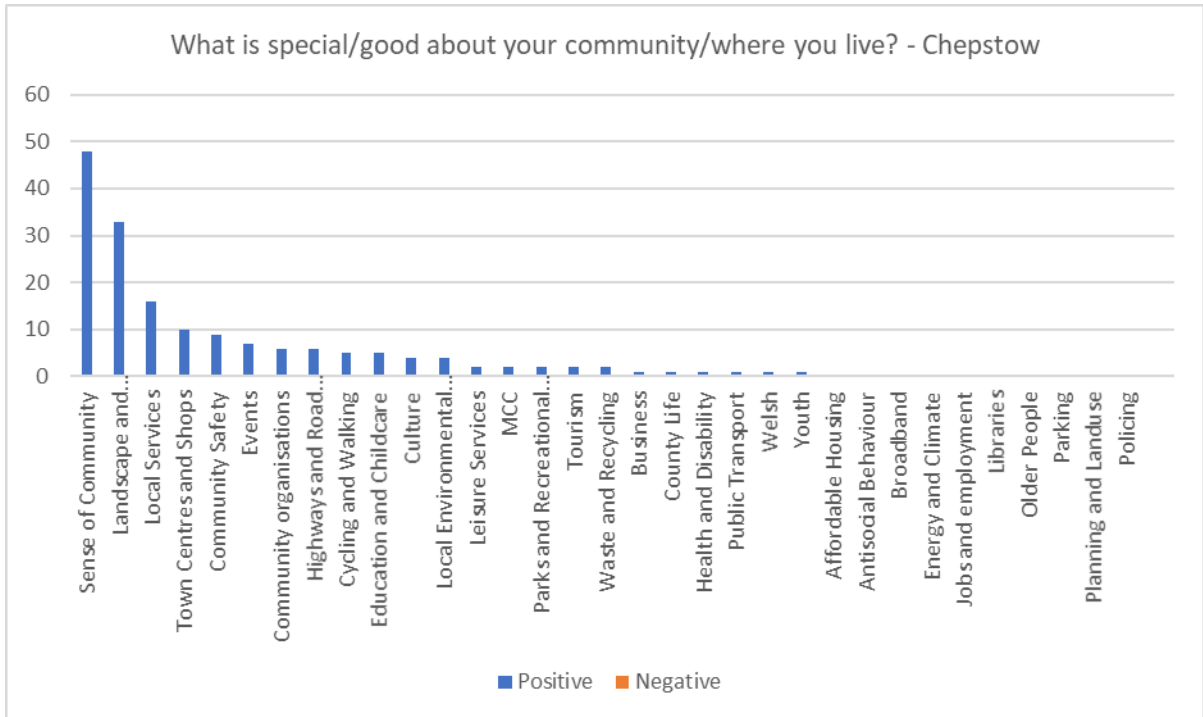
responses: many respondents were keen to see a thriving high street with a high variety of shops that encourages people to shop locally.

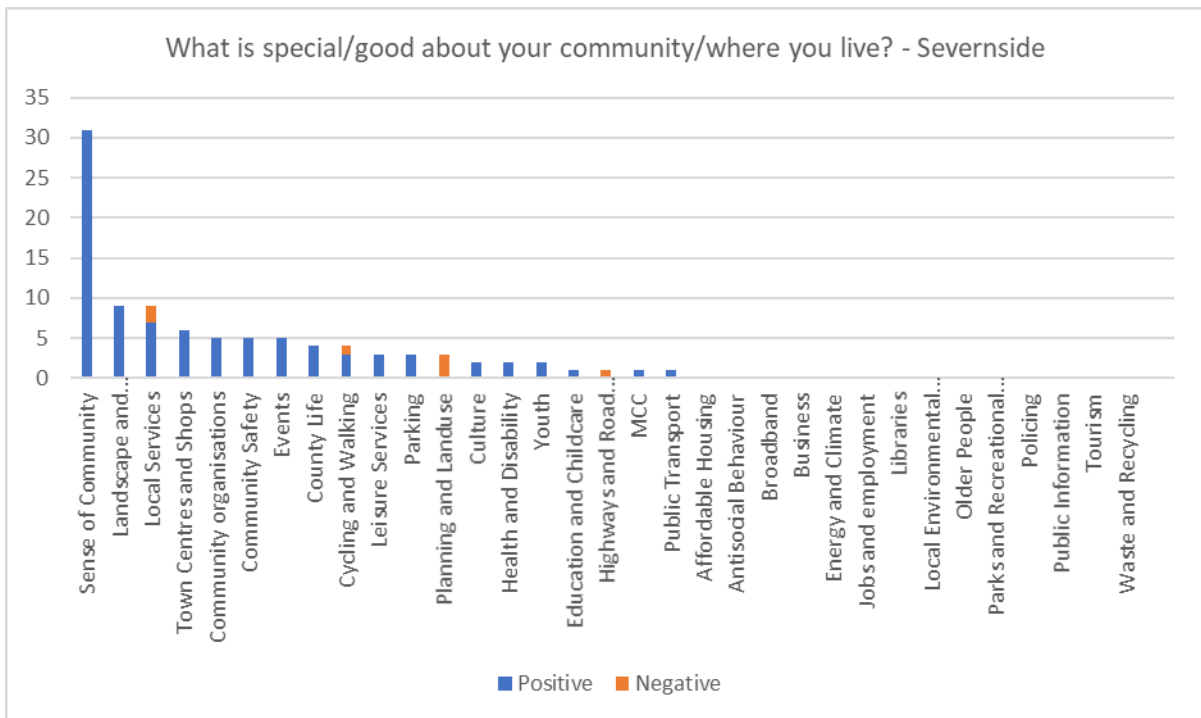
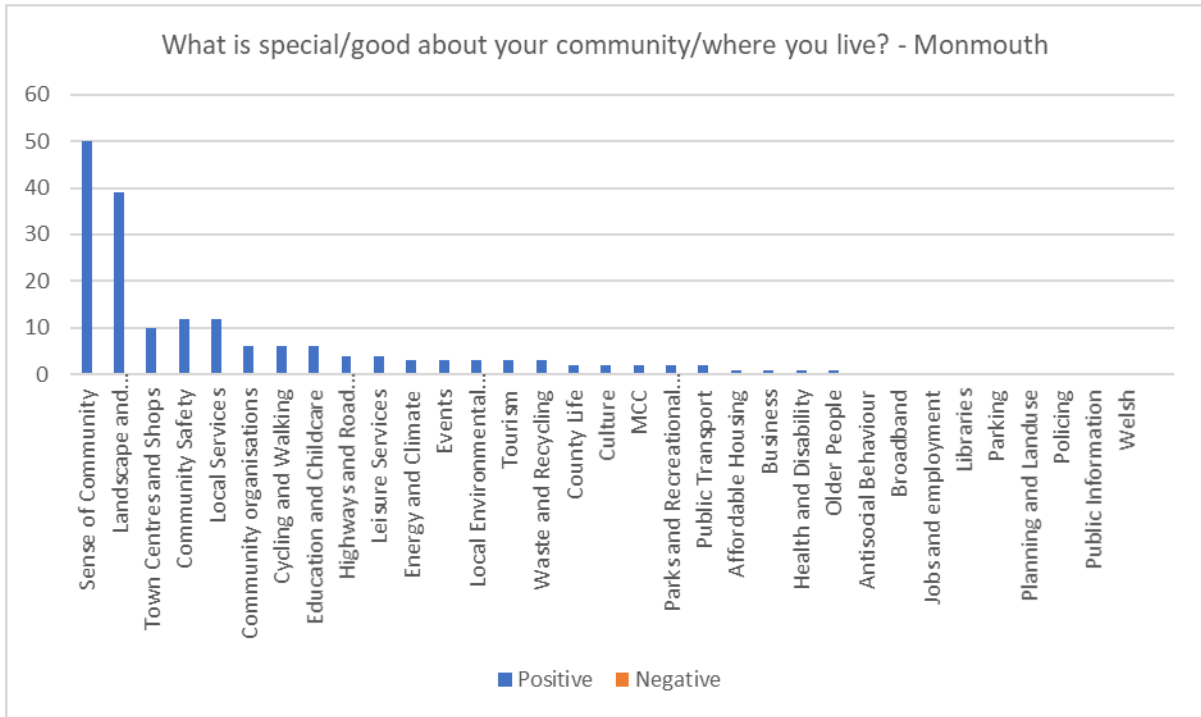
Five Local Monmouthshire Community Areas

A breakdown of responses by the five local community areas in Monmouthshire is provided. There was variation in the total number of responses received in each area. This breakdown shows that some of the well-being issues raised vary by location, with some issues being more prevalent in some areas than others.

Question 1. What is special/good about your community/where you live?

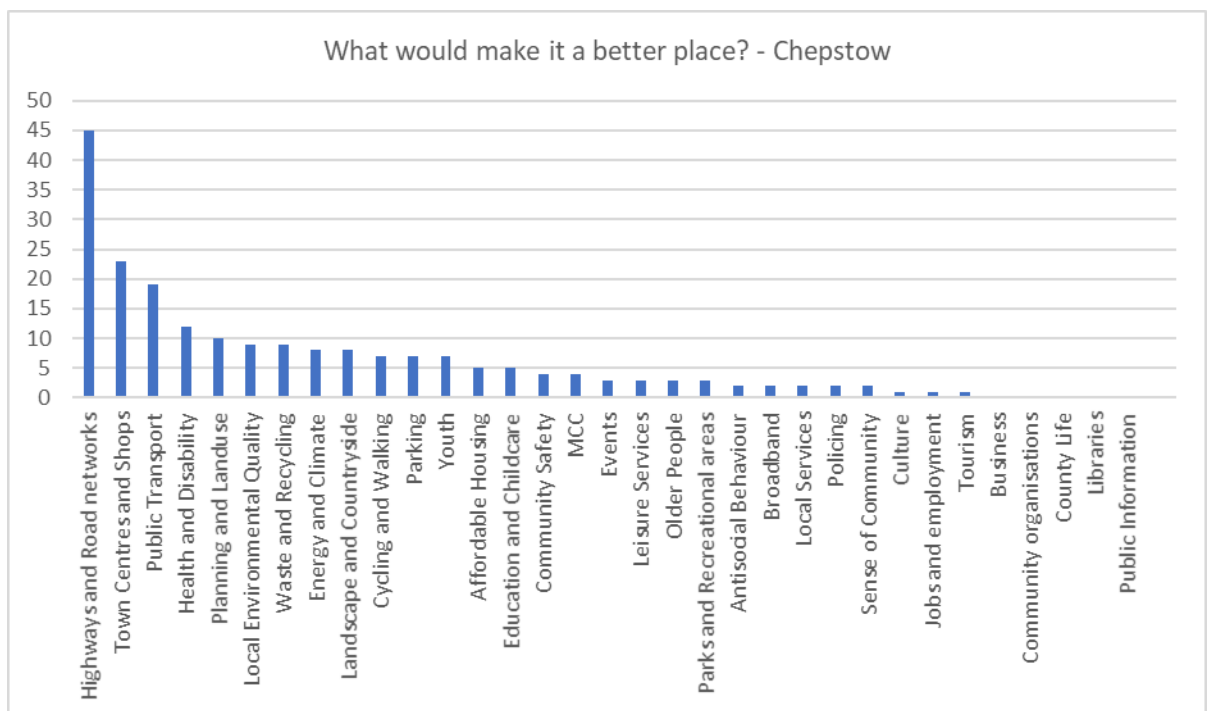
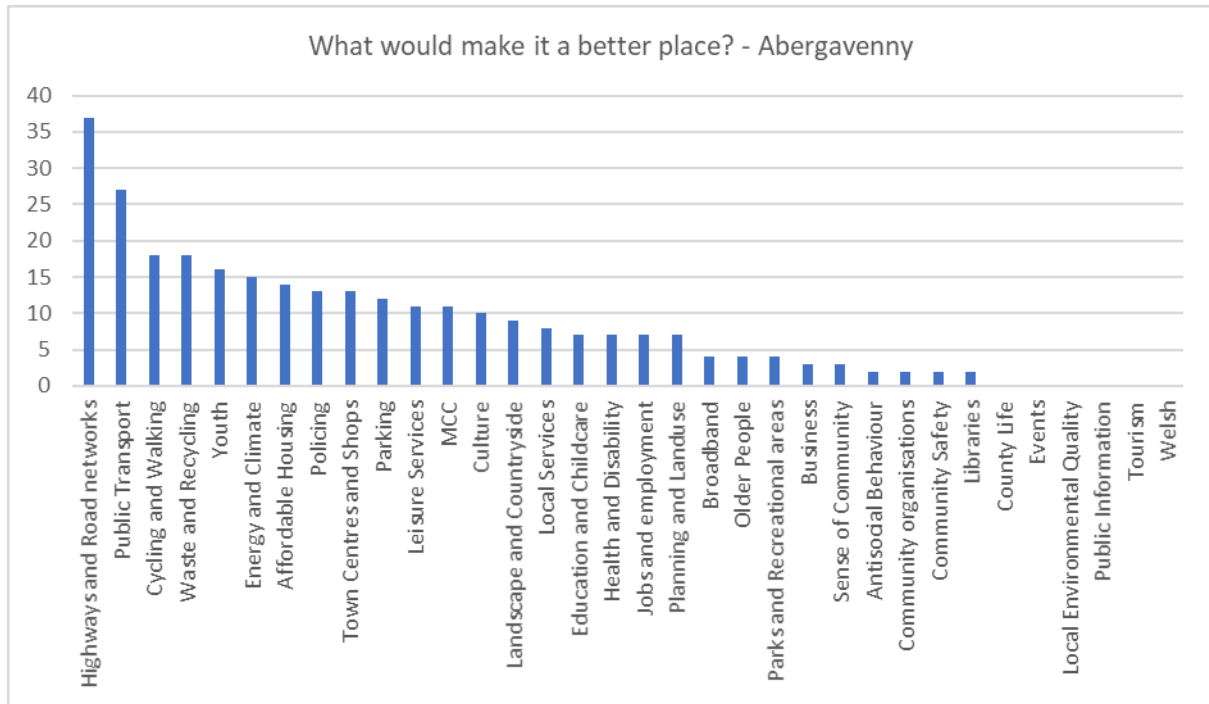


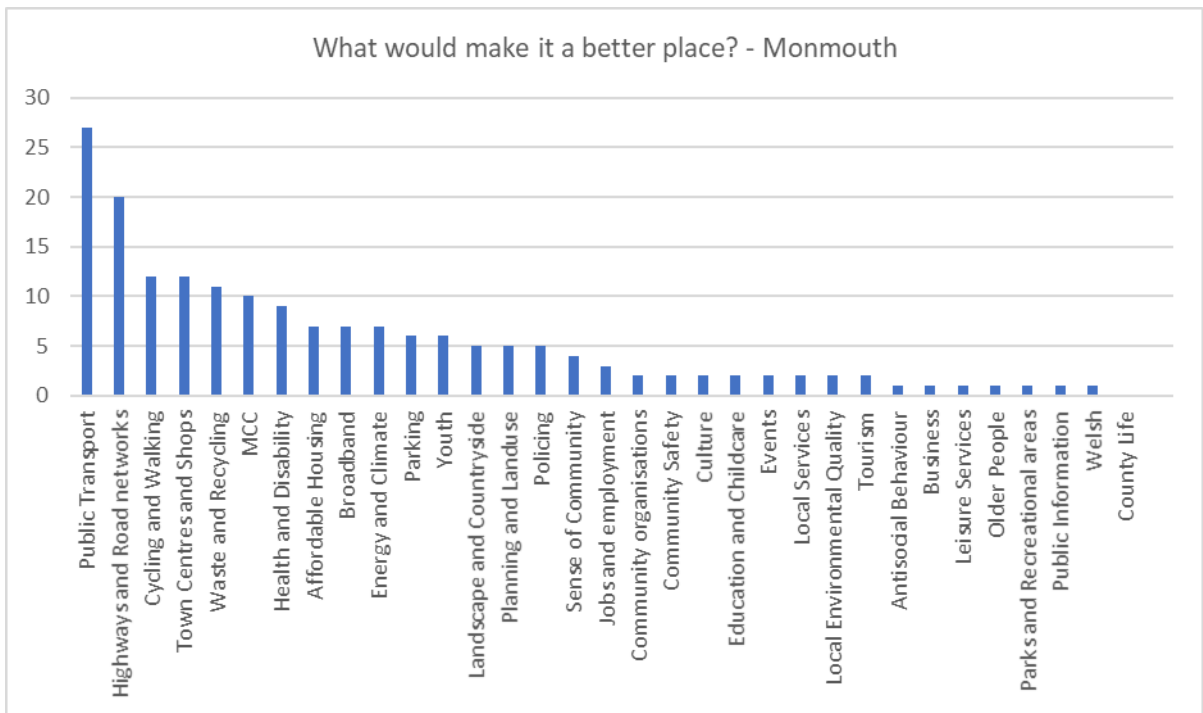
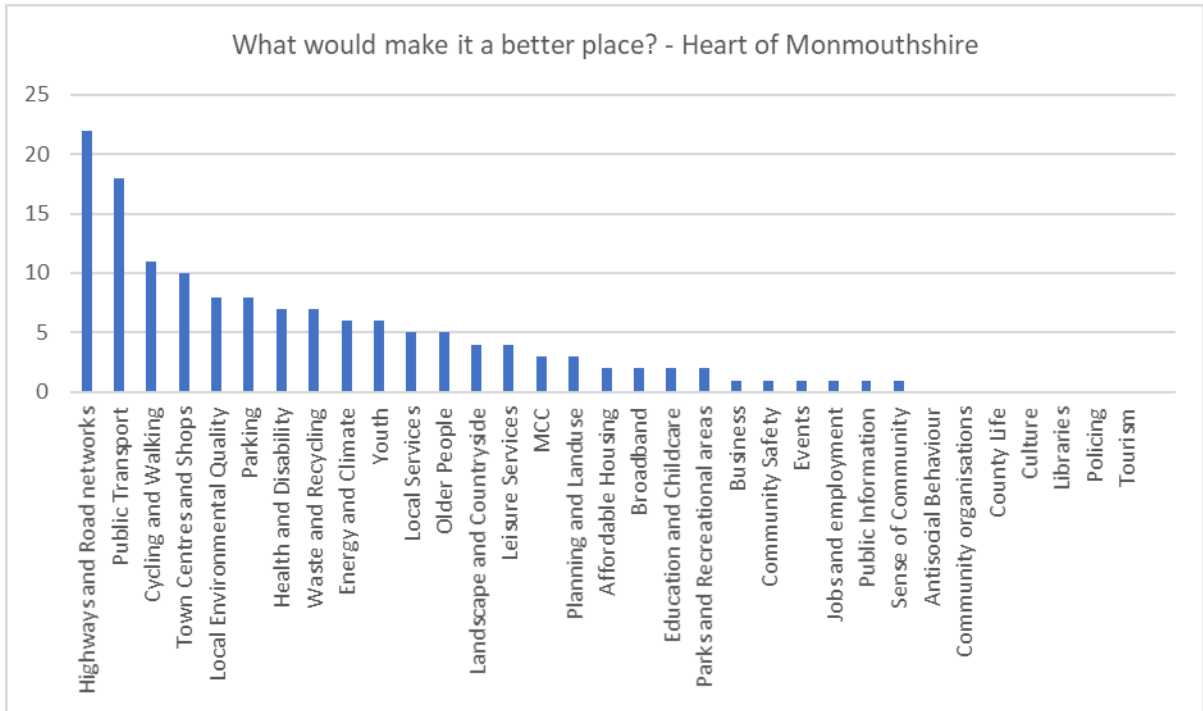


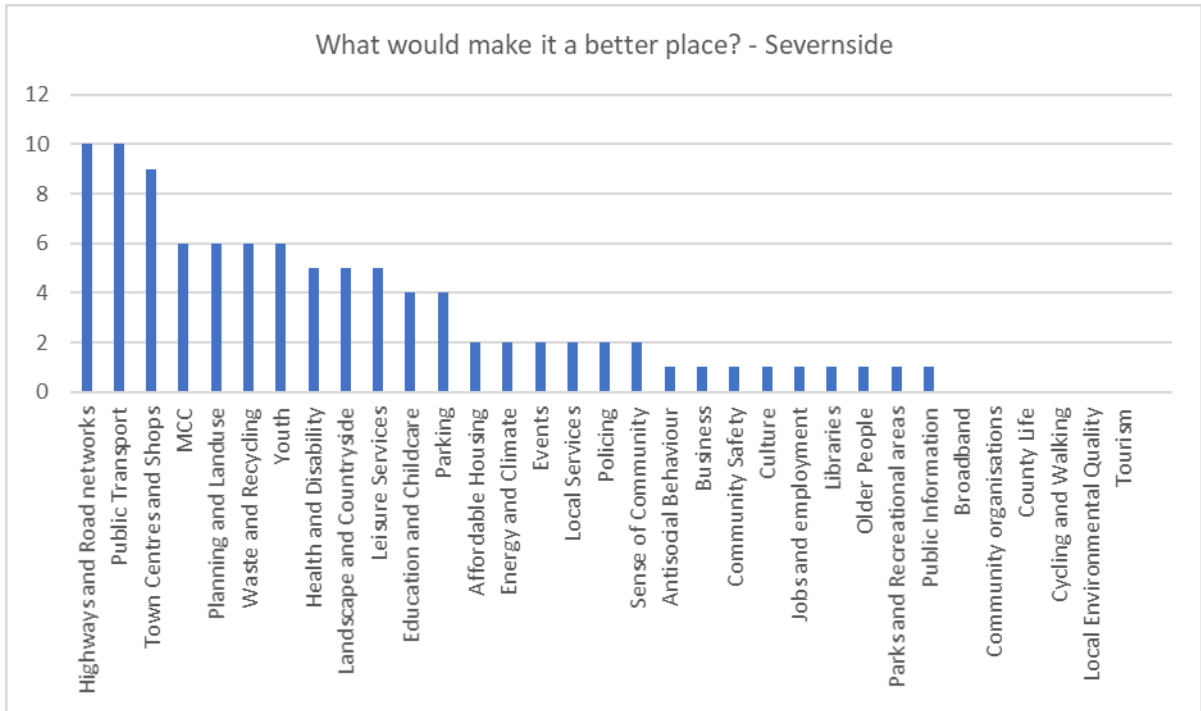


Across the five areas, as seen in the Monmouthshire analysis, both Sense of Community and Landscape and Countryside were the most frequent themes. Local Services, Community Safety and Town Centres and Shops were also amongst the most commented themes. Whilst the vast majority of comments were positive, there were some differing concerns raised within the respective areas on issues such as Highways and Road networks, Local Services, Planning and Land use, and Town Centres and Shops.

Question 2. What would make it a better place?







Responses covered a wide range of categories. Most of the categories with a higher number of responses in the five local areas were consistent with Monmouthshire overall. These include Highways and Road Networks, including comments on speeding and traffic issues. The Public Transport category contained many references to transport links and affordability, including bus and/or train services available, and the Town Centre and Shops comments tend to focus on having a greater variety of shops available locally.

There were some variations in issues raised within areas, for example, in the Abergavenny area Cycling and Walking was amongst the most prominent issues. In the Chepstow area, Highways and Road Network and Town Centres and Shops featured particularly prominently in the responses.

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