



More in
Common

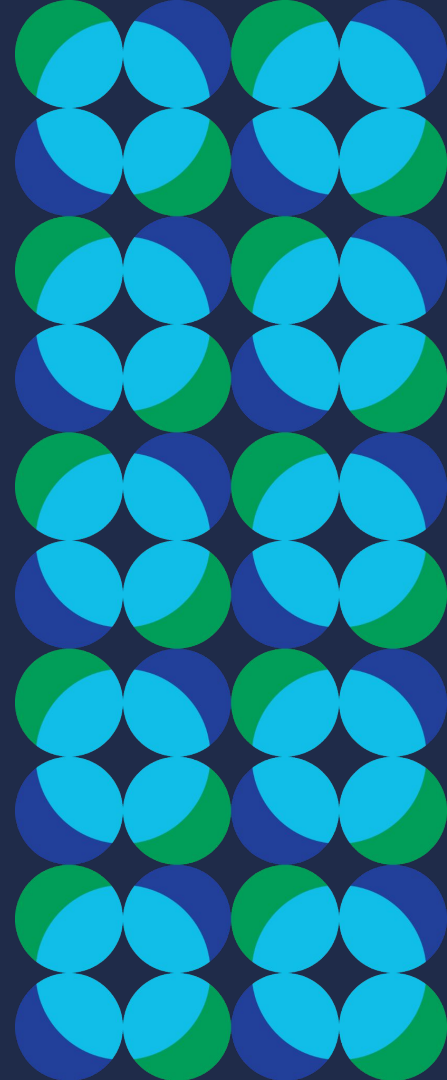


THE JO COX
FOUNDATION

Time well shared

Bridging divides to bring local communities closer together

A report by More in Common UK and The Jo Cox Foundation – June 2026



Time well shared: key takeaways

While community connection might have declined, demand for it has not

While many feel that their communities have become more divided and that their own ties to their neighbours have weakened, a third (33 per cent) still want to improve their community connections. Only 4 per cent want to feel less connected. 62 per cent of Britons say online interaction is fundamentally less meaningful than in-person connection.

Community connection is built on simple "micro-moments"

Feeling connected to your local area doesn't require massive lifestyle shifts or formal commitments. Our data shows that community is forged in the small, everyday interactions that weave us into the fabric of a neighborhood. Simple acts – stopping for a brief chat on the street, giving directions to a stranger, or feeding a neighbor's pet while they are away.

Older people are less likely to feel lonely than younger people

Social connection is higher and loneliness lower among the oldest age groups; 27 per cent of 18–24 year olds report feeling lonely 'always' or 'often'. A majority of Britons find that something as simple as an over-the-fence chat makes them feel most connected to their community. Older people felt they had the time to connect with people, whereas young people often felt more transient.

Time well shared: key takeaways

Anxiety is a personal barrier to social connection, especially for young people.

38 per cent of 18–24 year olds cite anxiety as a barrier to community connection, versus just 6 per cent of over-75 year olds. Young people are also particularly likely to say they feel lonely, and in focus groups, describe feeling like they are not locally rooted.

Financial hardship is a structural barrier to community connection

Those struggling financially are less connected to their communities, less likely to participate in community activities, and more likely to cite cost as a blocker. As the cost of living crisis continues community connection is increasingly becoming the reserve of the better off. While 59 per cent of the financially comfortable feel connected to their community, that drops to just 26 per cent among those who are struggling.

Mutual respect is the key to good connection across generations

Across generations people acknowledged their differences but didn't think it should get in the way of engaging with those who are older or younger – many of whom have more in common than they initially realise. Respect was a key theme: young people want to be treated without suspicion, while older people want politeness and in-person interaction.

**How do people
think of
'community
connection'?**



Around half of Britons feel connected to their local community

Britons are almost evenly split on whether they feel connected to their local community (47 per cent) or not (51 per cent). Nearly six in ten say that having some sense of engagement and connection with their community matters to them, though this feeling is significantly more pronounced among those who already feel connected than those who do not.

Regardless of whether they feel connected themselves, there is a broad shared understanding of what 'community connection' means in practice. Across the UK, it conjures up consistent images, with looking out for one another at its core.

For many focus group participants, this is embodied in small everyday acts of neighbourliness: helping with tasks around the house, lending tools, clearing snow from the road together. For others, it feels more like a safety net — neighbours alerting each other to anything suspicious, children being allowed to play outside because there is a sense of local trust, someone checking in on an elderly resident if their curtains haven't moved by mid-morning. Across the board, the feeling most commonly associated with community connection was one of safety and belonging.

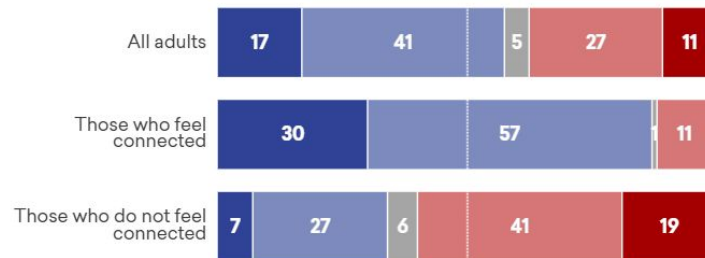
"Just the basic stuff like checking the bins are out. That's the only thing I can think of to be fair. Speaking to people in the streets, stopping them whilst they're walking by, just being friendly in that really."

Kiran, caterer, Sheffield

58 per cent of Britons think that social connection in communities is important, rising to 87 per cent of those who already feel connected to their community

How important, if at all, is feeling connected to your local community to you?

● Very important ● Fairly important ● Don't know
● Not very important ● Not at all important



Source: More in Common • May 2026

"If I see (my neighbour's) curtains being pulled and not opened, I'll knock her door to see if she's okay. And I've got another lady next door to me. I'll knock her door whether I hear her or not. I just say to her, "Just give me a shout. Don't bother to get up!" but just to make sure that she's okay."

Bonnie, aged 64, retired, Chingford

Over-the-fence chats are the way that a majority of Britons feel most connected to their local community

For most Britons, community connection happens in the simplest, most informal way: 56 per cent say that chatting to neighbours when out and about is what makes them feel connected. By contrast, just one in five say that being part of an online community (e.g. on WhatsApp, Facebook, or Nextdoor) makes them feel connected locally.

The gap speaks for itself. However useful digital tools may be for organising or staying informed, they are seen as a poor substitute for in person contact when it comes to genuine connection.

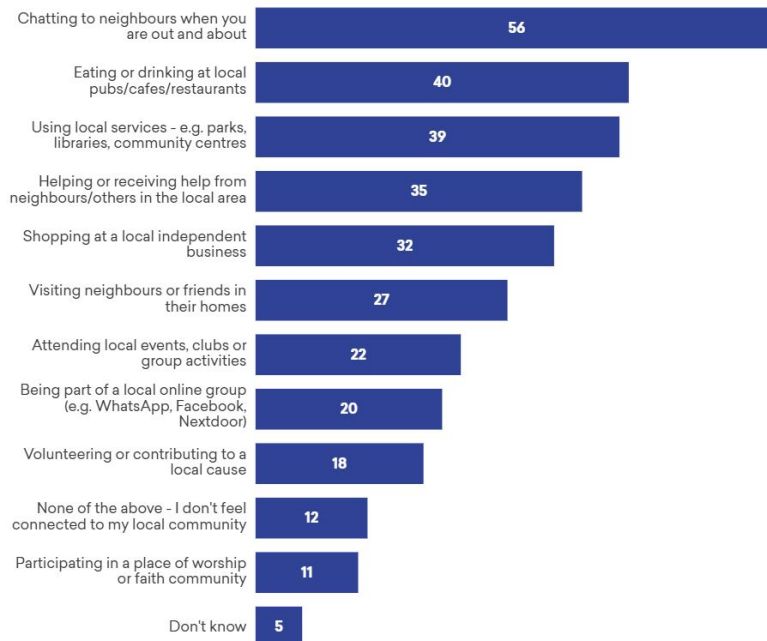
As a result, three in five Britons (62 per cent) say online interaction is less meaningful than in-person connection. Just 7 per cent say the opposite. Younger people are more open to the idea that online interaction can be equally or more meaningful, but even among them, a clear majority still favour in person contact.

"Dog walking. Even if you don't know them, you recognise them, you recognise a dog... I just think it's really nice when you're out and about and you say good morning or good evening. And the dogs sort of get to know each other and so do the owners and that's sort of my main way of being in my community."

Winnie, lunchtime supervisor, Wakefield

Chatting to neighbours, eating and drinking at local establishments and using local services are the most common ways that Britons feel connected to their communities

Which of the following, if any, make you feel most connected to your local community? Please select all that apply.



Most think that online interaction is less meaningful than in-person, especially older people

Three in five Britons (62 per cent) say online interaction is less meaningful than in-person connection. Just 7 per cent say the opposite. Younger people are more open to the idea that online interaction can be equally or more meaningful, but even among them, a clear majority still favour in-person contact.

The consensus cuts across generations – however people choose to stay in touch, most recognise that something is lost when the interaction moves online.

"I would say that close-knit communities would normally tend to be face-to-face. I feel like it's easier to have a community and get to know people face-to-face than it would be online."

April, aged 17, Hove

"It's far more practical to have them in person here because power cuts are very common and the locals aren't really that tech savvy. So for a lot of them, it's far more easy to meet up in a church or a town hall or just some form of community building."

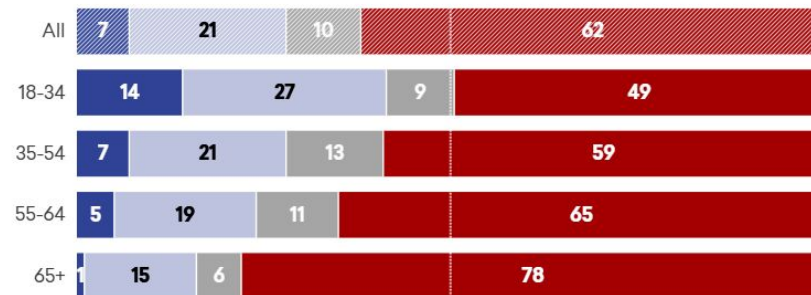
Michael, aged 17, Outer Hebrides

While 49 per cent of younger Britons think online interaction is less meaningful than in-person, 78 per cent of older Britons say the same

Which statement comes closest to your own view?

Interacting with people online is...

- MORE meaningful than interacting with people in-person
- AS meaningful as interacting with people in-person
- Don't know
- LESS meaningful than interacting with people in-person



Feeling connected to the community is seen to reap a wide range of benefits

34 per cent of Britons see help in times of need as one of the main benefits of community connection. In practice, most people do turn to their neighbours for everyday tasks: 76 per cent would ask a neighbour to take in a parcel, 66 per cent would ask for directions or local recommendations, 51 per cent would borrow a household item, and 48 per cent would knock on a neighbour's door for a chat if they were feeling lonely.

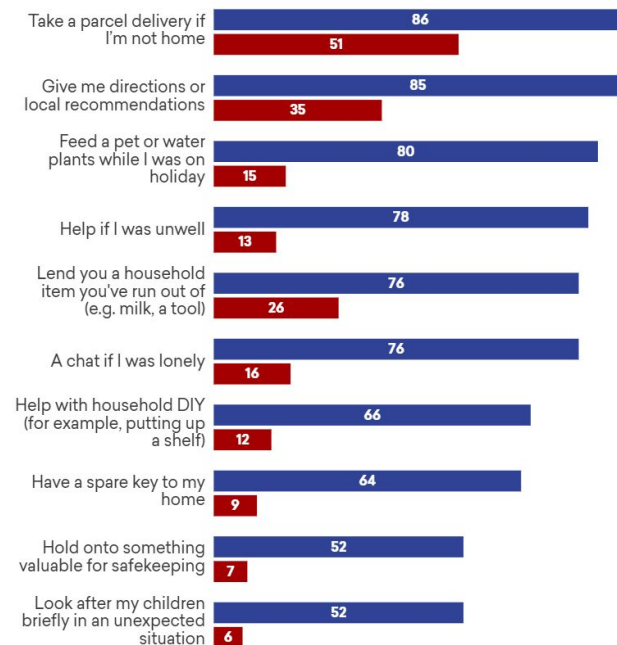
But these figures mask a sharp divide between the connected and the disconnected. 80 per cent of those who feel connected to their community would ask a neighbour to feed a pet or water plants while away, compared to just 15 per cent of the disconnected. While 76 per cent of the connected would turn to a neighbour for company when lonely, only 16 per cent of the disconnected would do so.

There are also limits to what most Britons feel comfortable asking of their neighbours, regardless of how connected they feel. A majority would not ask a neighbour to hold something valuable (57 per cent) or keep a spare key (54 per cent), and 40 per cent would not ask them to look after a pet or plants. Even something as low-stakes as asking for directions is off the table for a quarter of people. Community connection shapes how much people lean on their neighbours, but for many, that relationship has clear boundaries.

Those who feel very connected to their local communities feel able to turn to their neighbours for help

Which of the following situations, if any, would you turn to your neighbour or someone in your local community to help you with?

● Those who feel very connected ● Those who feel not at all connected



Those who feel connected to their community are less likely to feel lonely and more likely to feel safe in their communities

Among those who feel 'very connected' to their local community, only 10 per cent say they regularly feel lonely. This rises to 47 per cent of those who feel 'not at all connected' to their community. But loneliness isn't the only thing which appears to be improved by better connections with your local community; it appears to reap other benefits too.

39 per cent of Britons feel that 'a greater sense of safety and security in my local area' is a main benefit of feeling connected to the community. This is even higher (48 per cent) among those who already feel connected. Other benefits of community connection include practical support and help from neighbours in times of need (34 per cent) and opportunities to socialise and meet new people (29 per cent).

In focus groups, participants who felt connected felt a sense of shared experience with their neighbours, camaraderie and looking out for one another. Older residents especially were regularly checked in on by neighbours, just to 'make sure they're doing alright'.

"It's good to have that community look out for each other. I mean, I've borrowed lawn mowers, I've borrowed paintbrushes, you name it. They've come and hauled away stuff for me." – **Bonnie, aged 64, retired, Chingford**

While 10 per cent of those who feel 'very connected' to their local community regularly feel lonely, 47 per cent of the 'not at all connected' feel the same



"I would say that it makes you feel a lot more safer with the people like you're around. Because if you're getting to know people, you're getting to know what they're like, you'd understand them more and you wouldn't think they're just complete strangers."

Vincent, aged 14, Bridgend

**People think
connection has
weakened in the
last decade**

The background features a dark blue field with several overlapping circles. One circle in the top right is a medium blue, and another in the bottom right is a bright green. The circles are outlined in a light cyan color.

Britons are more likely to think their community has become more divided in the last decade than united

While a plurality (46 per cent) think that their community is about as united now as it was 10 years ago, a quarter (26 per cent) think that their community has become more divided in that time.

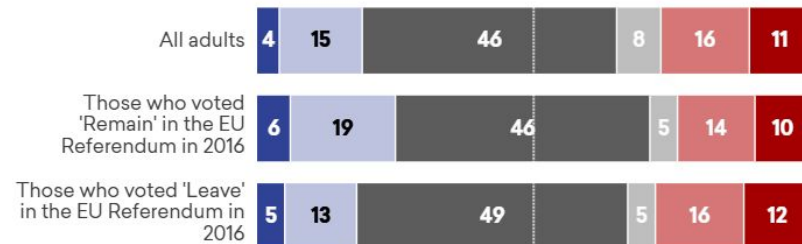
In 2016, one of the biggest dividers of communities was the Brexit question: whether the UK should remain members of the European Union or leave. Today, 'Remainers' are marginally more likely to think their community is a more united place than Leave voters, and slightly less likely to think that it is a divided one – with the caveat that these labels act as a proxy for a variety of factors, including financial security, education and geography.

Some of the biggest gaps in opinion on this question are more likely to be found along other lines. Voters who are more likely than average to say they feel they live in a more divided community these days than in 2016 include 35–44 year olds (37 per cent think their community is more divided than it was) and those who are financially struggling (38 per cent). Age and economic hardship seem to be significant fault lines driving perceptions of community division.

While 20 per cent think their community has become more united in the last decade, 26 per cent think it has become more divided

Compared to ten years ago (in 2016) would you say your community has become...

- Much more united
- A bit more united
- Stayed about the same
- Don't know
- A bit more divided
- A lot more divided



Three in ten say their own personal connection to their community has weakened in the last decade

While 25 per cent of British adults say their sense of connection to their community has grown stronger over the last decade, 30 per cent say it has weakened, and a plurality (40 per cent) report it has stayed the same.

These personal experiences closely track broader perceptions of community cohesion. Among those who feel their community has become more united over the past decade, 83 per cent also report feeling personally closer to it. Meanwhile, among those who think their community has become more divided, 74 per cent say their own sense of connection has weakened alongside it.

Those who have lived in their area all of their lives are particularly likely to say that their sense of connection to it has weakened over time (35 per cent). This feeling persists regardless of how urban or rural the place they live in.

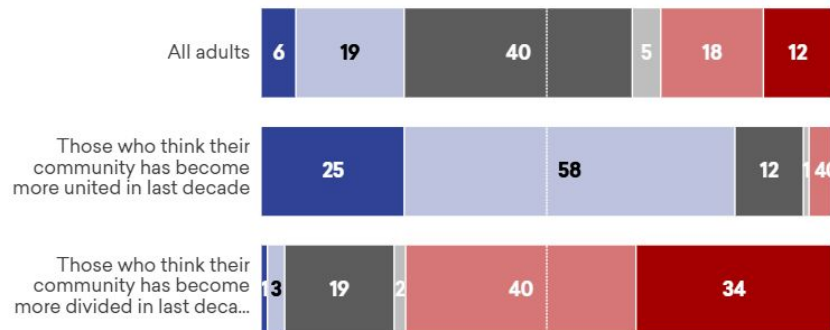
"I could be a hermit, quite easily sitting here if I allowed myself. I have to make a conscious effort. But the places that I would like to go to, a lot of them are closing down or they're moving... most of the shops that I remember, they've closed down"

Bonnie, aged 64, retired, Chingford

30 per cent of Britons think their connection to their local community has weakened in the last decade

Compared to ten years ago (in 2016) would you say your sense of connection to your local community has...

- Got much stronger
- Got somewhat stronger
- Stayed about the same
- Don't know
- Got somewhat weaker
- Got much weaker



Those who feel less connected to their community point to social media and the decline of the high street

Across generations, people have noticed a gradual weakening of community bonds. In focus groups, many pointed to the same underlying forces.

Technology emerged as a common culprit. Across age groups, people felt it had eroded attention spans, made people less sociable, and deepened social divides. For younger people, the problem was compounded by the disappearance of youth clubs and other spaces where teenagers could meet. With nowhere to go, many have retreated to their bedrooms and turned to social media for connection by default – [other More in Common research](#) for Children In Need with young people also reflects this tension, with young people unhappy with being pushed online as a substitute for in-person interaction. The result, for many, is a growing difficulty in forming meaningful connections with their peers.

Older people often described a parallel experience shaped by the slow decline of the high street. As local shops and coffee spots have disappeared, so have the incidental encounters that helped them feel engaged with the community around them.

“Community has changed a great deal over the years. A long time ago, people were more warm, were more empathetic, more tight, close-knit than ever, whether it's a small community or large community. But now a lot of communities don't have time for themselves. They don't have time to bond and people are not as close-knit as it was in the past. And young people now, I feel that because you've got the internet and so on and so forth, they'd rather be on PlayStation”

Amanda, customer service, Dartford

“I don't think that stuff like social media has really helped... I do think that everyone in my generation has become very much to themselves. Spaces for people of our age group to go would automatically help because I think that there's not enough for people our age to do in general just in our society.”

April, student (aged 17), Hove

“I think the internet plays a big part in bringing a lot of negativity amongst different cultures, creating a big divide in the last few years.”

Hannah, job centre assistant

Those who think their community ties have strengthened believe this is a response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Equally, there were some in focus groups who had observed their community getting stronger over the last decade. They attributed this strengthening to a 'post-COVID' effect. After experiencing the social isolation of lockdowns, people reported valuing human interaction much more, and becoming more open and friendly to one another as a result.

Whether social media strengthens or divides communities may say more about the community itself than the technology. In groups with those who feel their communities are relatively united, many discussed how during the pandemic, platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook had made it easier to organise locally and look out for neighbours, and have remained so. Yet others see the same platforms as a force pulling people apart.

"I think post COVID certainly people became much more open. They valued interactions are much more than previous to it, definitely."

Matthew, foster carer, Glasgow

"What we call the local network, we have it online. So like you say, if a dog goes missing or that somebody wants some recommendations for a local handyman or something like that, it's good for that type of thing. Somebody will say, "Oh, I need a gardener, any recommendations type of thing." And it's good."

Winnie, lunchtime supervisor, Wakefield

Those who currently feel disconnected from their community are the *most likely* to want to feel more connected

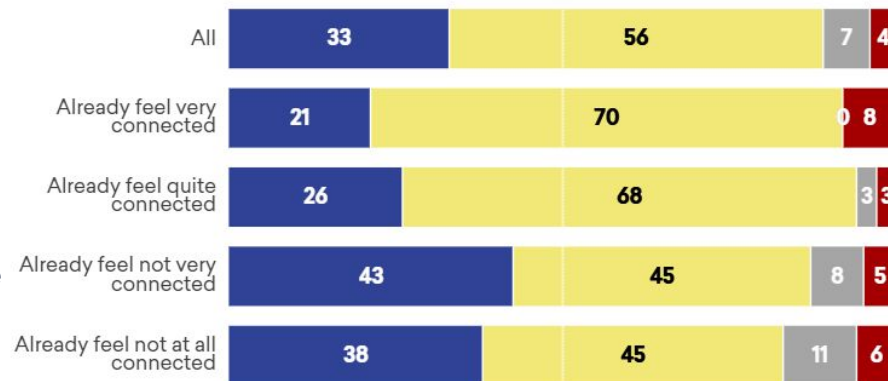
A majority of Britons (56 per cent) are satisfied with their current level of community connection, while a further third would like to feel more connected. Notably, those who already feel disconnected are more likely than those who feel connected to want closer ties. It's therefore not the case that those without connections have chosen to live that way – in fact, 38 per cent of those who feel 'not at all connected', and 43 per cent of those who feel 'not very connected' want to feel closer to their community.

The implication is that community connection is something people want, not just among those who already have it. Those who feel it are satisfied; those who don't are actively seeking it. There is no evidence that the disconnected have simply chosen to 'opt out' from community life.

Those who currently feel disconnected from their communities are the most likely to want to feel more connected

Which of the following statements best applies to you?

- I would like to feel more connected to my local community
- I am happy with how connected I currently feel to my local community
- Don't know
- I would like to feel less connected to my local community



Loneliness across generational lines



Older people are more likely to feel connected to the community around them than younger people

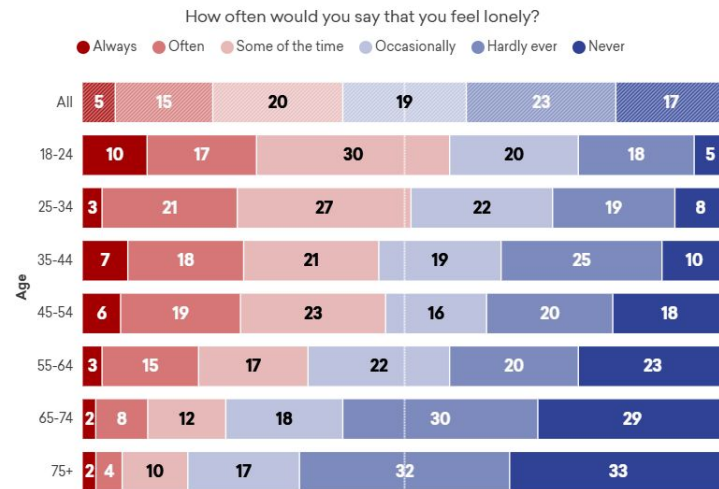
Most under-65s (56 per cent) feel disconnected from their communities, while most over-65s (62 per cent) feel connected. A sense of connection seems to 'dip' in midlife (ages 35–64) before recovering at retirement age.

However, loneliness follows an opposite trend, easing steadily with age rather than dipping and recovering. Among 18–24s, 27 per cent feel lonely always or often (including 1 in 10 who say always), compared to just 6 per cent of those aged 75+. Young adults seem to carry the heaviest burden of loneliness, rather than those who are older.

"As you get older, you find that you do talk to people more, maybe when you're young or more shy."

Davina, aged 61, librarian, Portobello

27 per cent of young adults feel lonely 'always' or 'often', compared to 6 per cent of over 75s



While loneliness descends in an almost linear fashion with age, disconnection peaks among those between 35 and 64

The relationship between age and connection is not linear in the way that it is with loneliness. Those aged 35–64 seem to experience a peak in social disconnection that is not replicated among those who are younger or older than them. This does not however follow the same pattern as loneliness, which appears to be much more linear, with Britons less likely to feel lonely with age.

Older people in focus groups described a slower pace of life than when they were younger, which allows them now to spend time chatting to neighbours, having conversations at the bus stop, getting involved and being a bigger part of their local community than they used to – when more of their time was taken up by full-time jobs or young children.

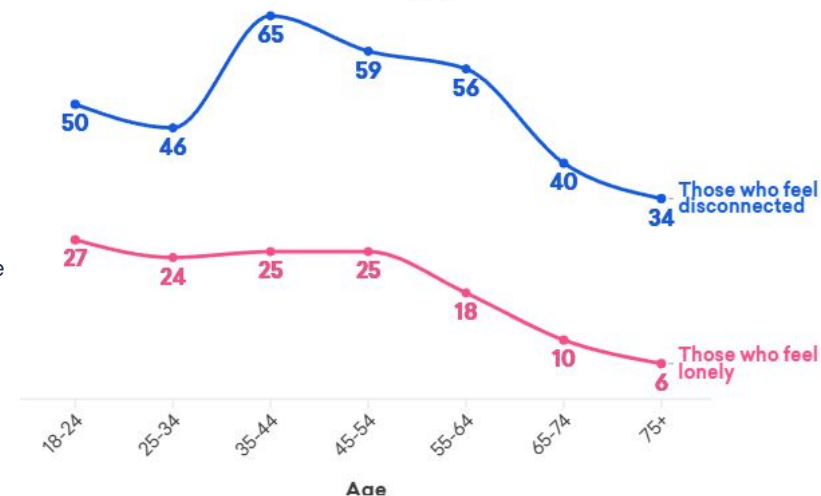
It may be that those in these middle age groups simply do not have this luxury of time – in focus groups, people often described the pressures of work and caring for children alongside older parents or relatives. It doesn't leave them feeling 'lonely' per se, with many still having lots of human interactions at work or within the family. The connections this age group are having tend to be found in areas other than the local community, or are limited by other demands on their time.

"I think different focuses at different ages. I mean, when you're younger, I mean, when you're really young, you're busy, you're going out there and wanting to get older."

Stanley, aged 63, delivery driver, Perth

Rates of disconnection and loneliness by age group

Proportion of those who say they feel 'not very connected' or 'not at all connected' to people in their local community in each age group, and proportion of those who report feeling lonely 'always' or 'often' in each age group



Older people felt they had the time to connect with people, whereas young people felt more transient

In focus groups, many of the older people who feel few barriers to social connection cited a slower pace of life from when they were young. Several feel they have more time now to chat to neighbours, linger at the bus stop, and get involved locally than when full-time work and young children dominated their days.

Younger people described a very different experience. Many saw themselves as inherently transient, likely to be renting for years to come, on the verge of leaving for university, or already mid-degree and aware they would soon move on again. That impermanence made it harder to invest in local connections, and easier to retreat into socialising within their own age group, where common ground felt more obvious and the relationships less temporary.

The result seems to be a cycle: young people feel less rooted, so they connect less broadly, which can leave them feeling more alone.

"I personally think in Glasgow, if you stand at a bus stop, you'll not be stranger for five minutes because somebody will talk to you about something. You might not want them to talk to you about something, but they will talk to you about something."

Matthew, foster carer, Glasgow

"I think my experience of community since moving out at my parents' house two years ago has changed quite a bit. I now live in a block of 30 flats and the extent of my interaction with other people in other flats is not much more than saying sorry when we meet each other in the corridor, we're in the way of each other. And I know it's a bit sad, but it is a transient population of students who they just want to live with their mates and just get on with life."

Will, student, Aberystwyth

"I've been at uni the last three years, so I've been living away. And obviously when you come back, you've got different neighbours, different things going on, whatnot, you don't know them. Obviously get to know neighbours growing up and that and then move away for three years. Some might have moved out, different people."

Kiran, caterer, Sheffield

Those who rent are less likely to feel connected to their local community than homeowners

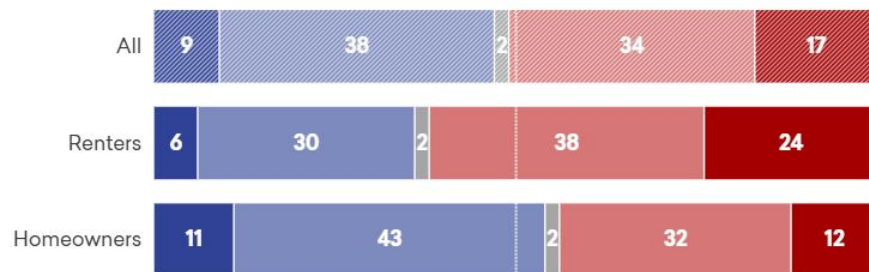
Renters – many of whom are young (41 per cent of those aged 18–34 rent rather than own) – are less likely to feel connected to their local community. 29 per cent of renters say they have lived where they do for less than three years (and 11 per cent for less than a year), compared to 7 per cent of homeowners. It is worth noting that homeowners tend to skew older, so some of this gap likely reflects age as much as tenure, older people simply having had more time to put down roots. That said, some of the instability and uncertainty that comes with renting seems to have an effect on connection.

Renters are more likely than homeowners to say frequent neighbourhood change is a barrier to connection, and are less likely to feel comfortable asking their neighbours for help. The transience renters experience – particularly those who are young, and for whom getting onto the housing ladder feels out of reach – may be taking a real toll on their sense of belonging and feeling rooted in a place.

Those who rent are less likely than average to feel connected to their local community

How connected do you feel to people in your local community/where you live?

● Very connected ● Quite connected ● Don't know ● Not very connected ● Not at all connected



Older people are also more likely to feel able to turn to their neighbours to ask for help

While 70 per cent of 18–35 year olds would ask a neighbour to take a parcel delivery if they were out, 91 per cent of over 65 year-olds would do the same. 43 per cent of the youngest adults would turn to a neighbour for a chat if they felt lonely, compared to 66 per cent of older people. Older people are more likely to turn to their neighbour than younger people for everything from getting local recommendations or holding onto valuables to help if they were unwell, or to feed a pet while they're on holiday.

Clearly, the benefits of feeling connected to the local community go beyond combating loneliness, and into practical, tangible help that makes life easier.

"It's good to have that community look out for each other. I mean, I've borrowed lawn mowers, I've borrowed paintbrushes, you name it. They've come and hauled away stuff for me." –

Bonnie, aged 64, retired, Chingford

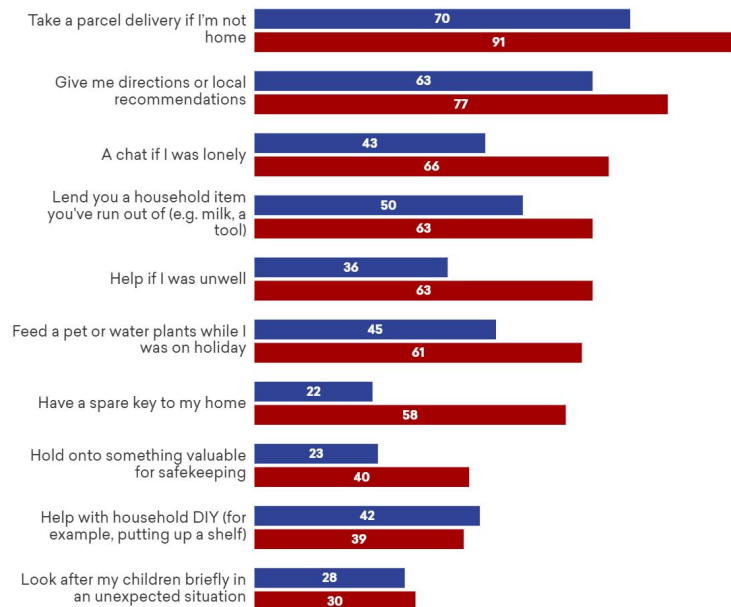
"I would say that it makes you feel a lot more safer with the people like you're around. Because if you're getting to know people, you're getting to know what they're like, you'd understand them more and you wouldn't think they're just complete strangers."

Vincent, aged 14, Bridgend

Over 65s are more than twice as likely to give a neighbour a spare house key than 18-34 year olds

Proportion who would turn to a neighbour or someone in their community for help in each scenario

● 18-35s ● 65+



**Does anxiety
hold young
people back?**



A plurality of those over the age of 65 say they experience no barriers to connecting with their local community

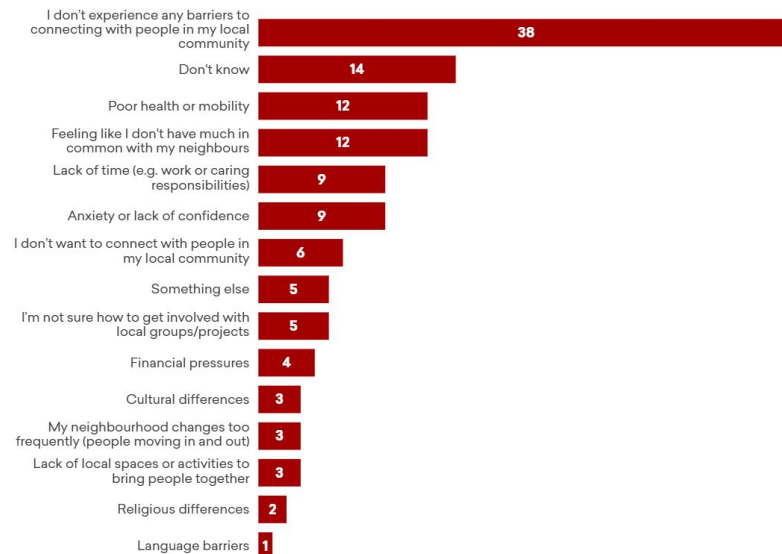
It's clear that those who are older tend to face fewer barriers to social connection and engaging with their local communities – almost four in ten of those aged 65+ say they experience no barriers to doing so at all. However, among those who do, these tend to be more physical than emotional or psychological.

12 per cent cite poor health or mobility as preventing them from connecting as much as they would like to, and a further 12 per cent say it's because they don't have much in common with their neighbours.

Younger adults, by contrast, are much more likely to experience barriers to social connection: where 38 per cent of those over 65 experience no barriers, just 6 per cent of 18–24 year olds say the same.

Nearly 2 in 5 Britons aged over 65 don't experience any barriers to connecting with their community

Which of the following, if any, prevent you from connecting with people in your local community as much as you would like? Please select all which apply



The most common barrier to connection for younger adults is anxiety

For young adults aged 18 to 24, the biggest barrier to community connection is internal, rather than practical: 38 per cent cite anxiety or lack of confidence. This is followed by feeling they have little in common with their neighbours (32 per cent) and a lack of time (24 per cent).

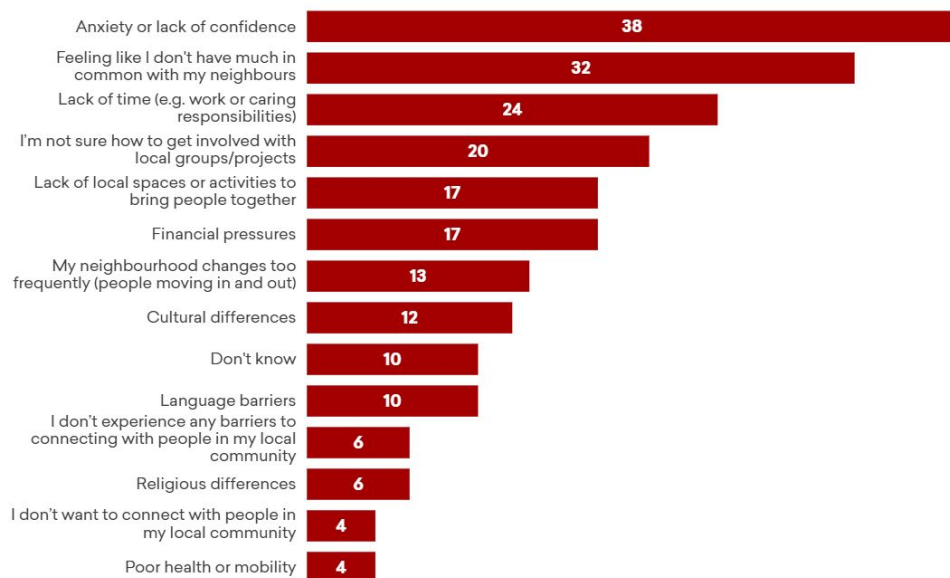
The contrast with older people (9 per cent of whom say anxiety is a barrier) reveals two very different relationships with community. Older people are more likely to want to connect and feel able to; younger people often want to connect but feel held back by self-doubt, a sense of not belonging, and by the pace of their lives.

"I would feel a lot more comfortable obviously dealing with people in my age group, but I feel like it'd be a little bit awkward if they were a bit older."

Vincent, aged 14, Sceptical Scroller, Bridgend

Nearly 2 in 5 Britons aged between 18 and 24 say that anxiety stops them connecting with their community

Which of the following, if any, prevent you from connecting with people in your local community as much as you would like? Please select all which apply



Financial insecurity



Those who are struggling financially are the most likely to feel disconnected from their community

At a national level, feelings of community connection are almost evenly divided.

But this near-even split hides a sharp divide along financial lines. Among those who describe themselves as financially comfortable, 59 per cent feel connected to their community. That figure falls to just 26 per cent among those who struggle to cover basic costs or regularly go without essentials like food and heating — a drop of more than half.

Financial hardship and social disconnection seem to go hand in hand: the people with the least economic security are also the least likely to feel rooted in the places where they live.

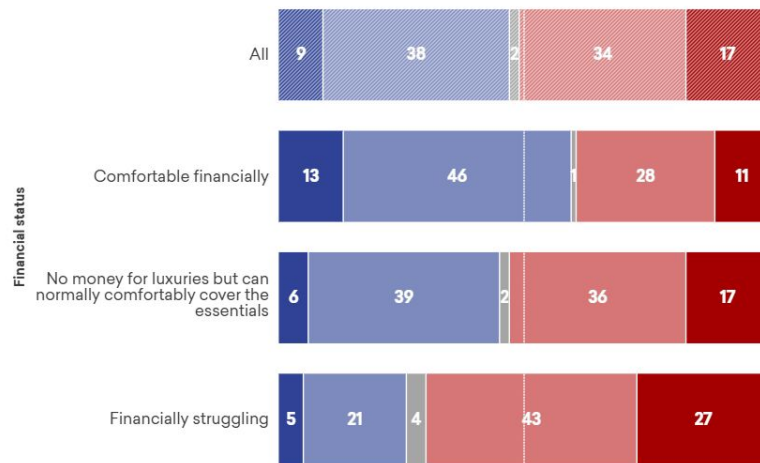
"I think money is a barrier or can be a barrier. If you want to join a class, there's always a cost to it. If you're on a low income, then that necessarily dictates how much you can spend on joining the club."

Marjorie, tutor, Weston-Super-Mare

Those who are financially comfortable are twice as likely to feel connected to their local community, compared to those who are financially struggling

How connected do you feel to people in your local community/where you live?

● Very connected ● Quite connected ● Don't know ● Not very connected ● Not at all connected



Those who feel more financially comfortable tend to interact with their communities on a more regular basis

A sizable majority of the more financially comfortable have regularly participated in community activities in the last year: speaking to their neighbours (84 per cent), using local services like libraries or parks (68 per cent), or helping a neighbour (62 per cent). In every case, those who say they are financially struggling are less likely to have regularly participated in these activities.

The financially comfortable are twice as likely to be part of a local social media group (on Whatsapp, Facebook or Nextdoor, for example) than their less well-off counterparts.

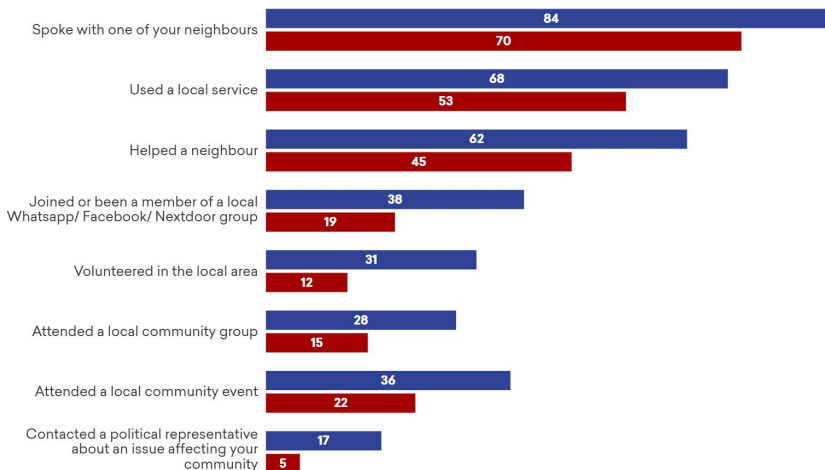
Financial hardship doesn't just limit what people can afford, but goes on to limit how embedded they are in the everyday fabric of community life.

Those who are financially comfortable are more likely to have spoken with neighbours, used a local service or been part of a local social media group than those who are financially struggling

In the last twelve months, how often have you done any of the following?

All those who have done this at least a few times in the last 12 months

● Those who are financially comfortable ● Those who are financially struggling



The financially struggling are more likely to see cost as a barrier to social connection

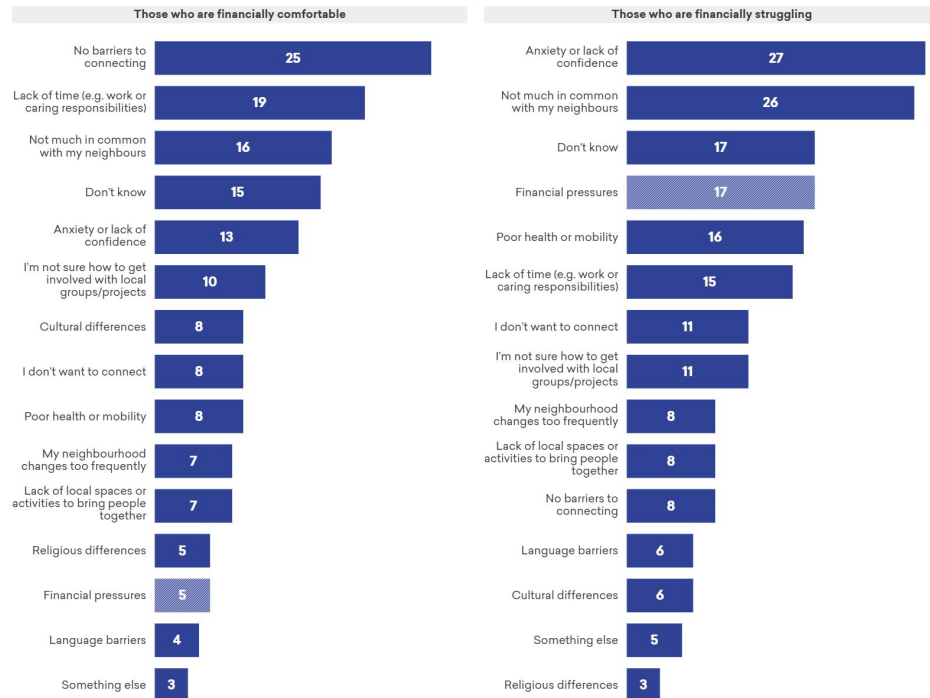
Half (51 per cent) of those who say they feel financially comfortable say they experience no barriers to community connection, compared to just 14 per cent of those who say they are struggling.

Alongside anxiety and feeling as though they don't have much in common with their neighbours, the barrier to social connection for those struggling financially is cost. 35 per cent of the financially struggling cited 'financial pressures' as barrier to connection, compared to just 9 per cent of those who are comfortable.

In this cost of living crisis, which 70 per cent of people say is one of the biggest issues facing the country today, it appears that social connection is increasingly likely to be seen as a luxury that fewer and fewer people can afford.

The financially struggling are nearly four times more likely to see financial pressures as a barrier to community connection than the financially comfortable

Which of the following, if any, prevent you from connecting with people in your local community as much as you would like? Please select all which apply



Intergenerational connections



Different generations have some negative preconceptions of each other

Focus groups suggest that preconceptions on both sides of the generational divide are actively getting in the way of connection.

Some younger people assumed older generations to be less tolerant of diversity, placing them at odds with what they saw as their own more open values. Others felt that older people's lack of familiarity with technology made connection awkward in an age shaped by social media. Several younger participants also described feeling viewed as "riff raff" or troublemakers when gathered in public spaces, even when doing nothing wrong, fuelling a sense of feeling unwelcome in their area.

Older people carried their own assumptions. Some worried that younger people's attachment to technology had eroded their ability to hold a real conversation or in person. Others expressed anxiety about saying the wrong thing and being shamed. Some simply struggled to relate, feeling that younger people had unrealistic expectations of life, wanting houses, cars, and inherited wealth without, as older participants saw it, putting in the work that their own generation had.

"People of my generation are very welcoming to all ethnicities and religion and growing up in schools we were very culturally diverse, but I do think sometimes with older generations around me, they can be a bit more like they won't really ... I don't know, they've just got set beliefs about certain things that people like me and my generation wouldn't relate to."

April, aged 17, Hove

"Children these days, I think their generation is just too self-absorbed. A lot of them are into themselves and it's just the period, the way they are and so on and so forth. It's not like when we're growing up, there's respect there for our eldest and so on. So there's been a big gap between the older generation and the younger generation. A lot of them don't want to know because they're too busy hanging around with their friends."

Amanda, aged 63, customer service, Dartford

"As teenagers, we kind of have the stereotype. They're like, "We're going to do something wrong." So they don't really encourage us to go out properly. I know in my area we have all of our barbecues and things like that, but they don't encourage us. If we ever go to a little park place... to hang out, they don't like that... they do want us to leave. Not that they'd say that, but they just look at us."

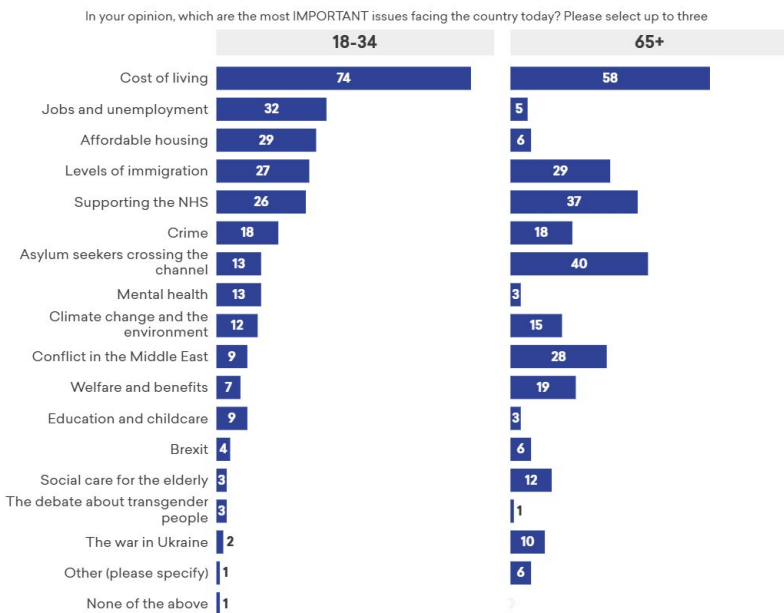
Sophie, aged 15, Plymouth

"I just let them be just as long as they behave themselves. I wish they'd be respectful."

Bonnie, aged 64, retired, Chingford

Despite these preconceptions, young and old people share many of the same priorities...

Cost of living remains the top issue affecting Britons across the generations



For instance, 74 per cent of 18–34 year olds, and 58 per cent of over 65 year olds believe that the cost of living is the most important issue affecting the country right now. Levels of immigration, and supporting the NHS also feature in the top 5 among both of these groups.

Despite either group feeling conscious of how different they are from each other, they have many of the same priorities in common.

In focus groups, the spark that starts much intergenerational connection is having shared interests. For some, that means finding it easiest to connect with their own grandparents, rather than older members of the wider community. But sharing the same football team, the same community cafes or gyms also allowed these age barriers to be broken down, and for people to find they're not so different from one another.

"I think common interest plays a big part. For example, with Arsenal winning, whatever it was day one the other day, it brought great conversation between everyone in the office. You saw the lads, the young lads, the older guys, everyone in the office communicate. So I think common interest plays a big part."

Hannah, (grandparent), job centre assistant

"Because everyone has a phone, everyone's seen what's going on, so you can easily talk to someone about what's happening. It's just easy to talk to people. For example, if I watch the news, I can go and talk to my Nan about it... if I watched older films that came out, I can talk to my Nan about that because she's watched them."

Heidi (grandchild), student, Greenwich

... and both younger and older people want to feel respected by the other generation

In focus groups, it seemed that the issue is not that people across generations don't want to connect – they do, and when they manage it, they value it. The problem is that both sides have come to see each other as increasingly unlike themselves.

A common thread running through both groups was the desire to feel respected by the other. For younger people, this might mean not being treated as suspects when gathering with friends in a local park, while for older people, it might mean younger people being more willing to engage in person rather than online.

Yet where respect does exist, the rewards are clear. The grandparent–grandchild relationship offers a telling example. Both sides are aware of their differences, but rather than making connection harder, those differences become a source of mutual value. For example, grandchildren help with technology, while grandparents share stories of films or music another era. The differences don't have to divide, but can become the thing that makes connection worthwhile.

“We all think differently, but you have to listen and respect other people’s opinions. Will and I probably disagree on certain things, but he’s entitled to his opinion, but I have to respect his opinion. And it’s the same for everybody, I feel.”

Katherine (grandmother of Will)

“Personally, I think mostly you just need to respect each other and from there you’ll probably be fine. Even my grandma works at a retirement home and if I ever help her out, volunteer, then even if they’re the most frustrating old person you’ll ever meet, if you just respect them, then they’ll help you out.”

Sophie, aged 15, Plymouth

Bridging other divides



Britain's diversity is celebrated, but some barriers to cross-community connection persist

Almost four in ten people say they regularly interact with people from a different ethnic or religious group to themselves. Among focus group participants who had experienced meaningful interactions across these divides, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Younger people felt their generation was open and welcoming, and many took pride in being inclusive of people from different backgrounds. Older participants described such connections as "life-enhancing", broadening their understanding of the world and expanding their circle of friends.

Yet alongside this warmth sat some concern. Young people in inner-city areas described parts of their communities as feeling like no-go zones for certain ethnic groups. Both Black British and White British participants in urban areas observed growing segregation in where people of particular ethnicities or religions tended to live, go to school, and spend time in distinct parts of a city, with little overlap. Many reported feeling they should avoid areas that didn't feel "for them," making genuine connection harder even when the will to connect was there. Others voiced concerns about integration more broadly, questioning whether enough was being done to actively encourage people to find common ground and build connections across ethnic and religious communities, rather than drifting further apart.

"Where I live, people of my generation are very welcoming to all ethnicities and religion and growing up in schools we were very culturally diverse"

April, student, aged 17, Hove

"I grew up in London and I grew up with Italians, Irish, which is my background, Sikhs, Muslims. If they were me mates, they were me mates. If they were an idiot, they were an idiot. Didn't matter what religion they were."

Henry, employment advisor, aged 62, North Wales

"In my opinion, I feel like certain areas are associated with certain ethnicities, religions, races and groups. I feel like there's certain areas that have a stereotype of having a certain group which may steer people away from going to certain areas."

Finn, aged 17, Enfield

(Moderator: How often do you find yourself connecting with people of different ethnic backgrounds?) "Not that often, but there's kind of different areas within the community that have not set ones, but the majority of certain ethnicity stay within. So there's not really much opportunity to connect with them."

Bella, aged 15, Oldham

Of the divides we tested, Britons are least likely to interact often with those of different political views

Britons are split on whether they frequently engage with people who hold different political views to their own – 32 per cent say they do frequently, while 31 per cent do not.

People who feel well connected to their local community (49 per cent), those living in urban areas (41 per cent), and Labour voters (47 per cent) are the most likely to report regularly have meaningful interactions with people of different political views.

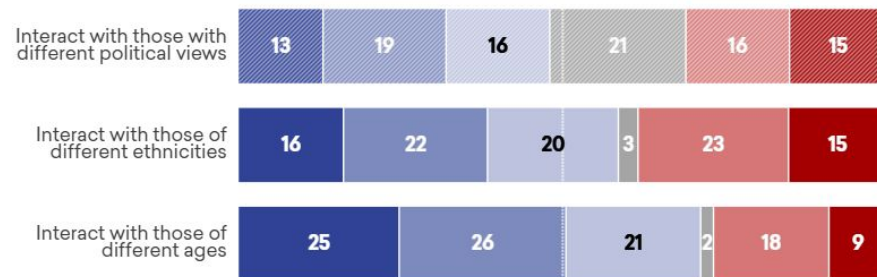
Those who feel entirely disconnected from their local community (38 per cent) are among the most likely to never have such interactions at all. Contact with those who hold different political views seems to be shaped as much by where people live and how rooted they feel as by their politics itself – those already on the margins of community life or who are the most dissatisfied with the state of play as it stands are less likely to engage with views that are different from their own.

32 per cent of Britons often interact with those of different political views to them, compared to 51 per cent who often interact across age divides

How often, if at all, do you have meaningful interactions with people in your local area of a different ethnicity/ age/ political beliefs to your own? By 'meaningful interaction', we mean a conversation or exchange that goes beyond saying 'hello'.

How often do you...

- Very often (at least once a week)
- Fairly often (at least once a month)
- Occasionally (a few times a year)
- Don't know
- Rarely
- Never



Methodology

Qualitative

More in Common recruited and moderated three online focus groups for this report.

Group 1 was made up of 9 young people, aged between 14 and 17, from across the UK, with a range of ages, genders and ethnicities.

Group 2 was made up of 8 adults, over the age of 65, from across the UK, with a range of ages, genders and ethnicities.

Group 3 was made up of 4 grandchild/grandparent pairs, plus one grandchild who had 2 grandparents in the group, totalling 11 participants across the whole group. These participants were from across the UK, all of the grandchildren were aged 22 or under, and a range of genders and ethnicities.

The groups were conducted between Tuesday 19th and Tuesday 26th May 2026.

Quantitative

More in Common polled 2,016 nationally representative GB adults. The field work was conducted between the 1st and the 4th April 2026. Respondents have been weighted according to age/sex interlocked, region, 2024 General Election vote, ethnicity, and education level.

More in Common is a member of the British Polling Council and abides by its rules.

For further enquiries, please contact polling@moreincommon.com



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