Findings Report: East Lothian Council Rural Housing Survey

East Lothian
Council

Contents

Introduction

As a local authority, East Lothian Council has a legislative requirement to routinely produce a Local Housing Strategy (LHS), which outlines, within a 5 year period, how best to improve housing and its related services, specific to the challenges faced in the county.

As the current LHS 2018-2023 approaches its end, East Lothian Council is in the process of producing the next LHS 2023-2028. During April to September 2022, there was a focus on engagement and consultation with key stakeholders and local residents. Evidence gathered will help direct the LHS. Therefore, to ensure it's reflective of the diverse needs and priorities of the population, consultation methods were diverse and key groups targeted.

In line with this, a survey was designed to understand the key challenges which are faced by those living in rural East Lothian, which, by the 8-fold urban-rural definition, affects all areas of East Lothian, with the exception of Musselburgh. Figure 1 illustrates the areas of East Lothian by 8-fold urban-rural classification.

Yet, as "rural" is viewed on a scale, with settlements categorised through population numbers as being "accessible rural" to "remote rural", the nature of challenges and the degree to which people are affected are complex and diverse across East Lothian. Thus, the survey aimed to address a wide range of issues, such as energy efficiency and development, and understand how such challenges can be address within the various contexts of rural housing within the county.

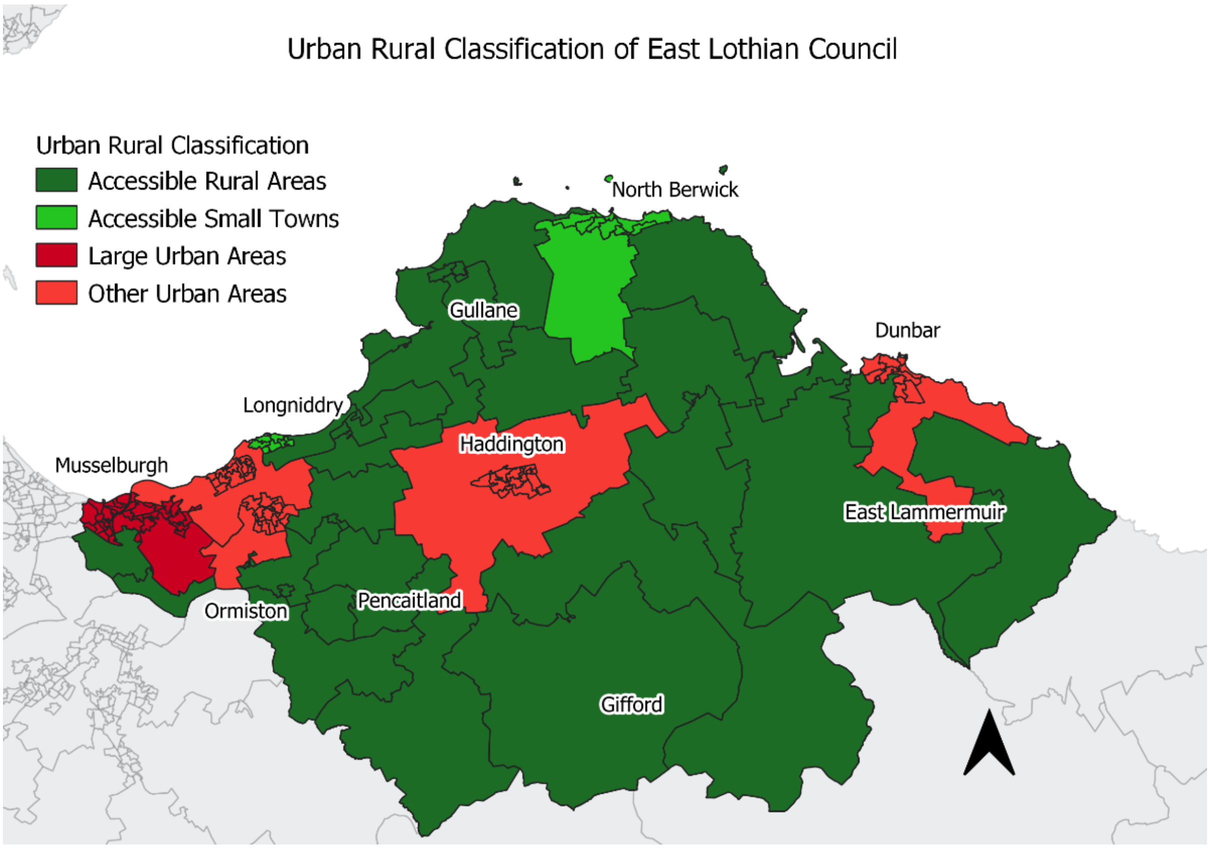


Figure 1: GIS Map of East Lothian by 8-fold urban-rural classification

Survey Design

The survey, accessed through East Lothian Council's consultation Hub, was published on the 5th of May and remained open for 4 weeks, closing on the 6th June 2022.

The survey was advertised routinely through East Lothian Council's social media pages, including platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Contacts within East Lothian's area partnerships, representing different areas of East Lothian, also helped promote the survey, forwarding details of the survey to interested parties to share.

In total there were 228 respondents to the survey, providing a good evidence base for the findings that follow.

Section 1: Demographics of Respondents

This section examines the demographics of respondents to the survey.

1.1 Age of Respondents

Whilst there was some diversity in the ages of participants, the bell-shaped graph does show a middle clustering. This highlights that those between 35 and 74 were the most likely to respond. Thus, responses within the survey are most likely to reflect the opinions of those in mid to later years of life.

Those aged between 55 and 64 accounted for the greatest proportion (24.6%) of respondents. Those in the youngest (18-24) and oldest (Over 75) age categories were the least represented, accounting for 2.6% and 6.1% of total responses, respectively.

Gaining representation of young people within surveys is a well-regraded issue within research, and one which does not come with a simple solution. Additionally, the under-representation of those age over 75 could be reasoned through a lack of digital confidence or access to the internet. As this survey required accessing the internet and basic IT skills, those not online or unfamiliar with surveys may have been excluded- a situation which is associated, but not exclusive, to the elderly.

Lastly, only 1.8% of respondents are unable to be identified by age, selecting the 'prefer not to say' option within the question.

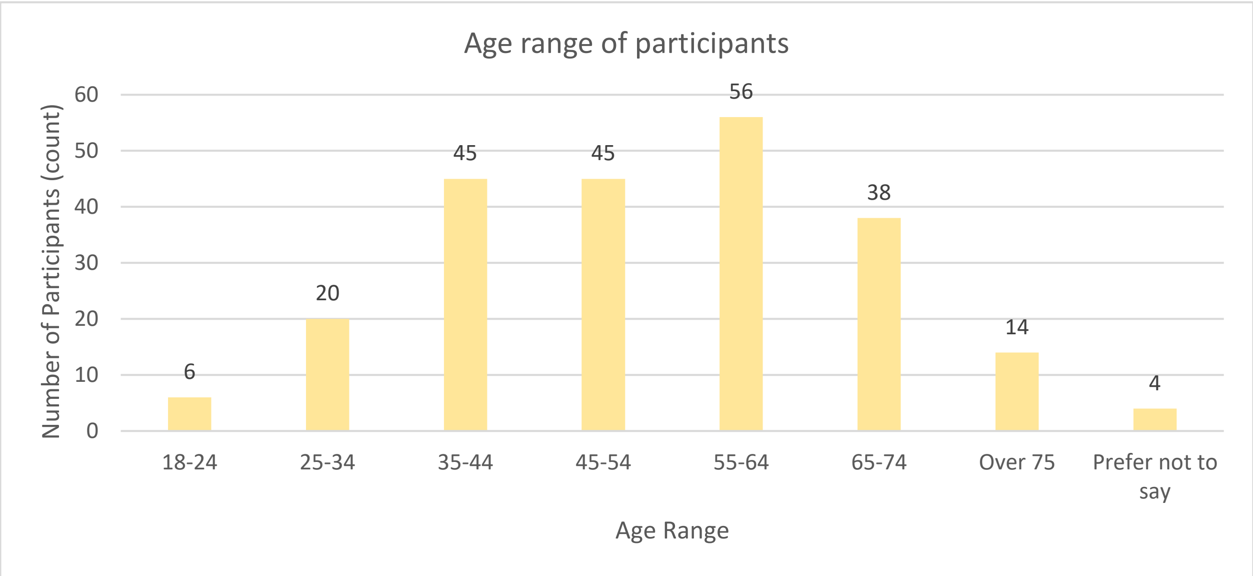


Figure 2: Bar chart showing the age range of respondents by count

1.2 Gender of respondents

Those identifying as female made up the majority of respondents. From the total number of responses, 64% were female, whilst 32.9% identified as male. This could therefore subject the results of the survey to a slight gender-bias.

Those identifying as non-binary and "other" represented the smallest proportion of respondents, equating to 0.4% of the total.

There were a small number of respondents (2.2%) who cannot be identified by gender, wishing to remain anonymous in this characteristic.

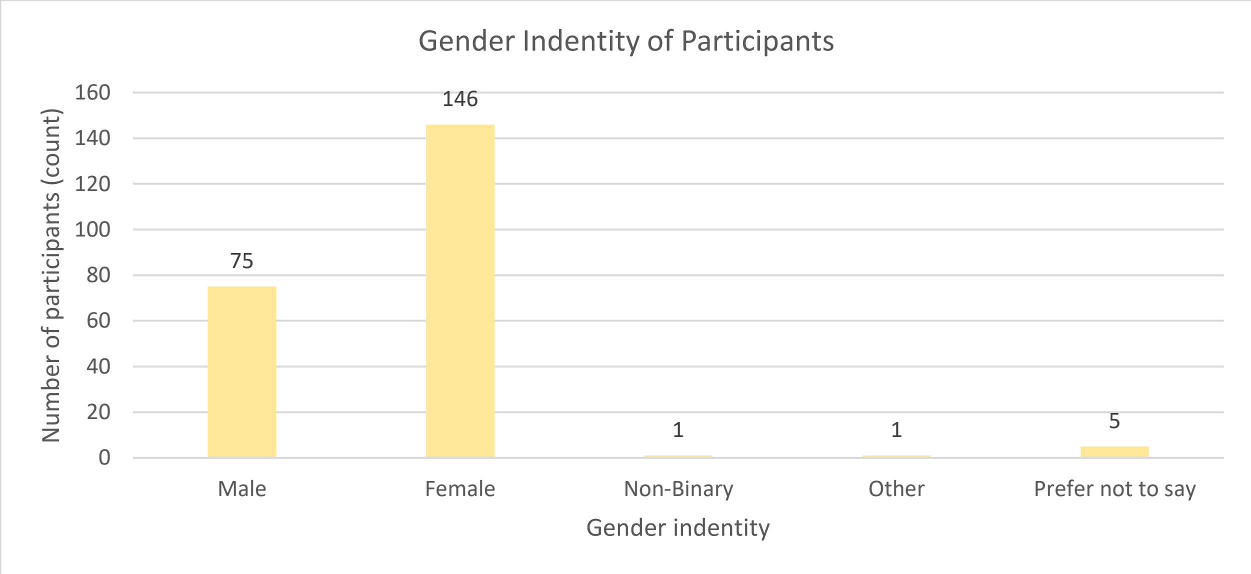


Figure 3: Bar chart showing gender of respondents by count

1.3 Location of respondents

Respondents were asked to provide a postcode as part of the survey. This allowed for the location of respondent's residence to be broken down by both the area partnership and urban-rural classification.

As shown within figure 4, the largest proportion of respondents lived within the North Berwick Coastal Area Partnership, accounting for 26.6% of total participants. Conversely, Musselburgh had the lowest response rate, at 5.1%.

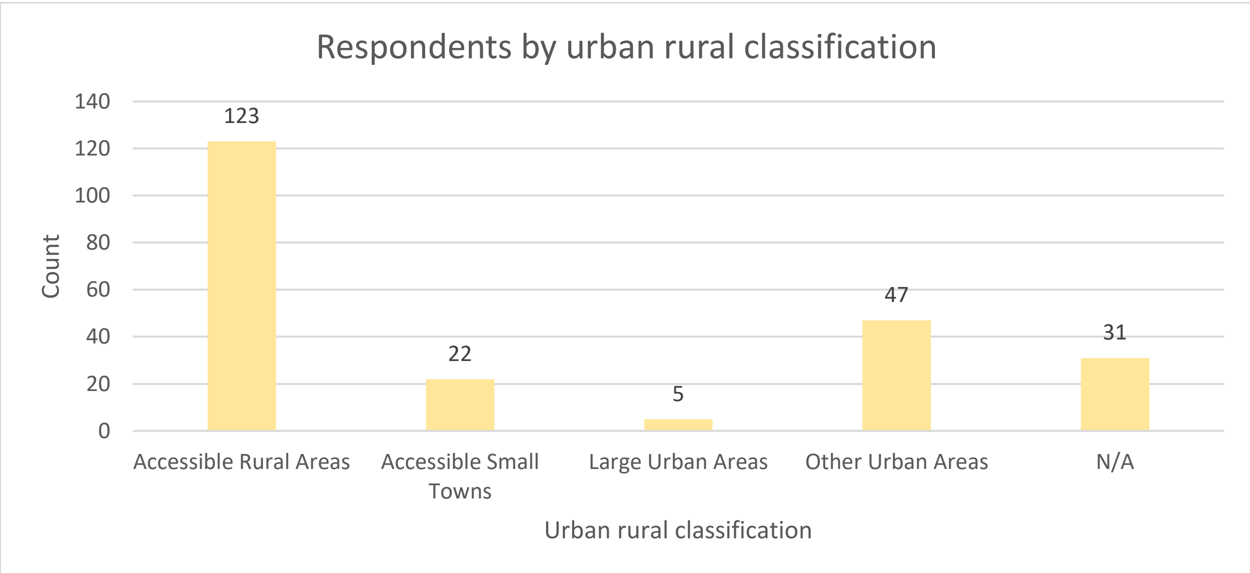


Figure 4: Bar Chart showing the number participants by Area Partnership

Using the 8-fold urban rural definition, Musselburgh is the only area within East Lothian considered to be urban, therefore such low representation is unsurprising due to the survey advertised to target those living in rural housing.

Respondents living in accessible rural areas provided the majority of respondents to the survey, accounting for 53.9% of respondents. The lowest response rate came from those living in “large urban areas” and “accessible small towns”, at 2.2% and 9.6% of total respondents, respectively. This is, again, perhaps unsurprising due to the subject of the survey being that of rural housing and the methods of targeting used in advertisement. Figure 5 shows the breakdown of participants by urban rural classification[1].

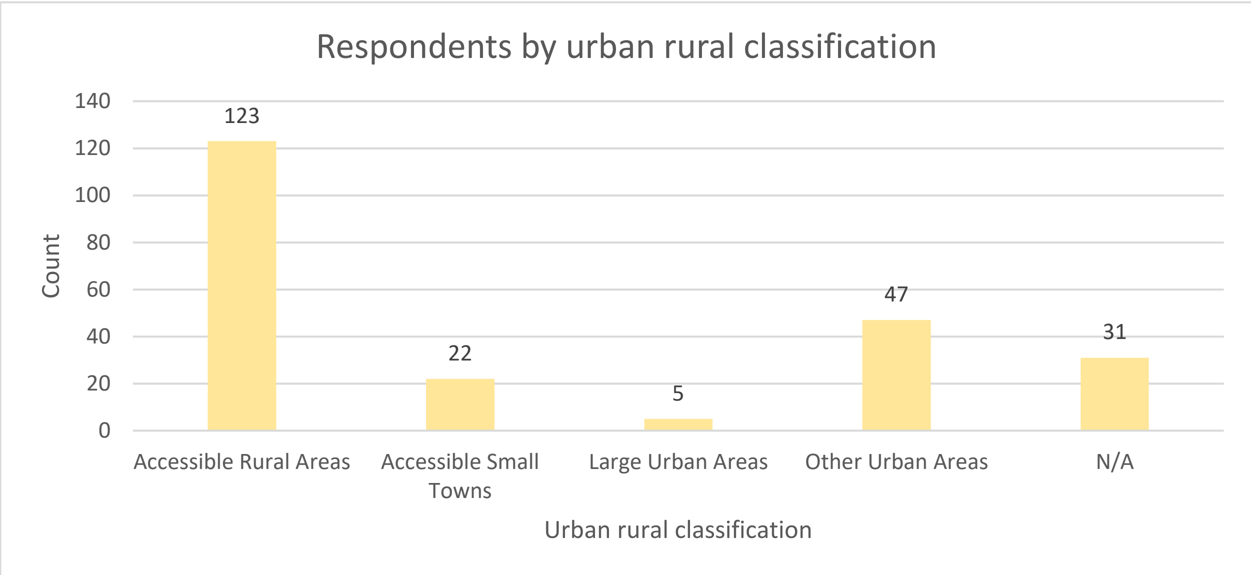


Figure 5: Bar chart showing the number of respondents by urban rural classification

1.4 Affiliation with Rural East Lothian

The vast majority of participants described themselves as living in a rural area (88.6%), in-keeping with the survey’s target population. Therefore, it can be inferred that the findings of this survey are largely based on the lived-experiences of those residing in rural East Lothian. Whilst selected sampling can be seen to add bias to results, such targeting supports the intention to create a picture of those living in rural East Lothian and the issues they face.

Those answering ‘other’ accounted for the next most common response (4.4%). A message box was provided within the survey for respondents to give context to their answer.

Personal interests for housing issues were provided as a meaning for “other”, shown in responses of: “*I have an interest in rural housing issues*” and “*I am interested in preventing homelessness in Scotland*”. For another, their response of “other” meant that they: “*care about sustainability*”. Therefore, whilst these respondents may not identify themselves as living in rural East Lothian, they share personal investments in rural housing and its associated issues.

The least common connections with rural East Lothian were those moving to a rural area and those working in a rural area, at 1.3% and 1.8% of total respondents, respectively.

[1] See Appendix A for definition of the Urban Rural 8 fold classification

Lastly, it should also be noted that participants may have multiple affiliations with rural areas in East Lothian. This was highlighted, again, within the comment box. Whilst selecting "I live in a rural area", participants explain that multiple options were relevant to them. For example, one respondent wrote: "I also have properties that I rent out". Another explained: "Multiple answered available here. Live, work in the field of rural, caring in rural." This, underlines the multitude of connections participants may have that will shape their experiences and needs within rural East Lothian.

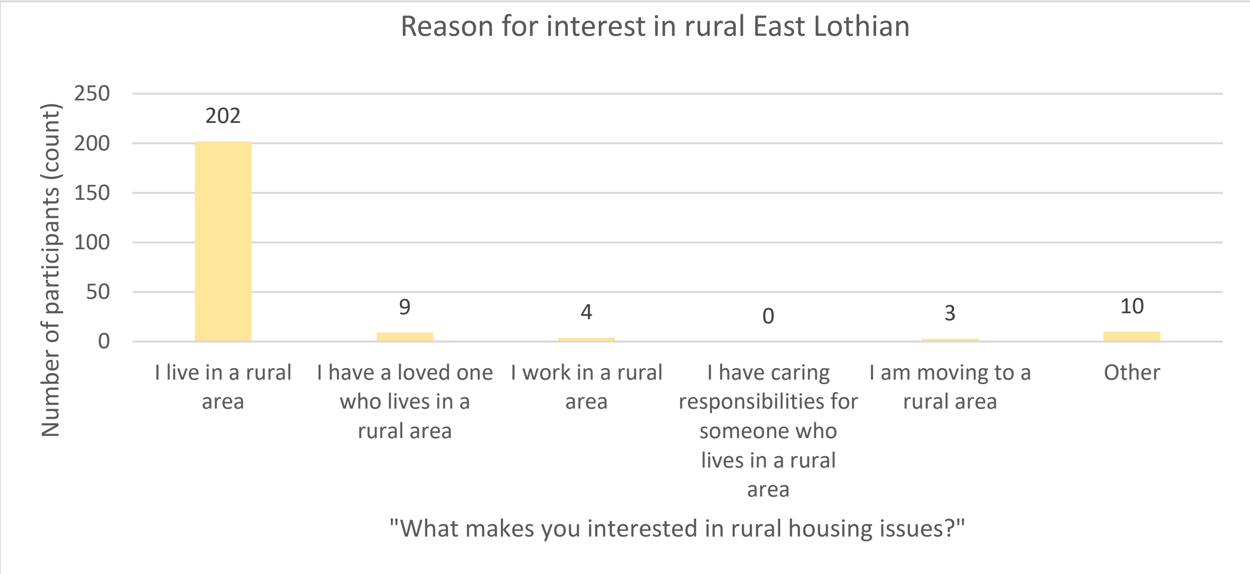


Figure 6: Bar chart showing reason for interest in East Lothian rural housing by count

1.5 Summary

By asking questions around a participant's personal characteristics, a basic profile of respondents can be built. Those answering this survey were most commonly aged between 35 and 74, female and living in rural East Lothian.

Participant demographics can give context to results, allowing us to understand some of the characteristics which may influence experiences and opinions within rural housing topics. It can also highlight the need for further research and engagement with certain groups, for example young people.

Section 2: Demographics of Respondents-Housing

This section provides background to the homes in which respondents live in, detailing household makeup, tenure, number of bedrooms and length of time at property.

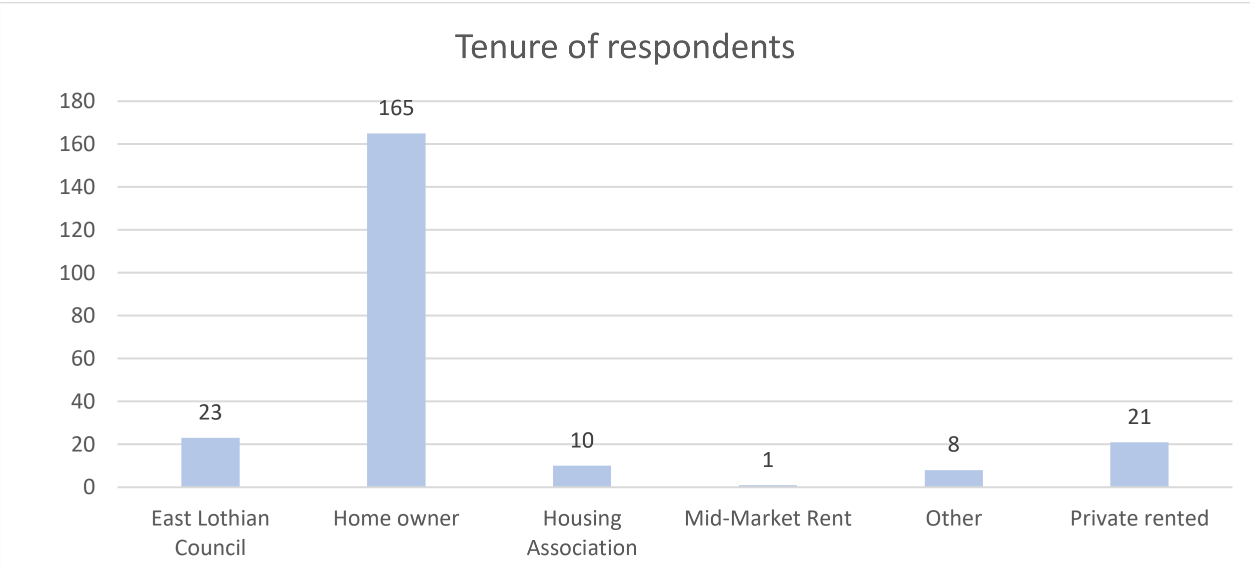
2.1 Household Type

There was a wide range of respondents with representation across all household types. The highest proportion of respondents were those living in a couple household, accounting for 33.3% of all respondents. There was also a high proportion of respondents (30.7%) from households with a couple and child or children. Table 1 shows the full breakdown by household type.

Table 1: Household Type by count and percentage of total		
Household type	**Number of households**	**% of total**
Couple household	76	33.3%
Couple household with adult children	31	13.6%
Couple household with child/children	70	30.7%
Single Adult living with family/parent	6	2.6%
Single Parent with adult children	7	3.1%
Single Parent with children	11	4.8%
Single person household	27	11.8%
All Households	228	100.0%

2.2 Tenure

As highlighted by figure 6, the majority (72.4%) were home owners. Around 15% live in the social rented sector (both housing associations and with East Lothian Council), while just under 10% of the respondents stated that they live in the private rented sector. This is broadly representative of East Lothian as a whole, in accordance with Scottish Survey Core Questions (SSCQ) statistics.[2]



[2] Scottish Government (2019) Household Tenure - Scottish Survey Core Questions. [statistics.gov.scot : Household Tenure - Scottish Survey Core Questions]

Figure 7: Tenure of respondents by count

By breaking down tenures by age group, it can be shown that respondents who were older households were more likely to be home owners- as highlighted below in table 2.

Half of all respondents aged 18-24 stated they live in “other” as their tenure, it could be inferred that they are currently living with parents. The group with the highest proportion living in the private rented sector were those aged between 35 and 44, while the highest proportion living in council housing were those aged 25-34.

Table 2: Tenure of Participants by age range

Tenure	**18-24**	**25-34**	**35-44**	**45-54**	**55-64**	**65-74**	**Over 75**
East Lothian Council	0.0%	15.0%	8.9%	11.1%	8.9%	7.9%	21.4%
Home owner	33.3%	60.0%	60.0%	71.1%	80.4%	89.5%	64.3%
Housing Association	16.7%	10.0%	8.9%	4.4%	0.0%	0.0%	7.1%
Mid-Market Rent	0.0%	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other	50.0%	10.0%	4.4%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Private rented	0.0%	5.0%	15.6%	13.3%	8.9%	2.6%	7.1%

2.3 Number of bedrooms

Those participating in the survey were asked how many bedrooms their current property has.

Respondents living in a home with three bedrooms made up the highest proportion (35.1%) of all of those who took part.

There was a small response rate from those living in one bedroom properties. However, given the rural focus of the survey, this was expected due to the trend of one bed properties being concentrated to urban areas.

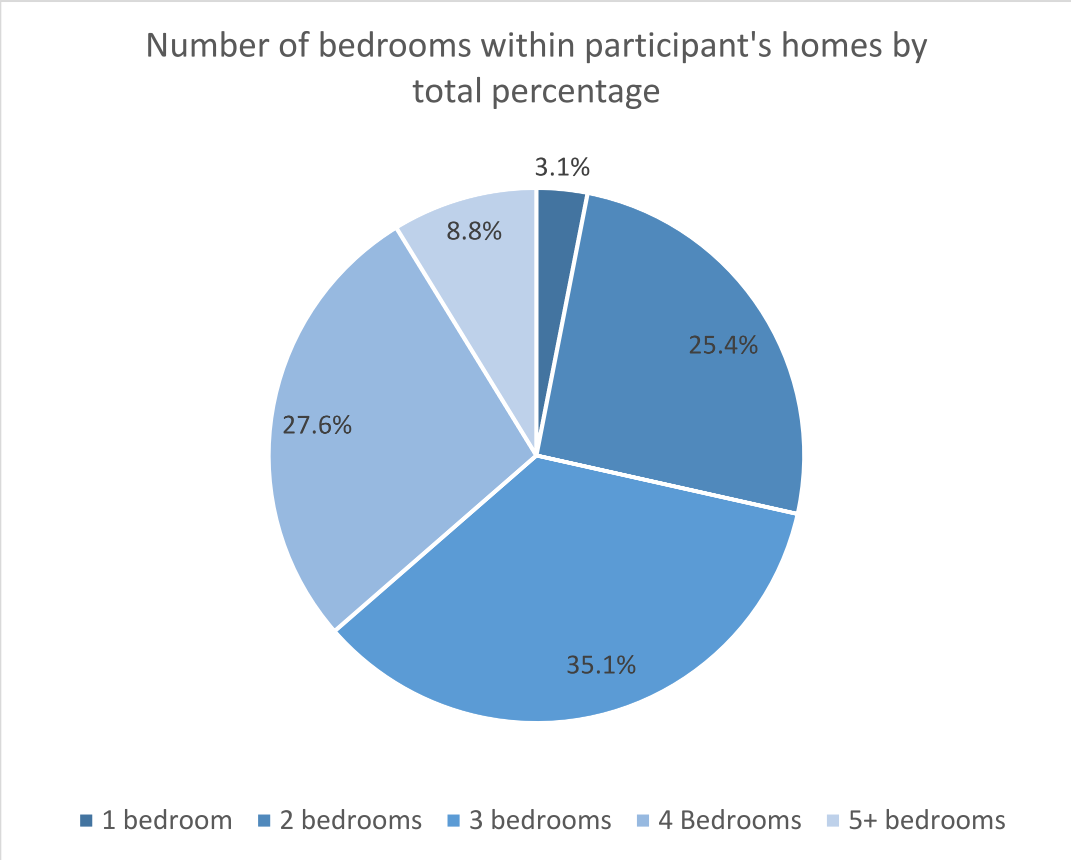


Figure 8: Number of bedrooms within participant's home by total participants

2.4 Length of time at current property

Respondents were asked how long they had lived in their current property.

There was a relatively even split amongst how long respondents had resided at their current address, as shown in figure 9.

Those who had lived at their property for between 10 -20 years made up the largest proportion of respondents. The lowest proportion, those who had lived at their property for a period of 5-10 years accounted for 20.2% of respondents.

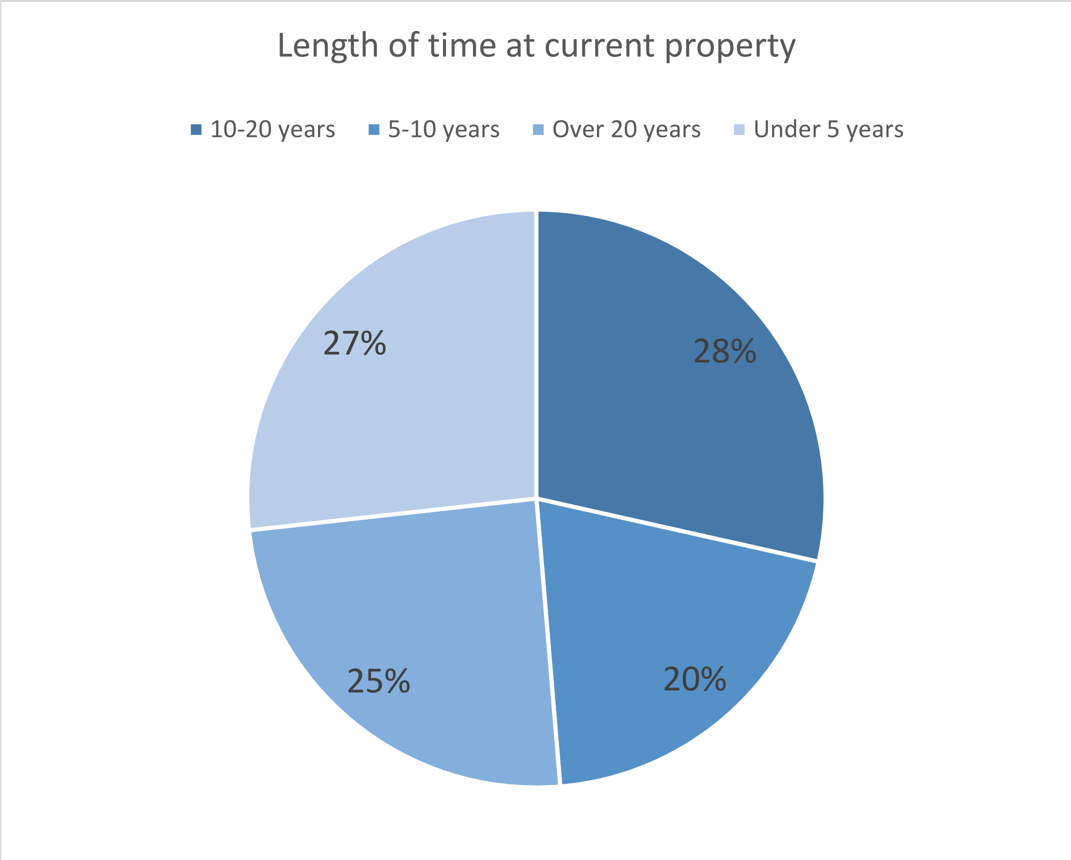


Figure 9: Length of time in current property by total percentage.

2.5 Summary

Through questions around housing characteristics, a picture of the homes that respondents are living in, most typically in rural East Lothian, can be developed. This, therefore, provides further context to results.

The majority of respondents are within a couple household, closely followed by couple households with children- most commonly those of a younger age but also included adult children.

Furthermore, respondents were, for the large part, homeowners. When cross-compared with age category, it was shown that homeowners were most often those aged 45 and above. Those living within the Private rented sector, had the highest majority in the 35-44 age category, whilst those in council tenures were aged 25-34.

Those living in 3-bed properties were in the majority, at 35.1%. There was a fairly low number of respondents living in the smallest (1 bed) and largest (5 plus bed), which could reflect the bias in certain housing stock to urban areas.

Lastly, whilst there was a relatively even spread of the time in which respondents have lived in their property. However, those living in their homes between 10 and 20 years were in the majority, by 1%, whilst those who have spent 5-10 years in their current home took the minority. This may be reasoned through the tenure of respondents, with home owners often having a longer turn-around time between properties.

Section 3: Growth of rural areas

This section highlights the level of growth respondents believe their area has had in the past 5 years and the attitudes regarding this.

3.1 Area Growth

The vast majority of respondents to the survey answered that they live in areas which, they believe, has seen growth in the past 5 years, standing at 78%, compared to 22% who have noted no growth. This shows that a majority of respondents are of the opinion that there has been growth within their area in recent years. This will be place dependent with some areas having experienced more growth than others.

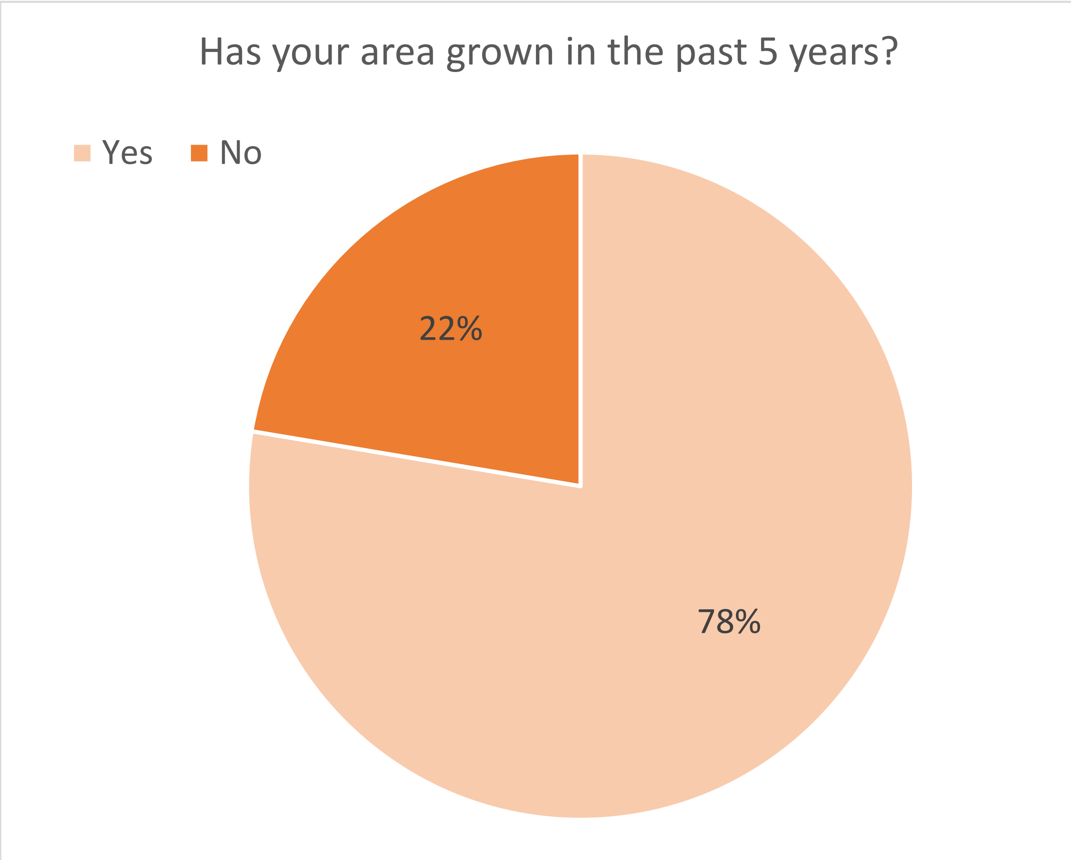


Figure 10: Pie Chart showing perceived growth of participant's area by percentage

3.2 Area Growth by Urban-Rural Classification

By using the postcodes provided by participants, differences in area growth based on urban rural classification can be seen.

As shown in figure 11, respondents across all area classifications have noticed growth.

Significantly, the majority (65%) of those living in accessible rural areas have felt their area has grown.

Thus, whilst areas defined as being urban or a small town were more likely to have been developed in the last 5 years, the growth of rural areas is significant, in particular the expansion of accessible rural areas of East Lothian.

However, the imbalance in representation within each classification can skew results somewhat, reducing the accuracy of results.

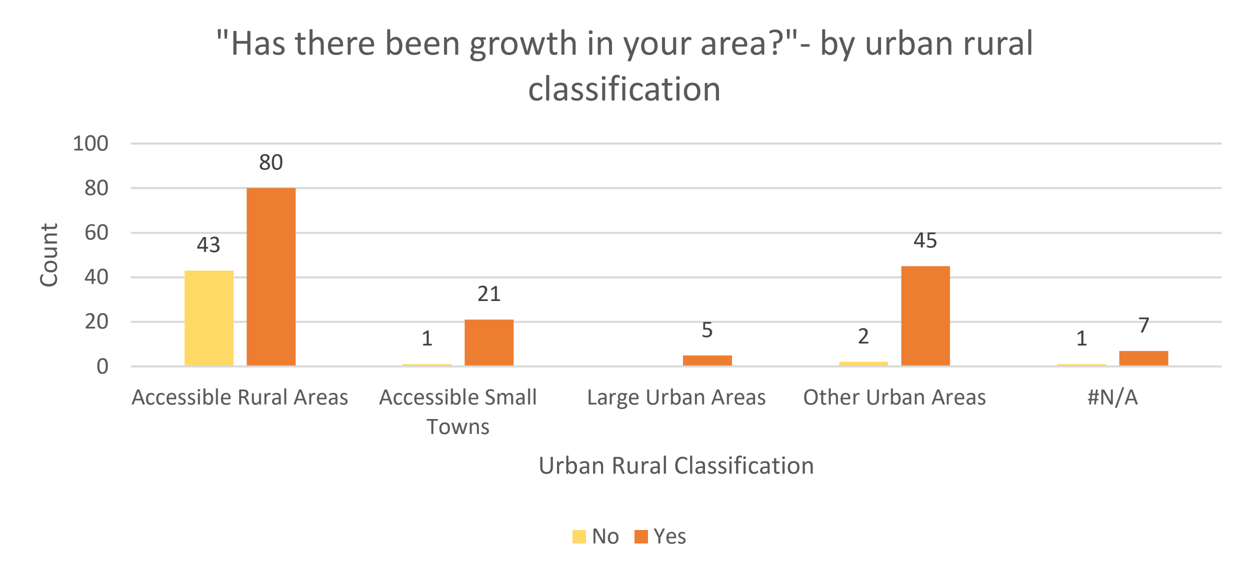


Figure 11: Bar chart cross comparing whether respondents believed their area has grown by urban rural classification

3.3 Attitudes towards area growth

Participants were then asked to describe their thoughts surrounding this growth, or lack thereof, within their area. 208 respondents chose to do so.

For the purpose of analysis, each response was broken down and categorised through the key themes or issues. Participants often mentioned numerous themes within their responses. The table below breakdowns the reoccurrence of each key theme through counts.

Table 3: Common themes within responses to Area Growth, by count and total percentage

Theme	Number of mentions	% of respondents mentioning theme
The need for additional housing	16	7.7%
Positivity towards area growth	21	10.1%
Negative impact of growth on services	106	51.0%
Increase of road traffic	27	13.0%
Environmental concerns	41	19.7%
Loss of sense of ‘community’/identity	21	10.1%
Properties built versus population needs	39	18.8%
Concern over size/speed of development	30	14.4%
Issues with developers/decision makers	11	5.3%
Want for more social/affordable homes	18	8.7%
Price of housing	10	4.8%
Lack of development due to the land within an area	8	3.8%

The need for housing

A small proportion (7.7%) of respondents recognised increased development as a necessity to support East Lothian's population.

This is highlighted by comments such as: "*People have to live somewhere*"; "*We all understand the need for more housing" and "…we know new housing stock is desperately needed"*.

However, participants often followed these statements with caveats, including conditions on the rate at which homes are developed, the affordability of housing and who develops within an area.

Growing community

Those who thought positively of growth often spoke of the residents which come with new houses, with comments including: "*It's nice to have new people*": "*makes the town more lively*" and "*It also attracts young families to the town*".

However, this support towards new residents was not shared by all. Several respondents voiced concerns that some will not interact with the local economy, felt in responses of: "*The newcomers are also not that helpful to the local economy as they do not shop locally…"* and "...*the people moving into them are mostly commuters who don't even support local businesses*."

Such attitudes may contribute to the feelings to segregation between settled residents and those new to rural areas, with one respondent describing it as: "*them and us*".

Changes in community identity

Moreover, growth within an area was viewed by 10.1% of respondents as causing, or threatening to cause, an area to lose identity.

For some, identity was attributed to area boundaries and, therefore, is threatened by expansion beyond traditional village/town outskirts. This can be seen in responses including: "*…all the towns and villages in East Lothian will lose their identity as it seems that they will all join up soon…*" and "*I moved into a village which is being changed into an anonymous urban sprawl…*". This indicates a fears of areas becoming ill-defined conurbations.

Additionally, participants spoke of their area changing beyond recognition, which was again spoken in relation to identity loss. This is outlined in responses such as: "*It is no longer the market town but a very large housing estate*" and "*It's certainly not the village I moved to in 2007*".

Environmental concerns

The loss of land was also an environmental concern for 19.7% of respondents.

Certain responses associated the growth of an area with an increase in air and water pollution.

Moreover, the impact of development on natural habits was voiced by several participants, shown through comments such as: "*disagree with the wildlife's homes being taken away from them*" and "*the loss of green space is a concern as more flora and fauna are losing crucial habitat*".

Participants showed further concern over the pressure a loss of farmland may have on food resources. This was felt within comments including: "*I am concerned about the loss of prime agricultural land- this resource needs to be protected*" and "*I hate to see housing built on good farmland. We need to feed ourselves and import less*".

Land Capacity and area growth

Furthermore, 3.8% of participants attributed the lack of development within their area with its capacity to sustain additional properties, due to the type and size of the land which surrounds it.

Examples of agricultural land effecting development includes responses such as: "*I do not feel the village could support development as we are surrounded by farmed agricultural land*" and "*not possible as would be too close to operating farm*".

Additionally, the size of an area influencing development was highlighted by one response of: "*we live in a converted steading where there is no scope for expansion*".

Development and infrastructure

Significantly, the impact development has had, or has the potential of having, on services and infrastructure appeared to be the biggest concern for respondents, mentioned within 106 responses. Included within concerns around services were GPs, dentists, schools, leisure facilities, rail services and retail shops.

Commonly, it was felt that there was a disproportionate number of residents to available services within an area, due to recent growth. The effect of this was assumed by participants as leaving residents unable to access required or desired services. One respondent explained: "*It took us 1.5 years to get a dentist when we moved, that's not going to get any better*". Another stated; "*New residential development is not matched by equivalent in public services…The community centres and sports centres have not been increased in size*."

Conversely, the lack of growth within an area was reasoned for some through not having, or having very limited, access to services/infrastructure. For one, having no growth in their area within the last 5 years was due to: "*The village and local community does not have transport links that would sustain a large scale development*". For another, the cost of providing the necessary services to support development effected growth, explaining: "*Rural hamlet with no infrastructure makes development costly*."

Increase in road traffic and its impact

Furthermore, 13% of respondents felt that area growth has led to increases in traffic.

Participants spoke directly of the number of cars on their local roads, highlighted through responses such as "*roads are far busier*", "*too many cars in the town centre*" and "*traffic is very busy*".

The associated impact of this included concerns over parking availability and increases in air pollution.

The developments

Moreover, respondents took issue with the houses being developed.

Some thought that the homes built do not reflect the needs of local residents. One respondent believed developments: *"…do not provide a solution to the need for housing for local families*", whilst another felt they: *"…seem to be marketed towards people moving into the country, rather than meeting the needs of existing residents".*

Price was often associated as a cause for local needs not being met, highlighted in responses including: "...*Most of the houses are priced outside what most locals can afford*..." and "...*new* *housing is unaffordable for the majority of local people*". This was further supported by 8.7% of respondents opining that they wish to see increases in the number of affordable and social homes.

The size of new properties was further used to explain the opinion that local needs are not being met. Responses often described new builds as "*large*", with one stating that: "*all new builds are 4/5 bed properties*". Some felt that smaller properties would be "*more affordable for those starting out".*

Lastly, certain groups became a particular worry for some respondents, with it being felt that new builds do not meet the needs of young adults and the older population.

3.4 Summary

The majority of participants have witnessed a growth in their area within the past 5 years.

Participants associated area growth with increases in population, pressure on resources (including services and food supply) and changes within area boundaries. Whilst some felt the benefit of their area developing, they were within the minority of participants.

The importance of infrastructure/service and the considerations that should be taken when developing an area was made certain in responses. It was felt that the ease to which services and infrastructure are accessed was negatively impacted due recent development. Therefore, it can be assumed, from responses, that without improvements or expansion of these provisions, additional housing may worsen the issue

The type of property being built also appeared as a cause of concern for participants, who felt that the size, affordability and availability were not conducive to the perceived needs of locals. Young people, whilst underrepresented within participant demographics, were a particular focus for some, who were concerned that local young people will be forced to move from the county. However, the effect to which this has, or will, become reality for young rural residents is made uncertain by the unpredictability of the housing market and the lack of representation of young people in surveys such as this.

Section 4: Affordable Housing

This section highlights respondent's perception on the availability of affordable housing and opinions around the need for such housing, in regards to their area.

4.1 Availability of affordable housing

The majority (57%) believed that there is not enough affordable housing in their area, comparable to 17.5% who feel their area has an appropriate provision of such housing. Significantly, 25.4% were not confident in the answer to this question, selecting "I do not know". This may infer that a greater understanding of the definition and availability of affordable housing is needed or that those who stated don't know do not currently have a need for affordable housing so it is not of concern to them.

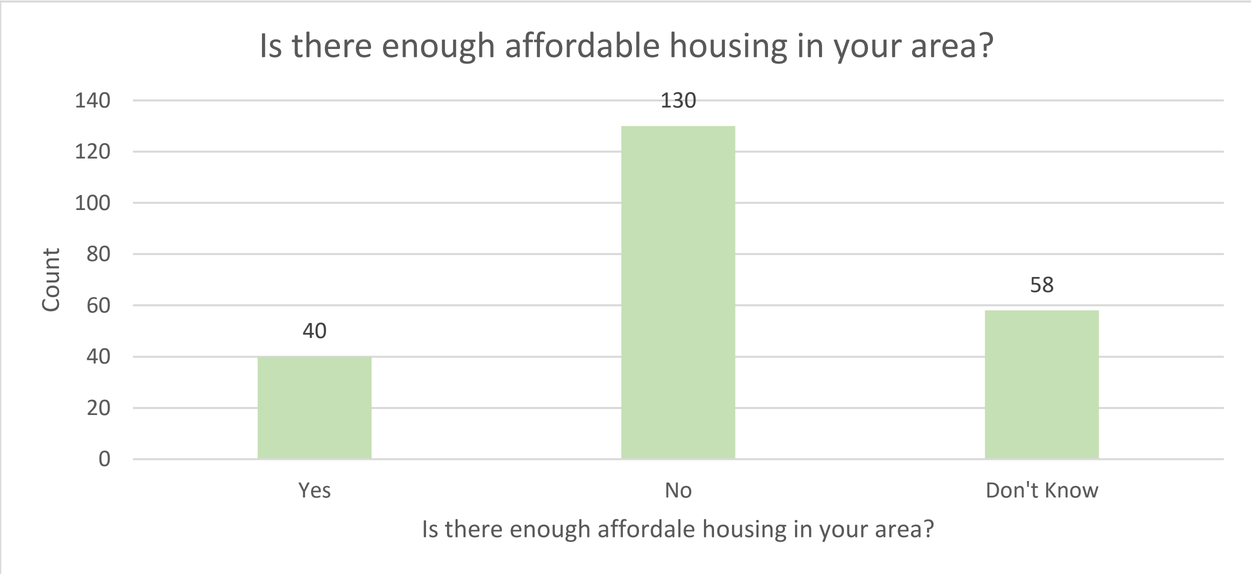


Figure 12: Bar Chart showing perceptions of the availability of affordable housing within respondent's areas, by count.

4.2 Opinions on Affordable Housing

Participants were then asked to provide context to their answer. 108 participants chose to do so. The table below breaks down the recurrence of each key theme.

Table 4: Common themes within responses to the availability of affordable, by count and total percentage

Category	Count	% of participants mentioning category
Need for affordable homes	31	28.7
Need for social housing	18	16.7
Access to affordable/social housing	30	27.8
Price of current housing stock	26	24.1
The Private Rented Sector	19	17.6

Concerns for lower income households	9	8.3
Young people and housing	18	16.7
Size of properties	6	5.6
Perception of locals being outpriced within area	6	5.6

Shortage of affordable homes

28.7% of participants believed there to be a shortage of affordable homes.

For some, the lack of affordable housing is a long-standing issue, explained through "*there is always a shortage in this category*" and "*there is never enough affordable housing*".

Respondents referenced their own experiences of house hunting to support their belief in a lack of affordable housing. For instance, one participant shared: "*we are aware of the lack of affordable housing as we are currently looking for one*", whilst another answered: "*looking into affordable housing. There is very little to buy".*

Conversely, others used word-of-mouth to reference their concern over a lack of affordable housing, highlighted in comments including: "*most people report there is not enough affordable housing in some parts of East Lothian*" and "*judging by community Facebook post there is a shortage of affordable housing*".

Moreover, whilst certain participants spoke of a shortage of affordable housing, others spoke of there being none at all within their area.

Social Housing Stock

16.7% of participants made reference to social housing, with many speaking of the lack of stock available. This can be outlined in responses such as "*there are NO council houses in my area*", "*there is very little Council/HA (housing association) homes here*" and "*none empty*".

Respondents went further to call for an increase in the number of these homes, showing concern that, due to the current economic climate, the demand will grow. Examples such as "*with inflation more people will fall into needing social housing*" and "*the demand for council/housing association homes is increasing as the cost of living is increasing*".

Access to affordable/social housing

Further to the levels of stock, 27.8% of participants referenced perceived or experienced difficulties in accessing affordable/social housing.

The wait-list for properties was mentioned by 22 participants, who often spoke of the length of lists and time spent on them.

Moreover, participants believed circumstance reduces access to social housing. One participant, for example, stated: "*as a single person with no children I do not believe I will get council housing in my lifetime*".

Price of Housing

Alongside the lack of affordable and social housing, there was concern that the alternatives available are often beyond the means of those who need it.

The current price of houses on the market appeared as a concern for respondents, with some speaking of a recent upward trend in the cost of housing. For instance, one respondent commented: "*houses have risen dramatically and are going for well over the asking price*", whilst another stated "*houses within our price range were being outbid by 50k over the value of the house*".

Moreover, respondents associated expense with the new development, highlighted through responses of: "*90 percent of new builds are high end prices*" and "*1/2 bed studio in the new development in Gullane are going for an excess of £200,000*."

The cost of the Private Rented Sector

Furthermore, renting as an alternative to buying was also described as being unaffordable for some.

This can be highlighted through responses such as "*the pricing of private rentals is prohibitive to anyone even on middle income*", "*private rents cost too much" and "rental properties are incredible expensive compared to salaries*."

Further to the price of rental properties, it was also felt by respondents that there is a lack of properties available to rent. For instance, one participant shared: "*only three long term lets have become available, all two bedrooms*".

The impact the availability of affordable housing can have

Participants felt that, as a result of a lack of affordable housing within their area, people are being adversely affected.

Those in certain professions, which were referenced as carers and hotel staff, were thought to be unable to take roles within areas due to a lack of affordable housing. It was thought by some that whilst it affects the individual themselves, it is also impacting the wider population stating: "*the demographic of the town is changing as a result. There are now not enough carers etc to look after the aging population*".

Moreover, those on a lower income became the concern for many respondents, who often felt that these individuals are being 'priced out' of East Lothian.

This issue was further mentioned in relation to young people. Some parents showed concern that their children will be unable to afford to remain within the area, highlighted through the response "*I worry about my own children not being able to afford to buy a home in their hometown*". Several respondents referenced adult children living in their parents homes, with one stating "*older people feel their home* is not their own".

4.3 Summary

Over half of respondents felt that there is a lack of affordable housing options, influenced by personal experiences and anecdotal evidence of house hunting for properties within East Lothian. It was believed that whilst some areas lacked such housing, others had none at all.

Furthermore, it was felt that the need for social housing is, or shall be, worsened by the current economic crisis increasing the cost of private housing both on the market and for rent.

Again, young people were of particular concern within responses, they were considered as being at risk of being unable to move from their family home, impacting both them and their family. Those within specific employment groups, specifically carers and hotel staff, were an additional concern when assessing a lack of affordable properties. Whilst also affecting these individuals, it was thought that the wider impact could mean a lack of support to meet the needs of an aging population.

It is apparent that for those who are unable to access social housing and are earning lower wages there is a real affordability issue, with private lets being expensive and little chance of getting on the housing ladder as a buyer.

Lastly, it should be noted that the lack of certainty over the availability of affordable housing could infer a lack of understanding for what constitutes affordable housing.

Section 5: Current housing and its ability to meet needs

Section 4 examines participants' current housing in relation to how well their, and those within their household, needs are met.

5.1 Ability for current home to meet household needs

The majority of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that their current house meets their needs, and those of their household, at 42.1% and 37.7%, respectively. This may reflect the fact that the majority of respondents were home-owners who often have more choice and flexibility around where they live.

Comparatively, there was a small percentage of respondents who are currently living in a house that meets neither their needs or those of their household members, with 14.9% disagreeing and 5.3% strongly disagreeing with the provided statement.

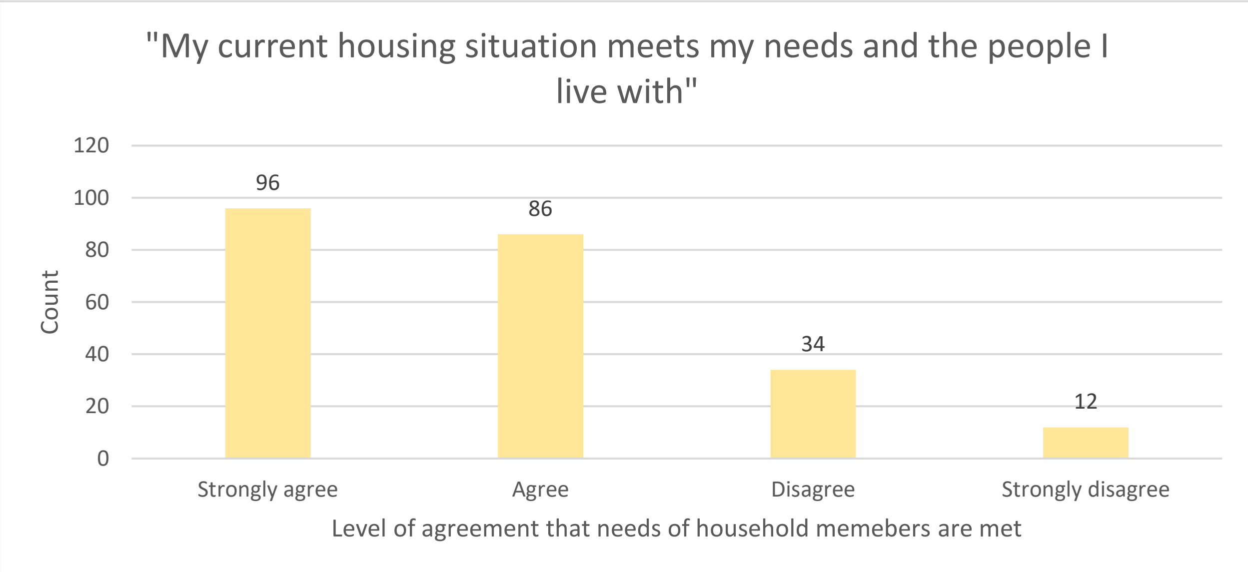


Figure 13: Current housing situation and needs of those living there

5.2 Descriptions as to how needs are unmet by current property

Participants who selected "disagree" or "strongly disagree" were then invited to provide these details on the ways in which their house was currently unsuitable, 43 from 46 respondents decided to do so.

Table 5: Common responses within responses to how needs are not being met by a property, through count and total percentage

Category	Count	% of participants mentioning category
Size of property	25	58.1
Condition of home	4	9.3
Health needs	6	14.0
Issues associated with the private rented sector	5	11.6
Distance from support system	2	4.7
Lack of access to garden space	3	7.0

Heating	7	16.3
Personal circumstance	4	9.3
Affordability of move	8	18.6

Size of Property

58.1% of respondents mentioned size in relation to their current property being unable to meet their, or their household member's needs.

A significant number (16), spoke of their house being "*too small*", which was seen to impact on the wellbeing of household members, their work-life and ability to pursue their hobbies.

Many spoke of the size of their household in relation to the number of bedrooms, bathrooms and shortage of space available within their property. For example, one respondent shared: "*...now 3 adults in a two bed house...So very little space*". Another stated: "*we are overcrowding. I have 2 daughters having to share a room they are 21yrs and 19yrs old with a son who is 14years old*."

Recent changes in the function of the home was further referenced as having some cause in a home now being unsuitable to needs. This is highlighted through comments such as "*I am now required to work from home 3 days a week. I have a very small spare room (box room) which is not big enough for working in comfortably*".

Conversely, having too large a home caused four respondents to feel their needs unmet. This can be seen in comments such as "*do not need as big a house*" and "*house is too big*".

Condition of home

9.3% of participants reported that the condition of their home was affecting its ability to meet needs. Those reporting this spoke of issues with mould, a lack of modernisation and house being in a "*state of disrepair*".

Unsuitability for health needs

14% of respondents believed their current home is not a conducive to their, or the families' health needs.

The size or layout of a property were seen to influence this. For example, one participant commented: "*my son and daughter share a room but due to my daughter's autism it's dangerous*." Another shared, "*I do not have a bath in the bathroom, only a shower which is two steps up. I have osteoporosis and have suffered several falls, two broken bones, and have become scared of slipping in the shower…*"

Lack of garden access

A total of 7% of respondents believed that the unavailability of a private garden made their home unsuitable for their needs. This can be evidenced in responses such as "*no garden*" and "*top flat no garden*".

Heating

16.3% believed that their current heating system and their home's ability to retain heat are accountable for their needs not being met. Words such as "*cold*" and "*draughty*" were used by some to describe their home.

The age of a property was used by some to explain the cause of heat loss, with one responding: "*it is cold with old window and an old boiler".* Meanwhile others, blamed the heating system itself, found in examples such as *"the heating system is inadequate" and "lack of efficient heating*". This issue is common to rural housing, with difficulties often met trying to modernise heating within these properties.

Personal Circumstance

The personal circumstances of individuals, such as their relationships, made a home unsuitable. Examples of this were "*broken relationships*", "*my parents are increasingly wanting me to move out*" and "*I need a home of my own for myself and my daughter*".

Affordability of move

Despite a property being unable to meet the needs of a household, 18.6% believed that a move to a more appropriate property is currently unaffordable for them.

The current state of the economy has worsened some participants' ability to move. For example, one responded: "*Housing market gone mad and no local affordable housing*", whilst another felt they had to "*I would like to move in with my girlfriend but need to save for this due to the cost of living*".

Additionally, a proportion of those living in homes they felt were too small to meet the needs of the size and/or health of their household, noted that a larger property is currently beyond their means. Comments including, "*we can't afford to move to a bigger house*" and "*cannot find affordable 3 bed*" highlights this issue.

5.3 Summary

A large proportion of those responding to this survey believed, or strongly believed, their needs and the needs of those within their household were met by their property.

For those with unmet needs, the size of a property was a particular issue, including homes that were both too large and too small when compared to the number of people within the household. Some felt overcrowded in their homes, more so by households with certain health needs, including those with autism. Moreover, Covid-19 has impeded a home's ability to meet the needs of some, due to increased expectation of homeworking creating the need for office space within a property.

The state of a property, including its ability to retain heat, influence its ability to meet household needs. This is of notable significance due to the recent focus of energy, as prices continue to rise. In particular, there appears to be an unmet need, in some areas, for people who have poorly insulated properties. This can result in high-cost bills and increased consumption- harming personal finances as well as the planet.

Some felt that their property was too large. In such cases, the need for accessible and available information regards options for downsizing should be an option. This could help them to find better suited accommodation, whilst also bringing larger-sized properties to the market for those who need them.

Lastly, despite a property being unsuitable to household needs, numerous respondents felt unable to move due to the current cost of housing, thus tying individuals to homes which do not allow them to live in the way in which they would like. Again, the issue of affordability of housing is an issue and this may likely impact their health and wellbeing further.

Section 6: Future housing plans

Section 5 illustrates participant's future plans regarding a move from their area, and the factors which influence their decision.

6.1 Future Housing Intentions

Of those responding to the survey, 72.8% of respondents had no future plans to move from their current area, compared to 12.3% of respondents who did. Additionally, 14.9% were unsure about their future plans regarding their property.

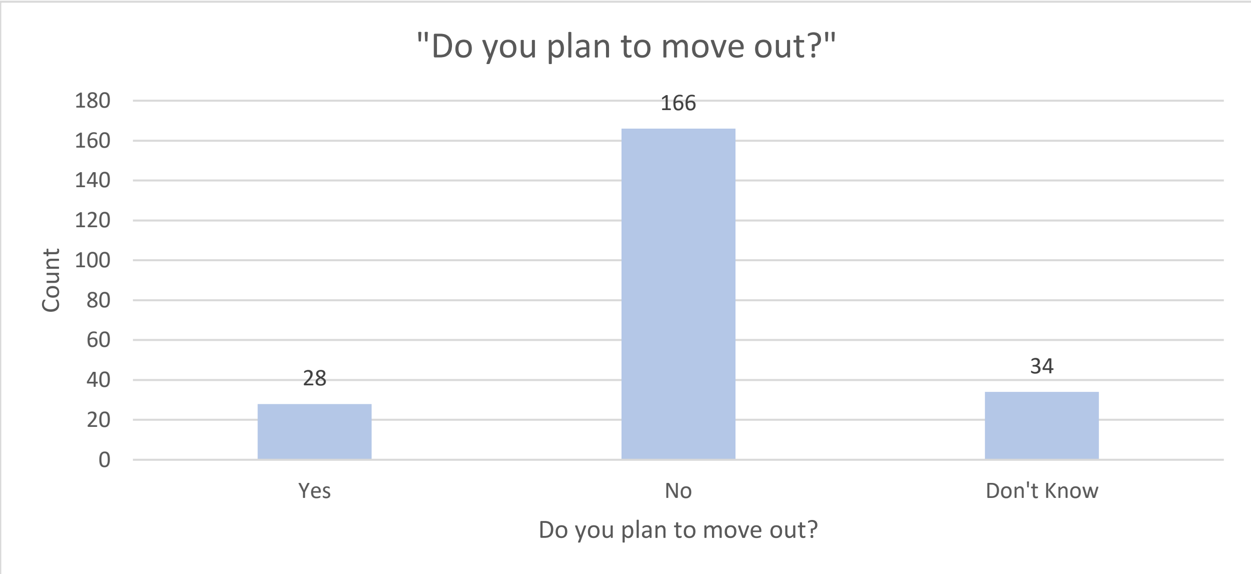


Figure 14: Respondents intention to move from area, by count

6.2 Contextual responses to future housing intentions

Respondents were then asked to provide context for their answer within a comment box, with 160 choosing to do so.

Table 6: Common responses to future housing plans, by count and total percentage		
Category	Count	% of responding participants mentioning category
Quality of life	34	21.3
School services	7	4.4
Access to support system	12	7.5
Distance from support system	4	2.5
Length of time in area	10	6.3
Time at property	9	5.6
Size of property	8	5.0
Employment/caring responsibilities	11	6.9
Age	5	3.1

Retirement	8	5.0
Unaffordability of move	16	10.0
Cost of houses within area	8	5.0
The Private Rented Sector	3	1.9
Development of area	9	5.6
National/local politics	9	5.6

Quality of life and support system

21.3% of those mentioned the quality of life they currently benefit from.

The area itself and its surrounding land were seen as an advantage to participants, such as "*love the area of the coast*", "*20 minutes from the sea*" and "*I live with the countryside close at hand*".

Others considered the benefit of having their support system within their area. Family, friends and the community itself were provided as examples of such support. This can be evidenced in responses such as: "*we have strong links with the community*" and "...*We have lots of family and friends here*…"

Conversely, feeling distanced from a support system or community was mentioned by 2.5% of participants as a potential reason for moving. For example, one respondent explained their plans: "*I may move to Edinburgh to be more socially connected with family and friends especially when I give my car up*". Whilst other responses mentioned a "*lack of community events*" and another felt that there was "*nothing keeping me here*".

Time at a property affecting a participant's choice not to move

Length of time within a community and property was also referenced by participants wishing to stay in their area. At one end of spectrum, some had long-term ties with their property keeping them from moving, highlighted in examples such as: "*Have lived here in the same house over 40 years*" and "...*and having lived in this council house for 50+ years I have no intention of moving out of home*".

Whilst, at the other end, a number of respondents had only recently moved to their property and had no intention of another move in the foreseeable future. For instance, one respondent commented: "*Just moved here from Edinburgh*", and another "*Only moved in just over a year ago*."

Connections with rural area

Further to time within a property, the length to which someone has lived within an area appeared to influence a participant's intention not to move, effecting 6.3% of participants.

This has been highlighted in examples such as "*lived here all my life*", "*born in Gullane not going to move*" and "*I have been brought up in this town and my parents and grandparents and great grandparents have stayed in Pencaitland*".

Development of area

5.6% of responding participants explained their choice, or indecision, to move on as being a result of recent growth within their area.

Some shared that they would consider a move if development within their village/town were to continue, or start, influenced by increase of population, changes in area identity and accessibility to services associated with growth. For example, one participant voiced: "*if the area continues to be developed we may well seek to relocate as the area loses its personality*". Other participants commented: “*if the village is developed beyond what it can manage it makes me rethink living here*” and “*if the population grows and building starts in our area then we would be forced to*”.

Employment and caring responsibility

6.9% of respondents attributed their employment to their lack of future plans to move. Examples of this can be found in responses of: “*I want to live local as I work local*”, “*our business is based here*” and “*I am a framer here and have no intention of moving*!”.

Caring and family responsibilities were also mentioned within this category, mentioned by 3 respondents. This can be highlighted in responses including “*I have elderly parents here*” and “*have ageing family in the area that we need to be close by to*”.

Young adults

Parents showed concern that their children will be unable to afford to rent or buy within in the area, forcing them to move further away their support. For example, one participant responded: “*we do not expect our three young adult children to be able to afford to rent or buy in the town*”.

Retirement plans

Participants chose rural East Lothian as their home for retirement and, thus, wishing to remain in the area. Responses such as “*retired here for the great East Lothian air*” and “*I retired here to be in a quiet village*” can support this.

Conversely, a select few participants used retirement plans as the reason for their intended move or uncertainty in regard to staying. These participants often saw a move as necessary to support the change in needs and priorities as they move into retirement. This can be highlighted through responses such as “*as we move towards retirement we have different needs*”, “*may move closer to home as part of preparing to retire*” and “*may move abroad when I retire*”.

Private Rented sector

Only 1.9% of respondents mentioned the impact renting privately within rural East Lothian has on their plans for a future move.

For one participant, their decision to move was not their own, remarking: “*unfortunately our landlord wants to sell our property in the near future and so we will have to*”. This insecurity was felt by another participants who felt uncertain about a future move as: “*we live in a private rent so don’t have a secure tenancy*”.

Moreover, the cost of rent influenced one participants’ intention of a future move, sharing:

“*My landlord has also decided that they're putting up the rent by 7.8%!!!! That's going from £800 to £862, in September. I don't even know how this is legal (but apparently it is), or morally justifiable. This coupled with rising petrol and food costs might well make it impossible for me to stay here, even though I don't want to move away....”.*

Cost of homes

The cost of homes was a further motivator for the intention of a future move or an uncertain response (“don’t know”).

Some felt that the current cost of properties on the market were unaffordable to them, influencing them to look beyond rural East Lothian. For example, one participant plans to: *"... move wherever we can afford, currently it looks as though we simply cannot afford to stay in the county despite working here and having lived here for well over a decade*". Similar responses were shown in "*there is so little in our price range that we may be forced to look outwith EL (East Lothian)*" and "*I don't know if we'll be able to afford to stay in the area once we start a family and need a bigger property*".

However, the cost of homes was also shown to keep participants in an area, explaining that a future move is unaffordable by 10% of responding participants. For example, one respondent wrote: "*I currently live with at home with a parent and am on benefits, so I could not afford to move into my own property if I wanted to…". Other shared, "I can't afford to!" and "we would not be able to afford to move elsewhere in Dunbar*".

6.3 Summary

The majority of participants have no future plans to move out of their area, influenced by the quality of life within their area, long-made ties to a community or property, and worry that it would be difficult to establish such connections in their new home. Furthermore, caring and employment responsibilities influenced a participants decision to stay within their area.

Young people were a point for discussion, with participants concerned their children would have to move beyond their area to improve their opportunities to purchase a property.

Similarly to previous sections affordability, was also seen to keep people in their properties, unable to finance a move.

Lastly, issues were voiced around the private rented sector, including the insecurity of tenure and an increase in rent, explained by landlords as a result of the current cost of living crisis. However, it should be noted that those within this tenure were underrepresented within this survey.

Section 7: Heating and Energy Efficiency

This section details the main source of heating within participant's homes, energy efficiency measure taken and, topical to current climates, the degree to which the energy crisis is impacting, or is feared to impact, respondents.

7.1: Heating Type

Amongst respondents to the survey, the majority listed their main source of heating as mains gas. The next most common source of heating was Oil with 13.2% of participants stating that this was their main source of heating. The bar chart below shows the number of respondents who had each heating type.

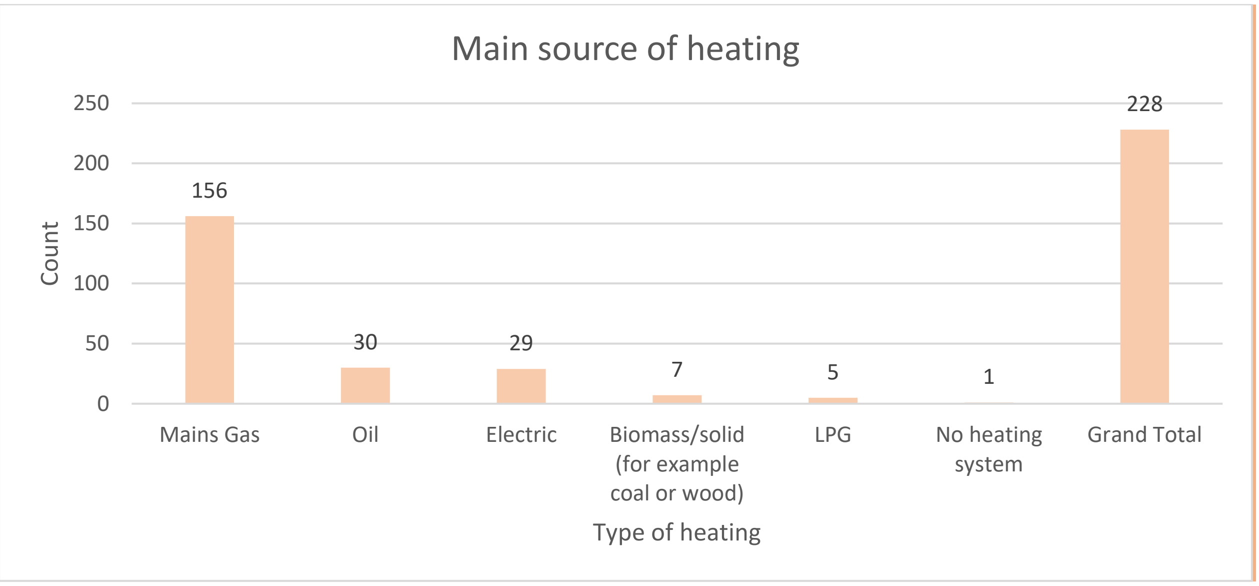


Figure 15: Participant's main source of heating by count

7.2 Heating Type by urban-rural classification

By referring to table 7 below, in terms of urban and rural classifications, it can be shown that all areas have mains gas as their predominant heating type.

In accessible rural areas, the use of oil is more prevalent than it is in other areas. Used by around one firth of all respondents. If net zero targets are to be met, it may be prudent to look into more energy efficiency systems for those who live in more remote areas of the region.

Table 7: Main heating source by urban rural classification

Row Labels	Biomass/solid	Electric	LPG	Mains Gas	No heating system	Oil
Accessible Rural Areas	4.1%	14.6%	4.1%	56.9%	0.0%	20.3%
Accessible Small Towns	0.0%	4.5%	0.0%	95.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Large Urban Areas	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Urban Areas	2.1%	8.5%	0.0%	87.2%	0.0%	2.1%

7.3 Energy Efficiency Measures Installed

Respondents were asked if they had energy efficiency measures installed in their home. As shown in figure 16, the majority (53.5%) stated that they did not have any energy efficiency measures installed in their homes. Conversely, 40.8% stated that they had such measure installed. A small number stated that they were unsure.

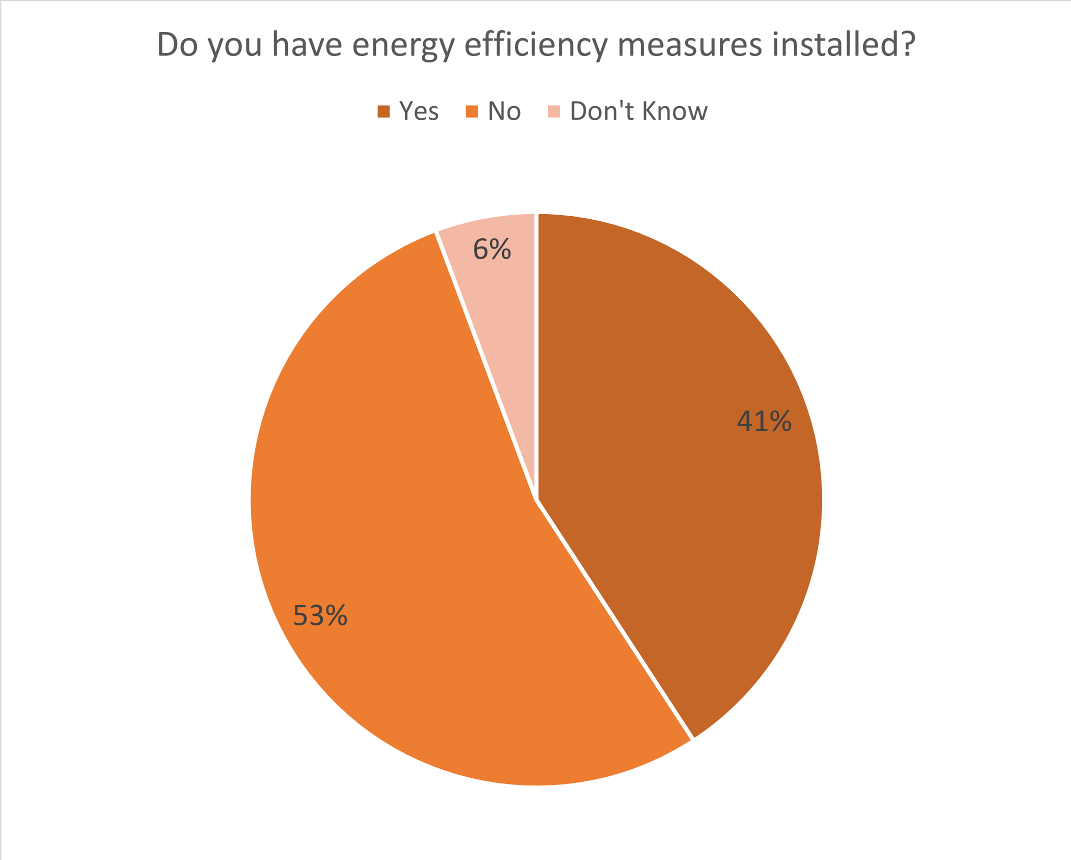


Figure 16: Pie chart showing the percentage of participant with energy efficiency measures installed in their homes

7.4 Energy Efficiency Measures Installed by urban-rural classification

In terms of the urban-rural split, the classification with the lowest uptake for energy efficiency measures, according to the survey results, are accessible small towns which had a yes percentage lower than other areas. Broadly, results across all areas were relatively similar, showing that there is no real barrier to energy efficiency measures being installed in more rural areas of the region compared to urban East Lothian.

Table 8: Energy Efficiency Measures Installed by Urban Rural Classification

Row labels	Accessible Rural Areas	Accessible Small Towns	Large Urban Areas	Other Urban Areas
Don't Know	5.7%	0.0%	20.0%	4.3%
No	52.8%	63.6%	40.0%	53.2%
Yes	41.5%	36.4%	40.0%	42.6%

7.5 Types of energy efficiency measures installed

Participants were asked what energy efficiency measures they had installed in their home- see figure 16 below for results.

The most common type of energy efficiency measure installed was insulation, with a total of 65 respondents stating that they had some form of insulation installed in their home. One respondent stated they lived in a house build to Passivhaus specification with MVHR (Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery).

In addition a number listed double glazing, although it is likely that a higher number of respondents will have double glazing due to the prevalence of double glazing in modern housing.

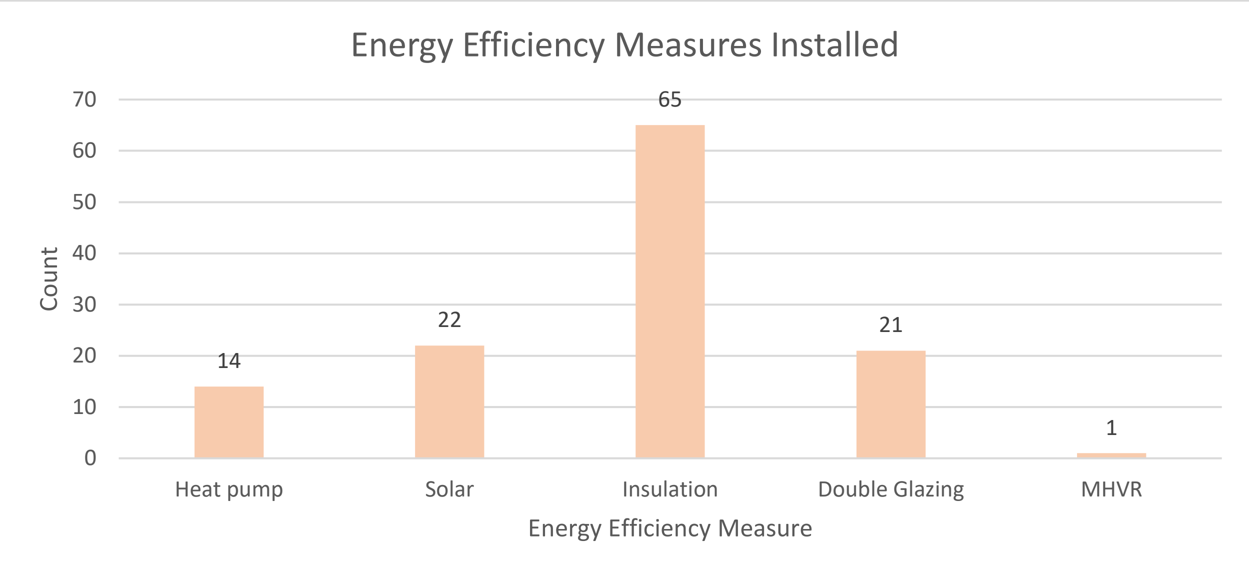


Figure 17: Bar Chart showing Energy Efficiency Instalments within respondents' property, by count

7.6 Cost of Energy Crisis

Respondents were asked in what way rising energy prices had affected them. In total, 194 respondents out of the 228 participants gave their views. For the purposes of analysis, each comments were broken down by theme.

Increase in energy prices

A total of 94 respondents mentioned that costs had increased for them, a number of comments mentioned that energy prices had doubled. Of these, 17 respondent mentioned that their bills had "*doubled*" while four respondents stated that their bills had "*tripled*".

Another recurring theme was people having to make cutbacks either by using less energy or by making cutbacks to their living standards. This is discussed in further detail in the next section.

A number of respondents (26) indicated that the rise in energy prices had caused them worry or stress. In addition to worrying about their current ability to pay their bills respondents were also worried about how they would cope with future price rises. One respondent stated "*I am very concerned about winter. I need to get another job to pay for the increases*".

Table 9: Common themes within responses to the ways in which they are, or may be, effected by the current cost of living crisis									
Increased costs	Making cutbacks to usage or cutbacks to living standards	Feeling anxious, stressed or worried	Not affected / not yet affected	Have had energy efficiency measures installed	Considering installing energy efficiency measures	Poor energy efficiency within current property	Have been using savings	Are on a fixed income	Work part time
94	91	26	14	2	2	5	4	11	2

Living Standards

One of the ways that increasing energy prices have impacted upon people was in forcing them to make cutbacks as well as a decline in their living standards.

Table 10 highlights that, of those who had made cutbacks or changes to their lifestyle, a total of 23% felt they had been made to cut back on their energy usage, for example through reducing the length of time heating was on for or by leaving if off altogether.

In addition, a number of respondents (13%) had less disposable income to spend, similarly 4% respondents were having to budget more carefully. Both may be taken as signs that people are having to adjust their lifestyles and indicates falling living standards.

Worryingly, a small number of respondents (2%) were having to make cutbacks in terms of eating or food shopping.

If energy prices continue to rise, the number of people experiencing hardship is likely to be exacerbated, significant for those who are already experiencing fuel poverty, finding any further increase in cost unaffordable.

Table 10: Ways participants are cutting back due to the current cost of living							
Cutting energy usage	Using more layers	Cutting back on activities	Cutbacks to food	Budgeting more carefully	Less disposable income to spend	Asking for financial help	Unable to afford current accommodation
53	4	3	4	10	29	1	1

7.7 Summary

The majority of respondents heat their homes through mains gas. When comparing the urban-rural location of participants, it was found that, for the large part, those living in more rural areas are more likely to rely on oil as main source of energy, which can be considered as more costly and more environmentally damaging.

A larger proportion of respondents had no energy efficiency measure installed in their homes, a small proportion were unsure. For those with measures installed, the most common method used was insulation.

Due to the current cost of living crisis, the impact of the cost of energy was included to understand the impact this has already had, and the steps participants are taking to account for the predicted rise this winter. The majority had noted increases, with some seeing bills double or triple, resulting in cut-backs which reduce the quality of life, including having less disposable income, reducing activities and, worryingly, limiting food.

Section 8: Digital Connectivity

Section 6 reviews the responses of participants in regard to their access to digital services within their area, referring both WIFI connections and mobile signal.

8.1 Access to reliable mobile signal

As seen in table 11, a large number of respondents stated they have a reliable phone signal in their area, at 73.2%. Meanwhile, those who believe their mobile signal is not reliable stands at 26.8%. Although this figure is the lower of the two, it still represents a significant proportion, with over a quarter of respondents not having a reliable mobile signal.

Table 11: Access to reliable mobile signal by count and total percentage

Do you a reliable mobile signal in your area?	Count	% of total participants
Yes	167	73.2
No	61	26.8
I don't have a mobile phone	0	0

8.2 Access to reliable mobile signal by urban-rural classification

The survey results show that mobile signals in the experience of respondents tend to be more reliable in urban areas.

As shown in the figure below, all of those living in a large urban and the majority of those in other urban areas replied that they have a reliable mobile signal.

A higher percentage of respondents living in an accessible small town (13.6%) felt that their mobile signal was not reliable.

Significantly, the higher the rural classification an area has, the less likely participants residing in the area are to have a reliable signal. Those found to live in an accessible rural area were least likely to have reliable mobile signal, with 35.8% answering no to the question.

The degree in certainty to which we can say the more rural an area is the less reliable they find their mobile signal is undermined by the proportion of those who could not be categorised through rurality. This is due to the significant number of those who didn’t provide a full postcode. However, it is clear that mobile signals are less reliable in rural areas and this is something that impacts upon digital connectivity and potentially access to services.

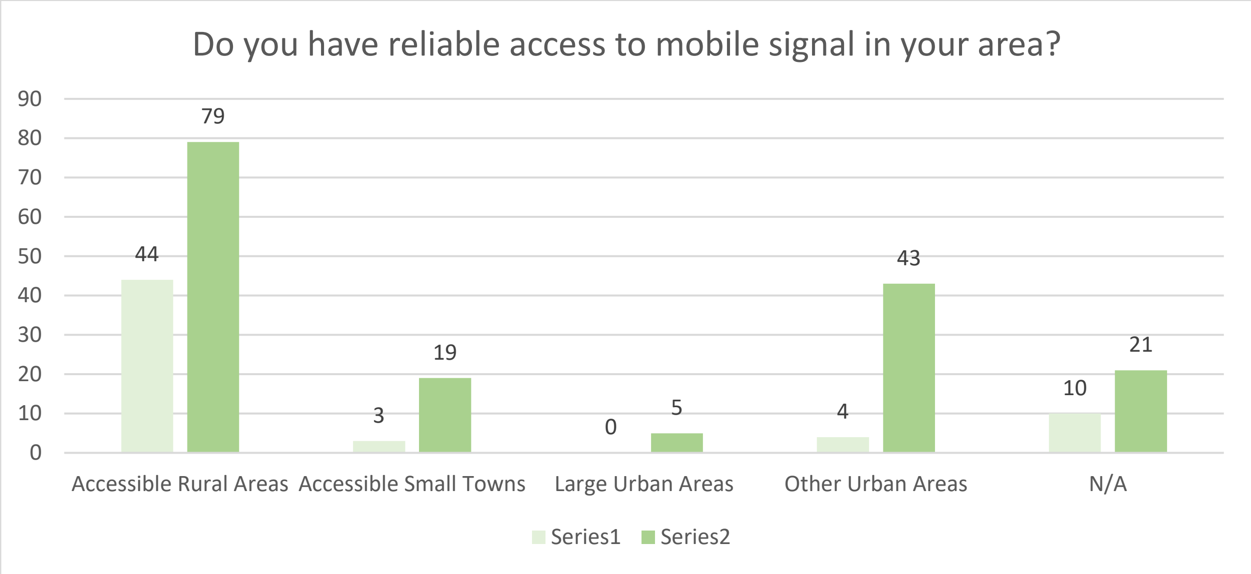


Figure 18: Bar Chart showing access to reliable mobile signal by urban-rural classification

8.3 Access to reliable broadband

The vast majority of participants, 80.3%, have reliable broadband in their area, compared to 19.3% who do not. Only one participant, 0.4% of the total number of participants, does not use the internet.

Table 11: Access to reliable broadband by count and total percentage		
Do you a reliable broadband in your area?	Count	% of total participants
Yes	183	80.3
No	44	19.3
I don't use the internet	1	0.4

8.4 Access to broadband by urban-rural classification

Again, by using the postcodes provided by respondents, a cross comparison can be made between the rural classification of a respondent's area and the reliability of their broadband.

As shown in the figure below, all those living in a large urban areas responded that they have reliable broadband within their area. The majority of those living in other urban areas, accessible small town and accessible rural also believed they receive reliable broadband.

Notably, there is some trend between rurality and broadband reliability, declining within more rural areas. However, the trend is not as defined as that previously found in mobile reliability- with inconsistencies found with some of living in fairly urban areas (those scoring low through rural category) being unable to access reliable broadband.

As mentioned previously, the relationship between rural classification and broadband signal is further undermined by the number of those who cannot be identified through postcode, with 22.6% of these respondents not being able to access reliable broadband.

Reliability may be a perception issue and what is unreliable to one person may be considered adequate by another. However, it demonstrates that those in rural area may have more issues engaging with services such as housing providers if this is done digitally.

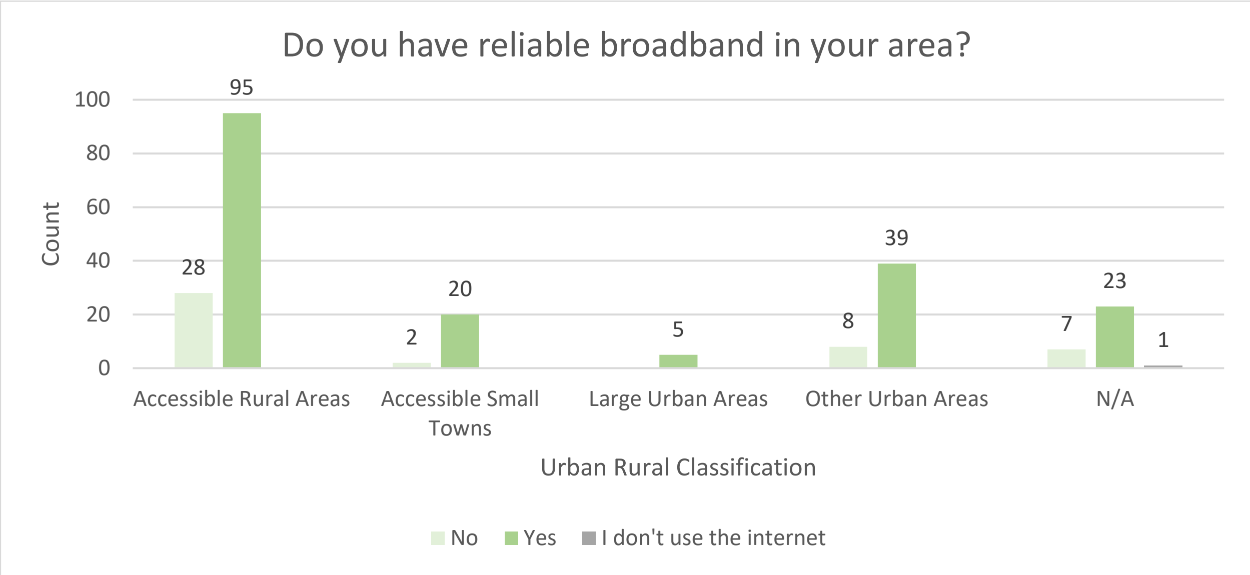


Figure 19: Bar Chart showing access to reliable broadband signal by urban-rural classification

8.5 Summary

Rurality appeared to impact a respondent's ability to access reliable internet and mobile signal, with connectivity decreasing the more rural an area was. This will be of particular importance moving forward with access to many services and a lot of advice being digital. It is important that those who have difficulty accessing information or services online are still given options that allow them to partake.

Section 9: Services

This section focuses on the services to which participants require most frequently, the ease in which these are accessed and highlighting any barriers which can restrict, or reduce, access.

9.1 Access to services

Respondents to the survey were asked if they can easily access the services that they require. Over 60% of respondents said that they either agree or strongly agree that they are able to access the services that they require. A total of 38.6% of respondents stated that they disagree or strongly disagree that they are able to access the services that they require. Although this shows that the majority of respondents were able to access the services that they require there is a still a significant proportion who feel they are unable to easily access services.

Table 14: Accessibility of services

I can easily access the services I require	Count	% of total participants
Strongly Agree	26	11.4%
Agree	114	50.0%
Disagree	69	30.3%
Strongly Disagree	19	8.3%

9.2 Access to services by urban-rural classification

If we break this down into the urban rural classification of those who agree that they can access services easily (either agree or strongly agree) and those who disagree (either disagree or strongly disagree) we can see that those living in accessible rural areas and large urban areas have the highest level of disagreement. Accessibility to service may be more problematic in rural areas due to lack of availability, however, in urban areas there may be difficulties in getting appointments so it is perhaps unsurprising that levels of disagreement are high in all areas.

Table 15: Access to services by urban-rural classification

Urban-rural classification	Agree	Disagree
Accessible Rural Areas	60.2%	39.8%
Accessible Small Towns	68.2%	31.8%
Large Urban Areas	60.0%	40.0%
Other Urban Areas	70.2%	29.8%

9.3 Mode of Transport

As highlighted in the table below, car use was the most common choice of regular transport by participants, at 78.1% of the total number of participants. This was then followed by walking and bus, at 8.8% and 7.9% respectively. This emphasises the importance of car use to those in a rural area and perhaps shows the need for a wider range of transportation options for those in these areas.

Table 16: Main form of transport		
Main Mode of Transport	Count	% of total participants
Car	178	78.1
Taxi	1	0.4
Bus	18	7.9
Train	3	1.3
Bike	3	1.3
Wheeling (for example wheelchair or mobility scooter)	1	0.4
Walking	20	8.8
Other	4	1.8

9.4 Services Required

In total, 201 respondents provided details in regards to the services that they regularly require. Access to medical services was of particular importance to many. The vast majority of respondents stated that they require the services of a GP or Doctor, with 88.9% of respondents mentioning this as a service they require. Pharmacies were also a service required by many with 63.9% Dentists were also mentioned by 18.8% of respondents.

Local shops were the most required, non-medical, service, with x% of 51 respondents mentioning these, accounting for just over a quarter of all respondents.

Table 17 provides a detailed breakdown of the services that respondents regularly require.

Table 17: Services regularly required by respondents		
Service	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Dr / GP	179	88.6%
Pharmacies	129	63.9%
Local shops	51	25.2%
Children's Activities / clubs	48	23.8%
Dentist	38	18.8%
Sporting and leisure facilities	36	17.8%
Libraries	27	13.4%
Public Transport	26	12.9%
School	26	12.9%
Post offices	16	7.9%
Activities for adults	13	6.4%
Swimming pool	12	5.9%
After school or breakfast club	9	4.5%
Optician	8	4.0%
Bank	7	3.5%
Parks	6	3.0%
Hospital	5	2.5%
Café/restaurant	5	2.5%
Community Centre or spaces	5	2.5%
Recycling / Waste	5	2.5%

Nursery & Playgroups	4	2.0%
Physio	3	1.5%
Vets	3	1.5%
Hairdresser	3	1.5%
Play parks	2	1.0%
Roads footpaths	2	1.0%
Public facilities (e.g. toilets, car parks, bike racks)	2	1.0%
Eye Hospital	1	0.5%
Midwifery	1	0.5%
Occupational Therapy	1	0.5%
Podiatrist	1	0.5%
Petrol Station	1	0.5%
Garage	1	0.5%
Grocery Deliveries	1	0.5%
Police	1	0.5%
Mobile Reception	1	0.5%
Dog Groomer	1	0.5%
Grass cutting	1	0.5%
No. of respondents	202	100.0%

9.5 Barriers to services

Respondents to the survey were asked what they felt the barriers were when trying to access services were. A total of 129 respondents gave their views. For analysis, these were split into categories to allow for an understanding of the areas In some cases respondents made a number of points and these were included across different categories.

Table 18: Factors creating barriers to services		
Barrier to services	No. respondents	% of respondents
Public transport	53	40.3%
Difficulty accessing services	34	27.1%
Lack of services	28	21.7%
Services closing or potentially closing	17	13.2%
Opening times	8	6.2%
Poor infrastructure	7	5.4%
Too much new housing putting pressure on services	6	4.7%
Distance to services	5	3.9%
Cost of travel	5	3.9%
Carers having to travel / lack of carers	2	1.6%
ELC poor services	2	1.6%
Affordability of services	2	1.6%
Too much focus on larger settlements	1	0.8%

Over a quarter of respondents (26.4%) had difficulty accessing services. The main barrier faced by many was difficulty in accessing a Doctor or GP. A number of respondents mentioned facing difficulties in getting an appointment.

The most common barrier to accessing services was public transport. In particular the lack of frequent bus services was highlighted as an issue for many with a number of respondents indicating they would like more frequent bus services for their community.

Lack of services was also a seen as a major barrier for many respondents, again a lack of GP and medical services was highlighted as an area of concern for respondents.

9.6 Services Closing

Respondents were asked if they were concerned about services closing in their area. In total 80 respondents stated that they agreed that they were concerned about services closing, while 59 strongly agreed. This meant that over half (61%) of respondents were concerned about services closing in their area.

Table 19: Concern about services closing

Agree/Disagree	Number	% of total
Agree	80	35.1%
Strongly agree	59	25.9%
Disagree	49	21.5%
Strongly disagree	6	2.6%
Don't know.	34	14.9%
Grand Total	228	100.0%

9.7 Services closing by urban-rural classification

Analysis of the location of respondents highlights that a high percentage of those who live in both urban and rural areas either agreed or strongly agreed that they were concerned about services closing in their area. Concern was strongest in those area that were classed as accessible small towns (68.2%) and accessible rural areas (63.4%).

Table 20: Concern around services closing by urban-rural classification

Area	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
Accessible Rural Areas	78	28	17
Accessible Small Towns	15	5	2
Large Urban Areas	2	1	2
Other Urban Areas	24	16	7
Grand Total	139	55	34

9.8 Summary

Whilst over 60% of respondents agreed that they can access services, there were still a significant proportion (38.6%) who feel they do not have access. Access across both urban and rural geographies showed that the majority feel that they can access services, however, there is still a significant minority who feel accessing services is difficult.

Participants relied heavily on the use of cars, the most common mode of transports for almost all respondents, followed closely by walking.

Moreover, health-care services were the most regularly required services for participants, including frequent need for GPs/Doctors and pharmacies. Local shops were the most needed non-medical services, required by 51 respondents.

Amongst factors which are regarded as a barrier for participants accessing services were the lack of buses, supported by a low number of respondents using this as a mode of transport. In addition the difficulties in obtaining GP appointments was also highlighted, although this was often an issue associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lastly, the majority, 61% showed concern for services closing within their area, felt almost equally by respondents, regardless of urban-rural classification,

Section 10: Additional comments from respondents

This section details the common themes found within responses to "Is there anything you would like to say that is important in relation to housing in rural areas?"

10.1 Additional Comments

Participants were given the opportunity to detail anything additional or any thoughts that they believed are important in relation to rural housing. This was worded as "Is there anything you would like to say that is important in relation to housing in rural areas?" 151 respondents took this opportunity. The table below details the frequency to which the common themes within these responses were mentioned.

Table 21: Common themes found within additional comments by count and total percentage

Category	Count	% of responding participants mentioning category
Prioritising/Improving infrastructure and services	33	21.9
Improvement for public transport	23	15.2
Road/Traffic issues	18	11.9
Sustainability/environmental concerns	23	15.2
Energy Efficiency	7	4.6
Increasing affordable homes	23	15.2
Increasing social housing access	7	4.6
Cost of current housing stock	5	3.3
The Private Rented Sector	4	2.6
Prioritising specific groups	23	15.2
Responsibility of decision makers/developers	27	17.9
Rate of current development	14	9.3
Holiday let/second homes	8	5.3

Prioritising infrastructure

21.9% of responding participants mentioned the provision of infrastructure/services as being important within rural housing.

Some participants mentioned a want for stronger internet or mobile connections. One participant called for: "*internet/connectivity. We are reliant of 4G providers as we are over 3 miles from a telephone exchange - this is a direct disadvantage when using increasingly connected world*". This was similarly shared in other responses of "*faster internet and a 5g network*" and "*we need a reliable internet connection and also a choice of internet provider*".

Other participants related the need for more services with the level of growth within their area. One respondent placed importance on "*the ratio of services per number of houses*", whilst another worried "*where are all these new families going to shop*".

Numerous responses considered services should be provided, or ensured, within areas prior to building new developments. One respondent voiced "*Infrastructure first, houses second*", whilst another thought there should be "*investment in trunk roads, medical and education services BEFORE overwhelming the community with more people and houses*".

The location of these services was also important to participants, who felt services should be built within walking distance from rural areas. One respondent felt it was important that: "*When builders create new housing they should have to provide shops, schools, gp surgeries etc within the housing area*". Another stated: "*Affordable housing needs to be within walking distance of essential services such as GP, schools, supermarkets, pharmacies, and community hospital as not everyone has a car.*"

Transport

Accessible public transport and improvements made to current provisions for vehicles, including roadways and parking, seen as important for 15.2% of responding participants.

Some respondents believed priority should be placed on providing alternatives to car use, stating concern with the "over reliance on cars" within rural areas. Indeed, one respondent shared that they would like there to be: "…*realistic alternatives to car usage - the roads are so much busier and do spoil the rural feel of our village*."

The accessibility of public transport within certain areas was further explained by numerous respondents. For instance, one respondent commented "*my son is looking for summer work in city relating to his degree. It will take him over 1.5 hrs each way as either 2 buses and 1 train or 2 buses. We need better access to faster transport*". Furthermore, one participant felt: "*There are swathes of our area that public transport goes nowhere near*."

Others voiced concerns around the cost of public transport, highlighted in responses like "*it's very expensive to live anywhere past Tranent if you rely on public transpor*t" and "*The minute you get into Longniddry the bus fare hikes up*."

Sustainability

15.2% of those responding believed a greater focus should be placed on sustainable and greener development within rural areas, with participants stating "*rural development needs to be sustainable"* and "*there needs to be a higher priority given to environmentally friendly choices*".

The need for sustainable growth was often felt as a reason for the need to slow or halt development within greenspaces. Examples of this can be found in responses such as: "*use more brownfield, stop destroying farmland"* and "*I don't think green belt land should be used*". The perceived impact a loss of greenspace can have on eco-system and human wellbeing was often given as reason to call for such preservation.

Energy Efficiency

4.6% of those responding wished to highlight the issue of energy efficiency within rural properties.

This can be evidenced in responses such as "*better options for accessing means to improve the thermal and energy efficiency of properties*", "*making sure that housing in rural areas have suitable affordable heating*" and "*heating such (rural) properties is expensive and inefficient*."

Affordable/social homes

15.2% of responding participants placed focus on affordable housing, whilst 4.6% felt more social houses within rural East Lothian was important.

A call for greater availability and choice of affordable housing was prevalent within responses. For example, one participant stated "*Affordable housing needs to cater for both families and single people*". Another participant felt: "*Affordable housing is important. Not just rented housing but housing that is affordable to buy for first time buyers in areas that they want or need to live*…."

Few participants shared their want for more social housing, highlighted in responses such as "*please build more council houses*", "*there is a need for social housing*" and "*address lack of social/council housing*".

Cost of housing

3.3% of responses mentioned the current price of the current housing market within East Lothian, felt in comments including "*desperately need to stop the inflated and ridiculous house price increases*", "*property prices are too high*" and "*the area is only accessible for the wealthy*".

2.6% mentioned the private rented sector, often in relation to its cost. For example, one participant shared "*rent control areas would be of great benefit to stop greedy landlords buying all the cheaper properties to let out at huge rents*". Another commented "*Landlords demanding excessive rents, deposits and 3 or 4 months' rent in advance needs to be addressed*".

Specific groups

15.2% of participants thought housing for specific groups was an important issue to note.

Included within this category was the perceived needs of younger people, which was often associated with the necessity of affordable homes to allow them to stay within rural areas. One participant voiced: "*It is important that affordable housing is more readily available to keep local young people in the area*". Another shared "*young people seem to have been overlooked and left to fend for themselves… Not all parents are in the position to financially fund or assist their children to find their own home and rural properties are far more expensive than urban ones".*

Some respondents felt that housing for "*locals*" should be made a priority. For instance, one respondent opined: "*have a bit more thought for the people who have lived here all their lives*". Other expressed: "*Rural areas traditionally were for local people to live, and grow a strong community. This needs to be remembered*" and "*first choice of houses should be given to those who are born or brought up in the area*".

Decision makers

17.9% of respondents mentioned local government and developers within their responses, asking for greater levels of communication and transparency when it comes to builds within rural areas.

For instance, one participant thought there should be: "*More transparency needed about why specific housing, especially expensive, is required*". Another commented: *"I would like to see wider, more demanding planning rules which are more strictly adhered to, to ensure developers of the* *modern estates build more social housing on site or contribute to providing social housing elsewhere in the locality, e.g. the town centre*."

Rate of development

9.3% of responding participants believed the rate of development within rural areas was of particular importance.

Some felt that large developments in areas should give way to small-scale, individual, building projects. For example, one participant highlighted: "*Encourage small scale development in small plots and allow people to get connected with the wild outside again for their health and wellbeing and finances*". Another saw the benefit of this, sharing: "...*Would be nice to maybe see plots of land sold to individuals".*

Others felt the need for slowing the current rate of development. One participant felt: "*East Lothian, and in particular North Berwick, need to breath and pause*", whilst another gave the view that it is "*important to keep expansion roughly in line with the natural flow of the town*."

Short term lets

Lastly, 5.3% commented on the issue of short term holiday lets and second homes as being an important issue. Often associated with this was greater knowledge on the extent of holiday homes and a restriction on the number of these properties within an area. Examples of this can be found in responses such as "*more restrictions on holiday lets"* and "*a control area for short term holiday lets is needed to help ensure a balance of residential housing types*".

10.2 Summary

Leaving room for participants to provide final remarks on the issues they believe to be most important produced the headlines of the key priorities and problems for respondents, in regards to rural housing. Whilst not all chose to do so, the question did have a considerable response rate (62.8%), allowing us to make general conclusions.

Significantly, it was felt that key services and infrastructure, such as GPS, public transport and roads, have felt the effect of a growing rural population, with calls for increases in these provisions within a close distance to settlements heard.

The preservation of greenspace and a focus on sustainable development and upgrading the energy efficiency of rural homes was further highlighted, with the balance between population and maintaining natural land often associated with rural housing. The relevance of this can be found within the recent rate of development in East Lothian, with respondents opining smaller development should be prioritised over those on a larger scale.

The cost of homes, including those on the market and within the private rented sector, concerned participants, particularly in relation to young people and those wishing to remain in their local area. This was further highlighted within the proportion of those who prioritised the increase in availability of affordable and social homes.

Those with influence over rural housing, namely private developers and the Council, were asked to give more transparency over decisions made over recent development and hold greater restrictions over short term lets. However, the means to which this can be done was not considered by participants.

Section 11: Conclusions and findings

This section summarises some of the most common points raised within the survey.

11.1 Affordability of housing

The affordability of housing was a thread which ran through many of the responses to the survey. Some of the key concerns raised in regards to affordability were:

- A lack of affordable housing options.
- Increasing costs of private housing, both to rent and purchase.
- There is a lot of pressure on those unable to purchase a property and unable to rent in the social sector, who are often forced to rent at higher prices in the private sector.
- Affordability in the private rented sector and increasing rents as a result of the cost of living crisis.
- Affordability for key workers, such as carers.
- The current cost of housing influencing the ability individuals have to move from homes which are not conducive to the needs of the household, leaving them stuck.
- Affordability for those, in particular young people, who wish to remain in the area, but who are 'priced out' of the housing market and private rented sector.

11.2 The need for infrastructure to be put in place alongside housing

Another recurring theme from the survey was the need to be mindful of the provision of infrastructure to support the development of new housing. The key points made were as follows:

- The growth of areas has resulted in pressures on resources including services and food security in terms of a reduction in fields for farming.
- Current residents' ability to access services being negatively impacted by new development within their areas.
- Services are already reaching capacity without further development, particularly services in the medical field such as GPs and Doctors. Respondents felt the provision of new housing, without first improving services, will exacerbate this issue.
- Respondents felt that public transport and roads had been impacted by the growing population and the need for improved public transport for those in rural areas was highlighted.
- Digital connectivity for those in rural areas was less reliable for those respondents in more rural areas, for both broadband and mobile. Improvements are, therefore, necessary to ensure equal access to services in an increasingly digitised society.

11.3 Housing supply

Another area that respondents highlighted was the supply of housing within rural areas.

- Respondents voiced an imbalance between the type of houses, in terms of design, size and affordability, built by developers and the perceived needs of the local population.
- The need to increase the availability of affordable including social homes.
- Regarding recent high levels of development within East Lothian, respondents observed a need to prioritise those on a smaller scale over those of larger proportions.

- However, the survey also highlighted a need to balance greenspaces and focus on sustainable development striking a balance between the need for new housing and maintaining natural land in rural areas.
- Respondents also sought more transparency from the council and private developers around decisions made over developments.
- There was also seen to be a need for greater restrictions over short term lets.

11.4 Housing needs of young people

Although proportionately underrepresented in the survey, concerns around housing for young people were raised by a number of respondents. With some of the key points noted below:

- There were concerns raised around the ability of young people to obtain housing within East Lothian, with the believed impact leading to a generation unable to stay in the county they grew up in.
- The inability to move out of the family home for many young people was also raised, impacting parents and children, alike.

11.5 Growth

Growth in rural areas is often a contentious issue, highlighted within comments within the survey regarding recent growth. A summary is provided below.

- Most participants (78%) had seen growth within their area in the last five years.
- The amount of growth tended to be greater in more urban areas with those residing in rural areas generally less likely to have seen growth.

11.6 Current living circumstances and the housing situation of respondents

The current living circumstances in particular the type of housing they currently reside in was a focus for a number of participants, some of the main points are summarised below:

- A number of respondents felt that their needs were being met by their current property.
- Amongst those who have unmet need some of the issues raised included properties being either too small or too large relative to the size of their property. Overcrowding was raised as an issue by some respondents, in particular those who had additional health needs including autism. Homeworking had also created additional pressure for some with extra space needed as an office.
- Most participants planned to remain in their current home.

11.7 Energy Efficiency

Energy efficiency and the cost of living are currently to the forefront of many people's minds. Some of the points made in regards to energy efficiency included:

- Upgrading the energy efficiency of rural homes was further highlighted,
- Unmet need in certain areas for those with poorly insulated properties, homes with better insulation could both lower energy bills and reduce consumption.

Appendix A – 8 fold urban rural

Class	Class Name	Description
1	**Large Urban Areas**	Settlements of 125,000 people and over.
2	**Other Urban Areas**	Settlements of 10,000 to 124,999 people.
3	**Accessible Small Towns**	Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and within a 30 minute drive time of a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
4	**Remote Small Towns**	Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes but less than or equal to 60 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
5	**Very Remote Small Towns**	Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people, and with a drive time of over 60 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
6	**Accessible Rural Areas**	Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and within a drive time of 30 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
7	**Remote Rural Areas**	Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes but less than or equal to 60 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more.
8	**Very Remote Rural Areas**	Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 60 minutes to a Settlement of 10,000 or more