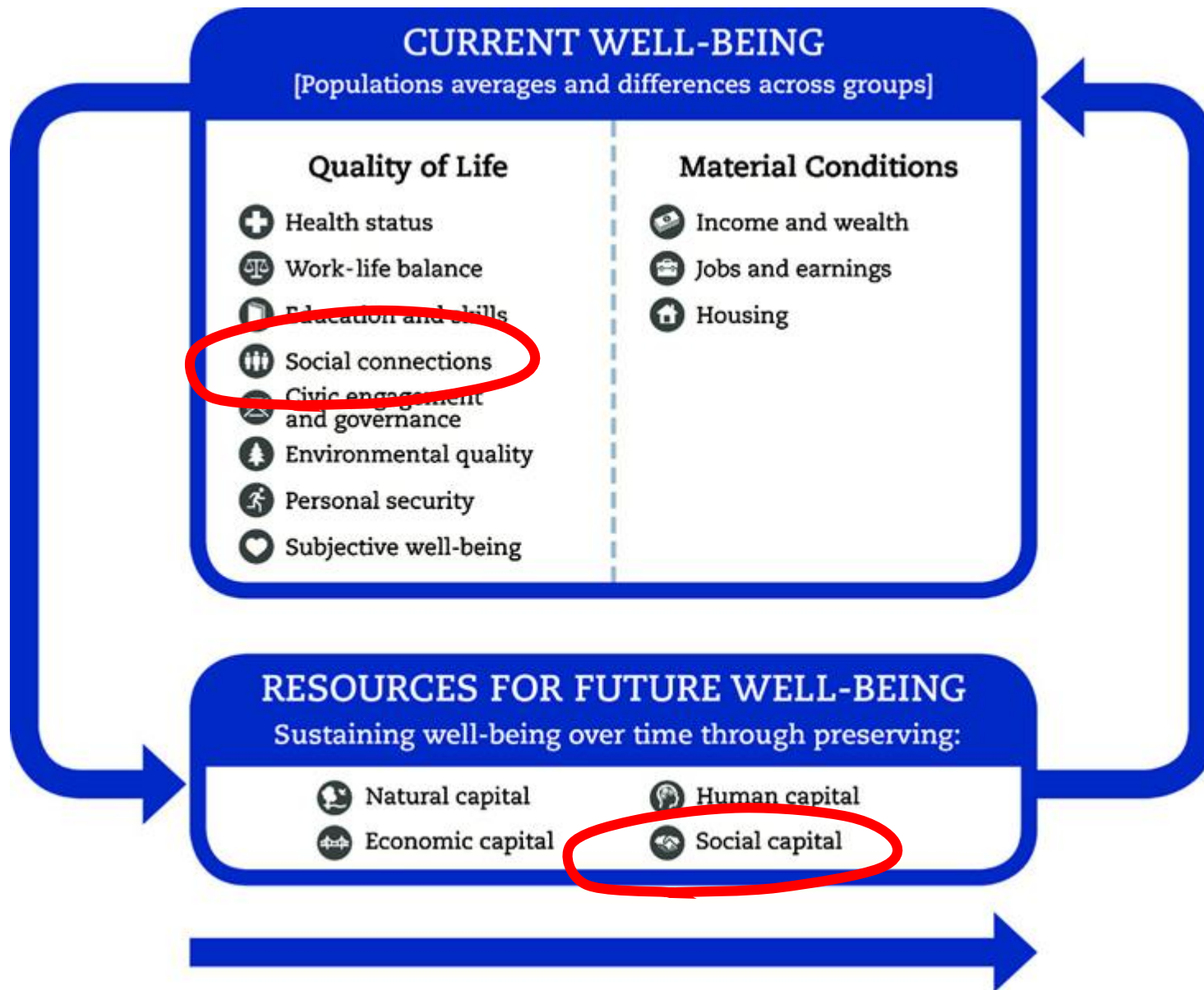# Measuring and understanding our social connections
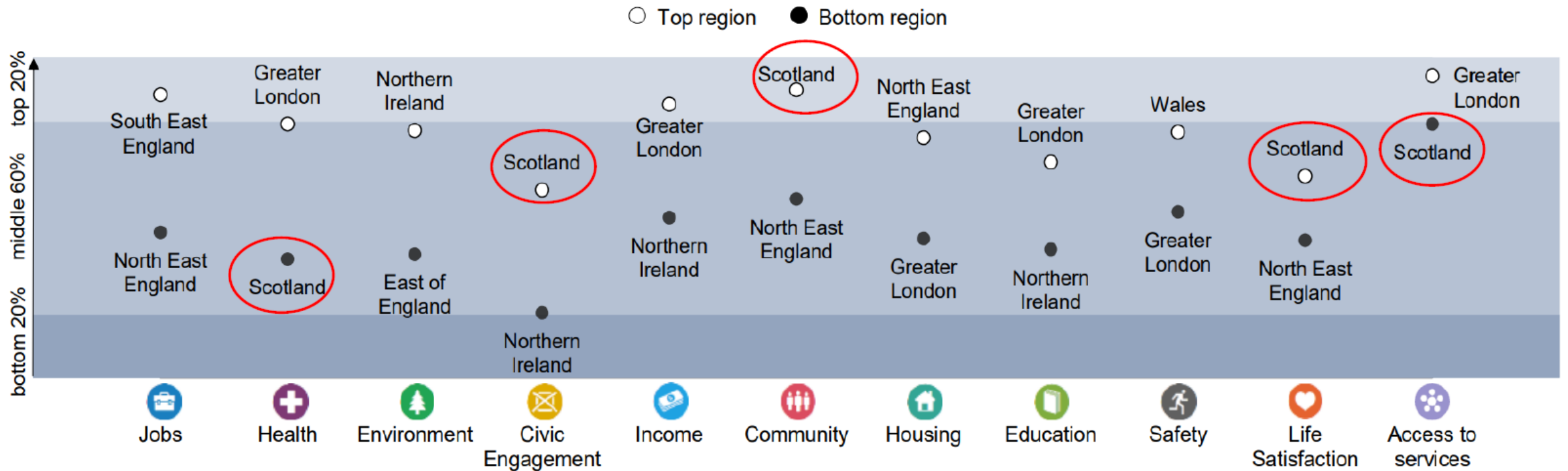
Ben Cavanagh
Office of the Chief Social Policy Adviser

CURRENT WELL-BEING

[Populations averages and differences across groups]

Quality of Life
- Health status
- Work-life balance
- Education and skills
- Social connections
- Civic engagement and governance
- Environmental quality
- Personal security
- Subjective well-being

Material Conditions
- Income and wealth
- Jobs and earnings
- Housing

RESOURCES FOR FUTURE WELL-BEING

Sustaining well-being over time through preserving:
- Natural capital
- Economic capital
- Human capital
- Social capital

OCED stats suggest it is a strength in Scotland (but based on a single simple measure)

The National Performance Framework – a new purpose and values

"Our values of kindness, trust and compassion"

"We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe"

A definition:

"**the relationships and networks of support that people experience, the interconnections within communities, and the involvement of people and communities in decisions that affect their lives.**"

An analytical approach with 3 elements:

1. A data dashboard/index – gives a national picture

2. Disaggregation – provides a view of how things vary within the population

3. Stories – provides a perspective from lived experiences and that can go beyond pre-established statistics

National overview - data dashboard

Social Capital - Themes and Questions

1. Social Networks

- Could you rely on a neighbour for help?
- Would neighbours keep an eye on your home?
- Could you turn to neighbours for advice
- Would you help your neighbours?
- Do you meet socially at least once a week?
- Have you felt lonely in the last week?

2. Community cohesion

Library ➤

- How good is your neighbourhood?
- Do you feel you belong to your neighbourhood?
- Do you feel safe in your neighbourhood?
- Can people be trusted in your neighbourhood?
- Are people kind to each other in your neighbourhood?
- Do people from different backgrounds get on well?
- Are there places to meet and socialise?
- Are there welcoming places to meet new people?

3. Social participation

- Do you volunteer formally?
- Do you volunteer informally?

4. Community empowerment

- Can you influence local decisions?
- Do people improve the neighbourhood?

All data from Scottish Household Survey 2013-2018

Percentages of people who agreed with statements:	2018
Could rely on neighbour to help	86%
Neighbours would keep an eye on home	85%
Could turn to neighbours for advice	77%
Would help neighbours	91%
Meets socially at least once a week	73%
Felt lonely in the last week	21%

Percentages of people who agreed with statements:	2018
Positive neighbourhood rating	95%
Neighbourhood belonging	78%
Neighbourhood safety (2017)	82%
Neighbourhood trust	78%
Neighbourhood kindness	83%
Places to meet and socialise	59%
Welcoming places to meet new people	53%
Diverse people get on well together	70%

Percentages of people who volunteered in the last 12 months:	2018
Formal volunteering	26%
Informal volunteering	36%
Formal and/or Informal volunteering	48%

Percentages of people who agreed:	2018
Influence on local decisions	20%
People improve the local neighbourhood	58%

95% of people rate their neighbourhood
as 'good' or 'very good'.

83% of people said they live in a neighbourhood
where people are kind to each other.

Half of people (48%) said they take part in formal
or informal volunteering.

1 in 5 people (21%) said they experienced
loneliness in the last week.

1 in 5 people (20%) said they have influence
over local decisions that affect their neighbourhood.

Social Capital Index - change since 2013

NPF National Indicator = "performance worsening"
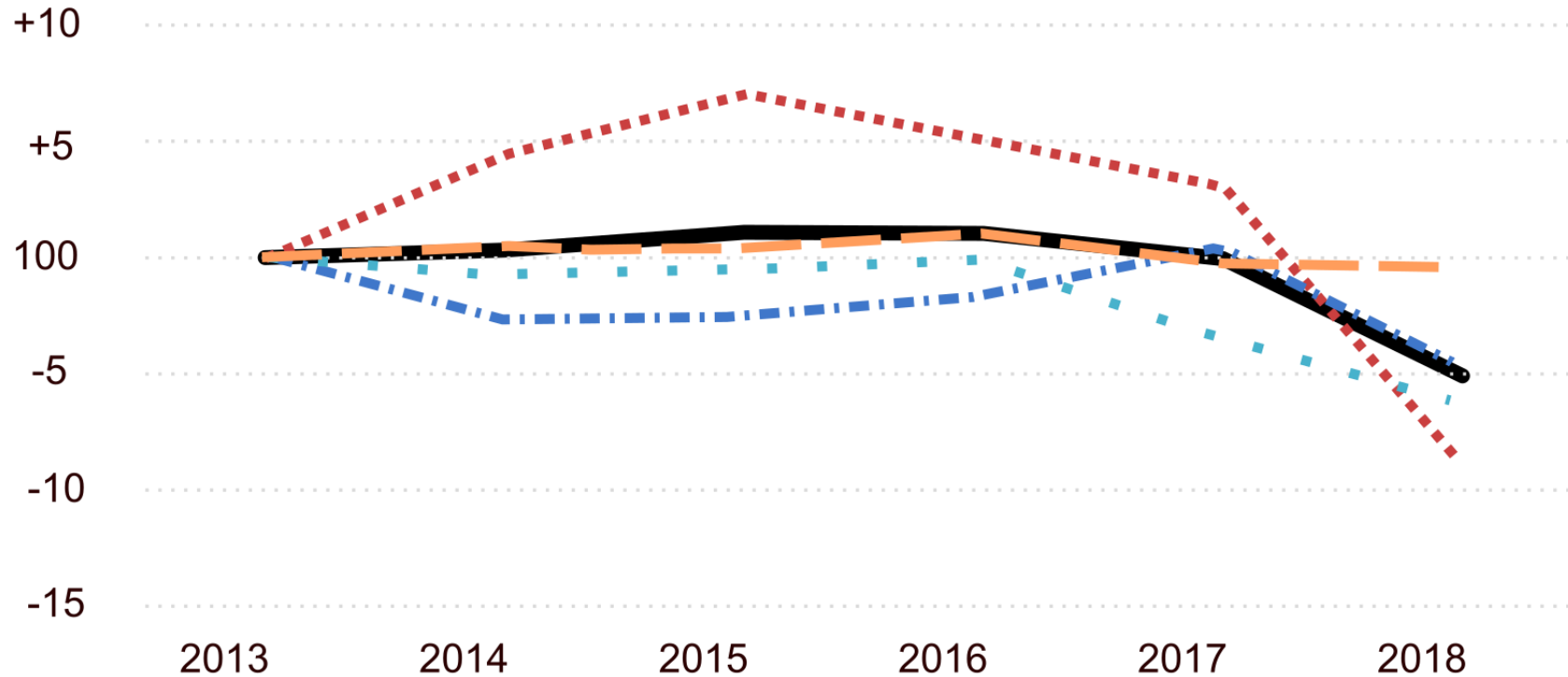
Social Networks -6%

Community Cohesion 0%

Social Participation -5%

Community Empowerment -9%

Overall Change -5%

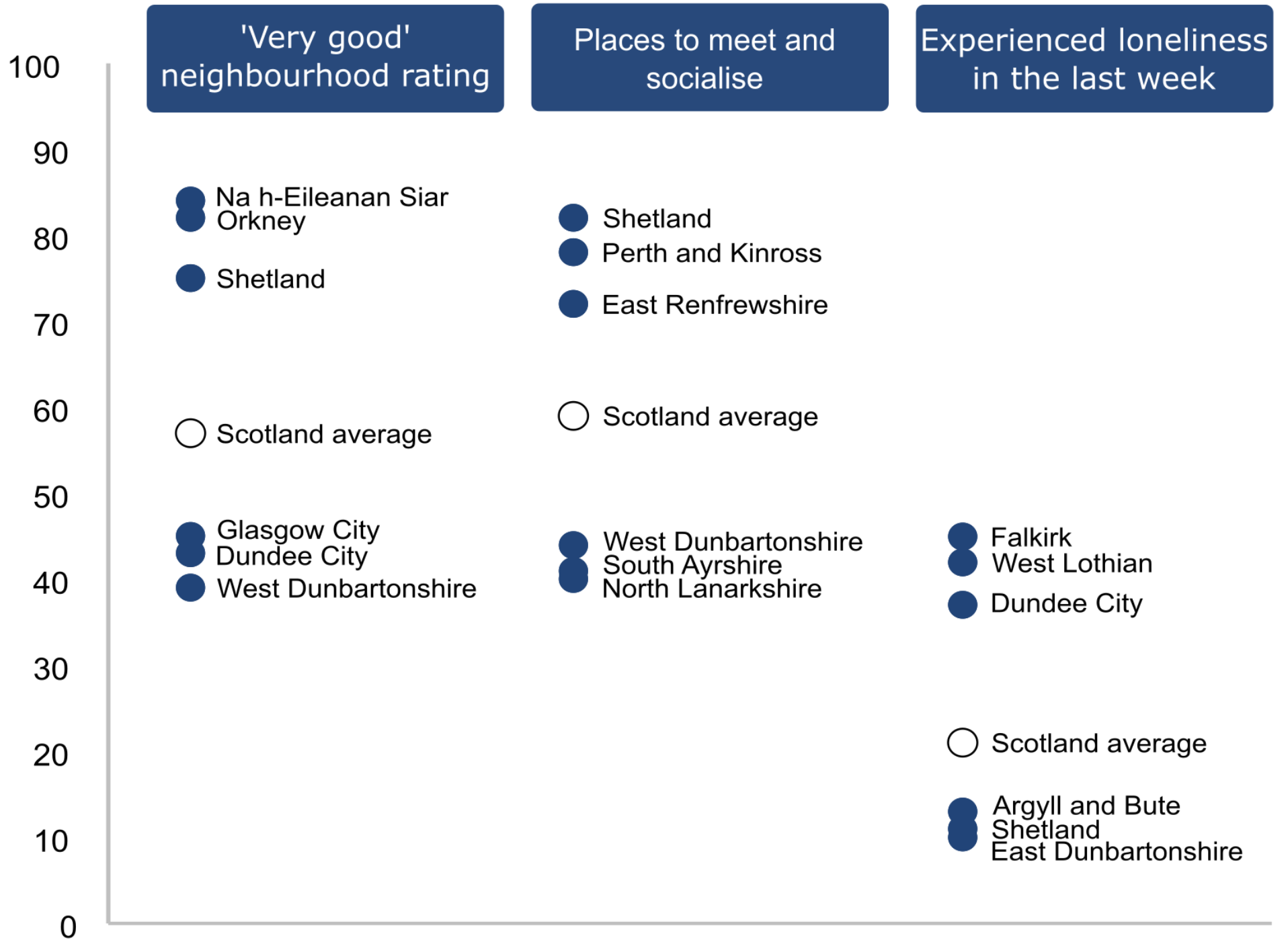**!** The national summary masks big variations in geographies and groups.

Geographies

There is large variation across local authorities, and marked outliers

	'Very good' neighbourhood rating	Places to meet and socialise	Experienced loneliness in the last week

100

90

80 — ● Na h-Eileanan Siar Orkney ● Shetland

75 — ● Shetland / ● Shetland / Perth and Kinross / ● East Renfrewshire

70

60 — ○ Scotland average / ○ Scotland average

50

45 — ● Glasgow City / Dundee City / ● West Dunbartonshire / ● West Dunbartonshire / South Ayrshire / North Lanarkshire / ● Falkirk / West Lothian / ● Dundee City

40

30

20 — ○ Scotland average

10 — ● Argyll and Bute / Shetland / East Dunbartonshire

0

(Chart) 'Very good' neighbourhood rating — Na h-Eileanan Siar, Orkney (~83); Shetland (~76); Scotland average (~58); Glasgow City, Dundee City (~45); West Dunbartonshire (~40).

Places to meet and socialise — Shetland, Perth and Kinross (~80); East Renfrewshire (~74); Scotland average (~60); West Dunbartonshire, South Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire (~43).

Experienced loneliness in the last week — Falkirk, West Lothian (~45); Dundee City (~41); Scotland average (~20); Argyll and Bute, Shetland, East Dunbartonshire (~11).

87% higher

↑

Experienced
loneliness in
the last
week

The most deprived 20% compared
to the least deprived areas.

32% lower   **18% lower**   **3% lower**

↓   ↓   ↓

Positive
neighbourhood
rating

Availability
of places
to meet
and interact

Meeting
socially at
least once
a week

Table source: 20% most
deprived
Locations compared with 20%
least deprived areas. (2018,
SHS)

People in rural areas are much more likely to report higher than average levels of social capital

Social Capital by Urban Rural Classification - %

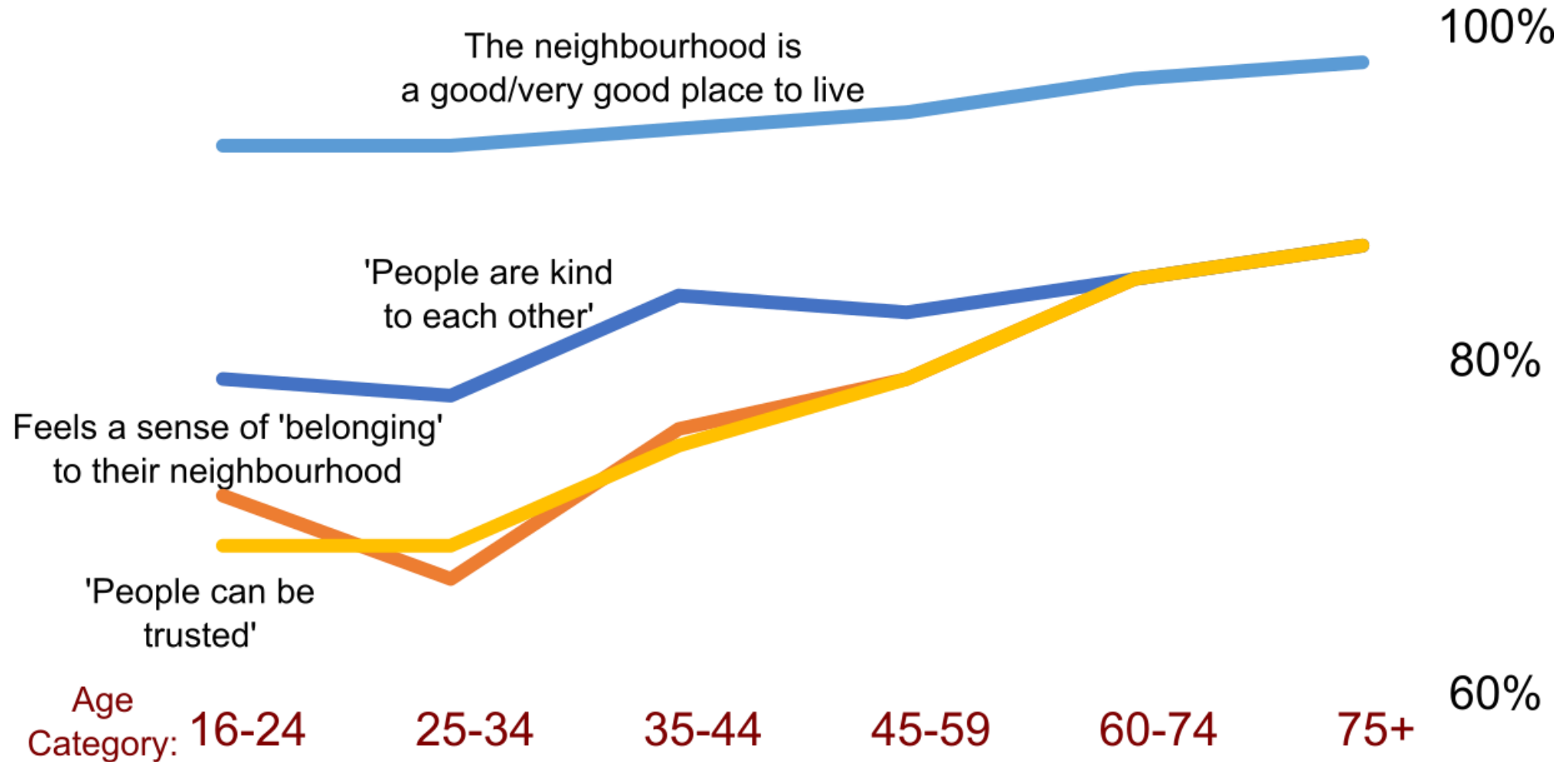|	URBAN				RURAL		
	Large Urban Areas	Other Urban Areas	Accessible Small Towns	Remote Small Towns	Accessible Rural	Remote Rural	Scotland
Social Networks							
Could rely on neighbour to help	83	85	90	85	89	93	86
Neighbours would keep an eye on home	81	85	91	89	92	93	85
Could turn to neighbours for advice	75	75	80	76	84	86	77
Would help neighbours	91	89	90	91	93	93	91
Meets socially with friends, relatives, work colleagues at least once a week	75	72	68	77	70	72	73
Felt lonely in the last week	21	23	22	26	15	19	21
Community Cohesion							
Positive neighbourhood rating	93	94	95	96	97	98	95
Neighbourhood belonging	74	78	82	84	82	87	78
Neighbourhood safety	80	80	84	87	90	92	82
Neighbourhood trust	73	75	83	77	88	89	78
Neighbourhood kindness	79	81	86	80	90	89	83
Diverse people get on well together	71	67	73	70	75	75	70
Places to meet and socialise	62	51	67	61	62	66	59
Welcoming places and opportunities to meet new people	55	46	59	56	57	63	53
Social Participation							
Formal and/or informal volunteering	45	48	51	48	53	52	48
Community Empowerment							
Influence on local decisions	21	19	21	23	19	21	20
People improve the local neighbourhood	55	51	66	55	72	73	58

Library

Least positive   Most positive

James's story

"There was plenty of factories around. Then during the 80s it was as if a storm hit the community and all the big industries closed down. It was like a domino effect, one went down and then bang bang bang."

"The local community centres have been knocked down, schools and doctor surgeries have closed and you just take it as that is what happens here so people develop this kind of attitude of this is as good as it is going to get."
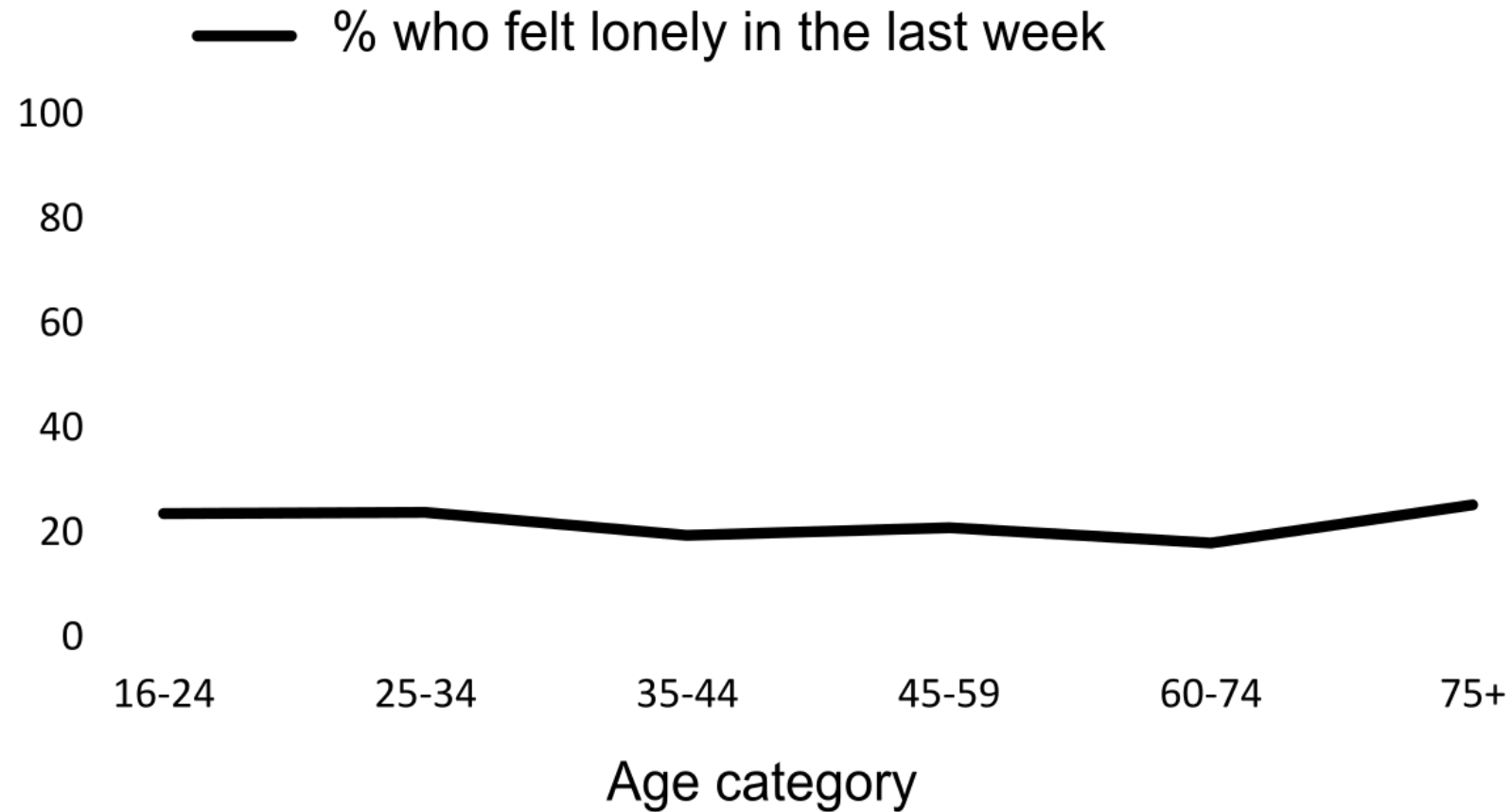
"There are groups of people who volunteer and who try to make spaces accessible for the community. They have raised money to get park benches and to put in goal posts so the kids can play football. People try to connect, to help each other but it can be hard at times."
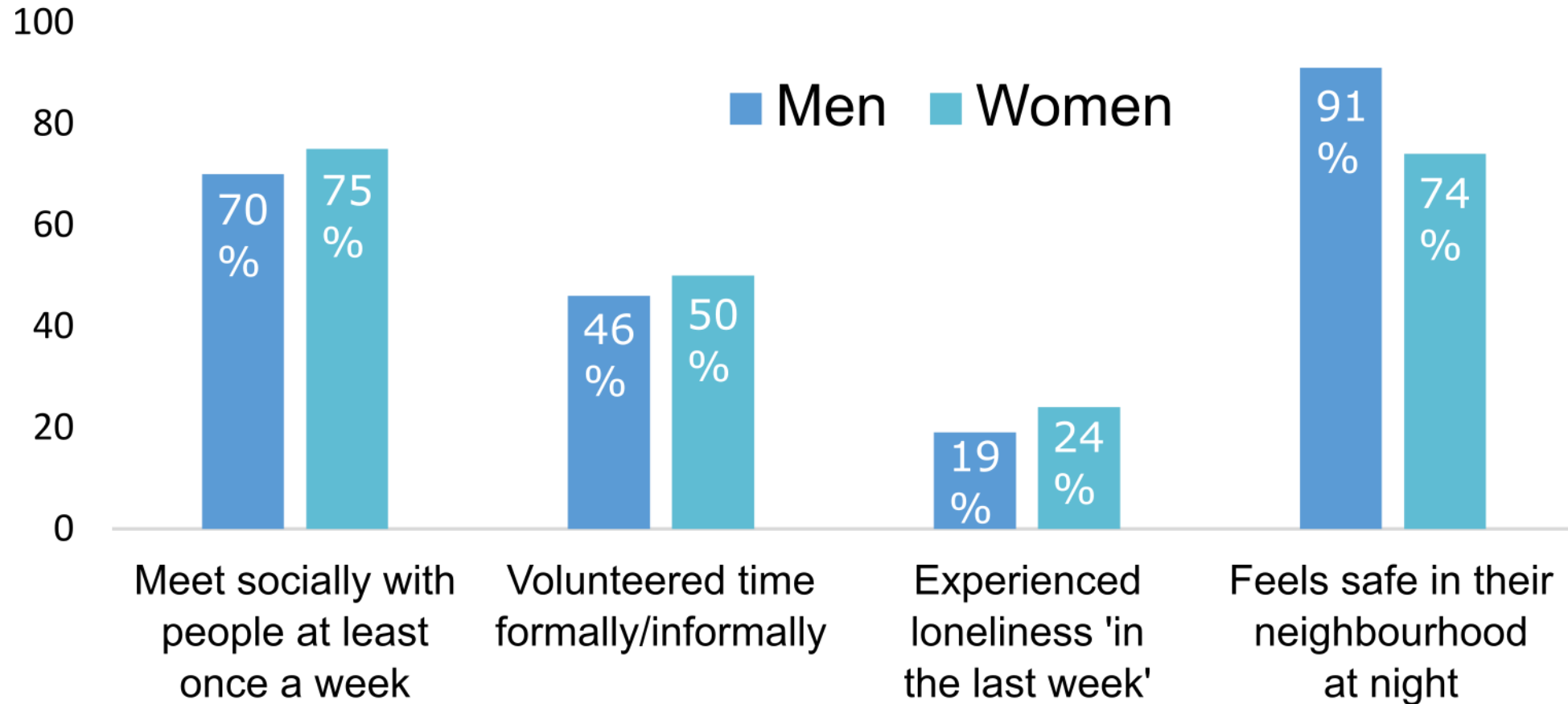
Personal factors

Perceptions of neighbourhoods across age categories
- the proportion who say....

100%

The neighbourhood is
a good/very good place to live

'People are kind
to each other'

80%

Feels a sense of 'belonging'
to their neighbourhood

'People can be
trusted'

60%

Age
Category: 16-24   25-34   35-44   45-59   60-74   75+

Loneliness is highest for youngest and oldest age groups

There are statistically significant variations by gender

	Men	Women
Meet socially with people at least once a week	70%	75%
Volunteered time formally/informally	46%	50%
Experienced loneliness 'in the last week'	19%	24%
Feels safe in their neighbourhood at night	91%	74%

(Scottish Household Survey, 2017, 2018)

Loneliness and social interaction/isolation – different patterns
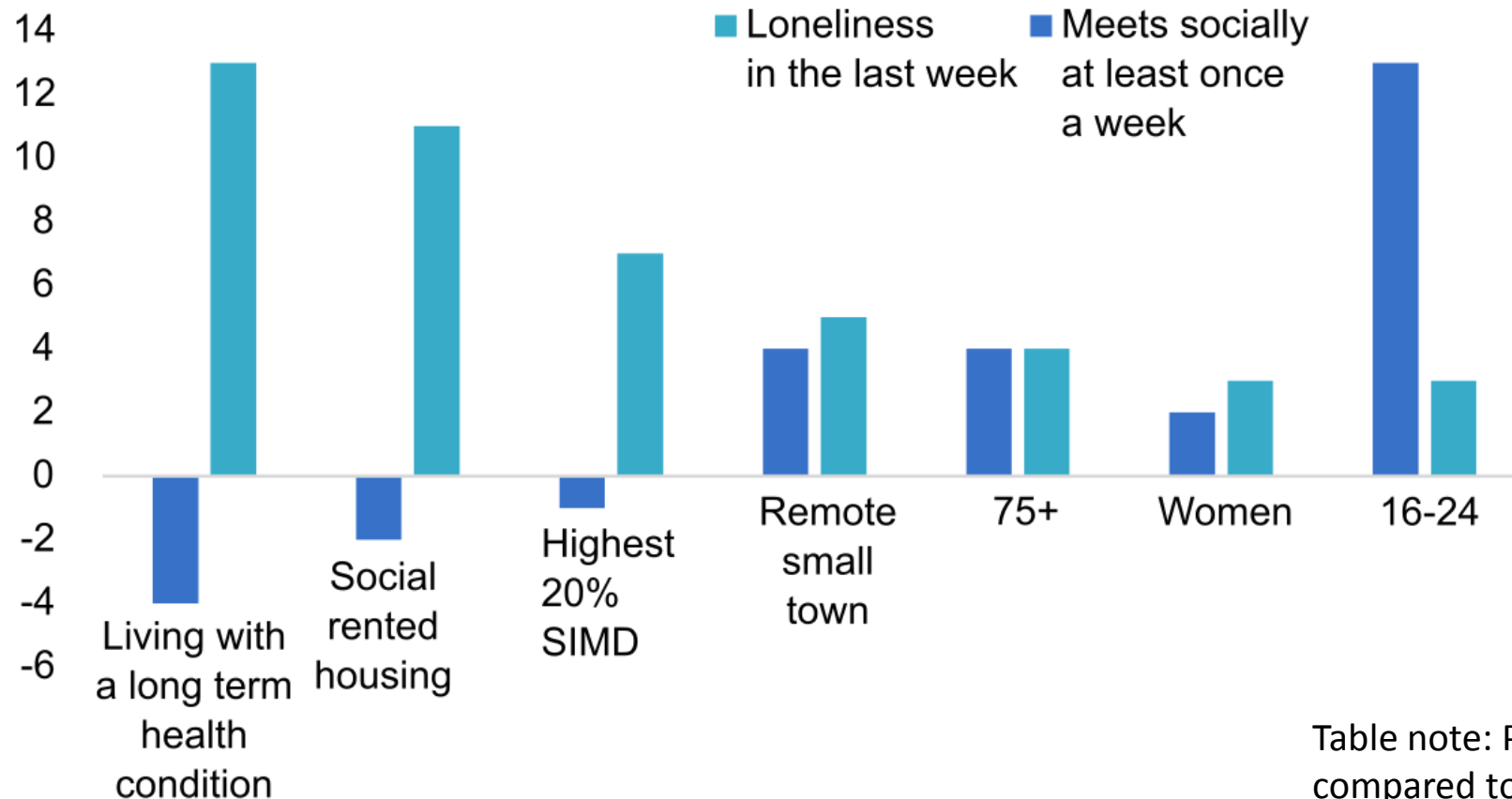
Table note: Percentage point difference compared to the Scotland average (Scottish Household Survey, 2018)

Kay's story

"You are asking local people to take a level of involvement that many people are incapable of and they are incapable not because they are stupid, not because they have no capacity to read and understand but because what is going on in their lives is taking all that they have.
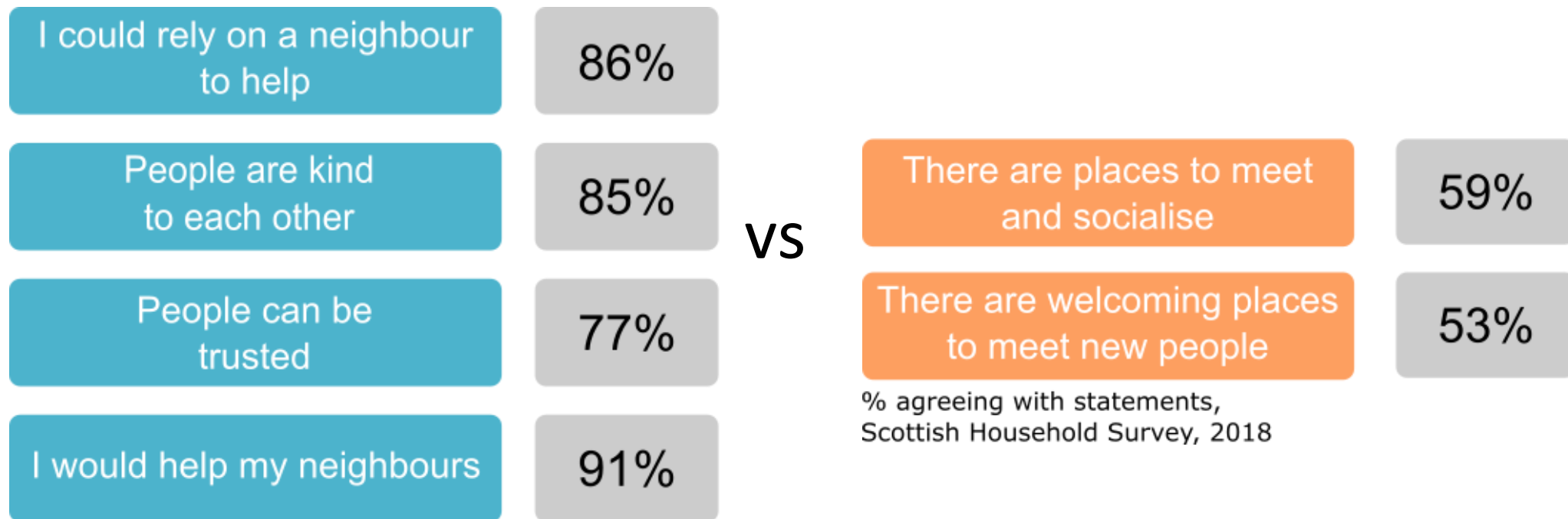
For some people the actual distress of being ill, or living in poverty, for instance, it just takes up so much energy. Which means that those voices are missing.

This is not a mental illness that I have but the circumstances that I am in create a mental health burden and you then find yourself reading websites about anxiety and being offered anti-depressants and it is not appropriate but that is where you end up."
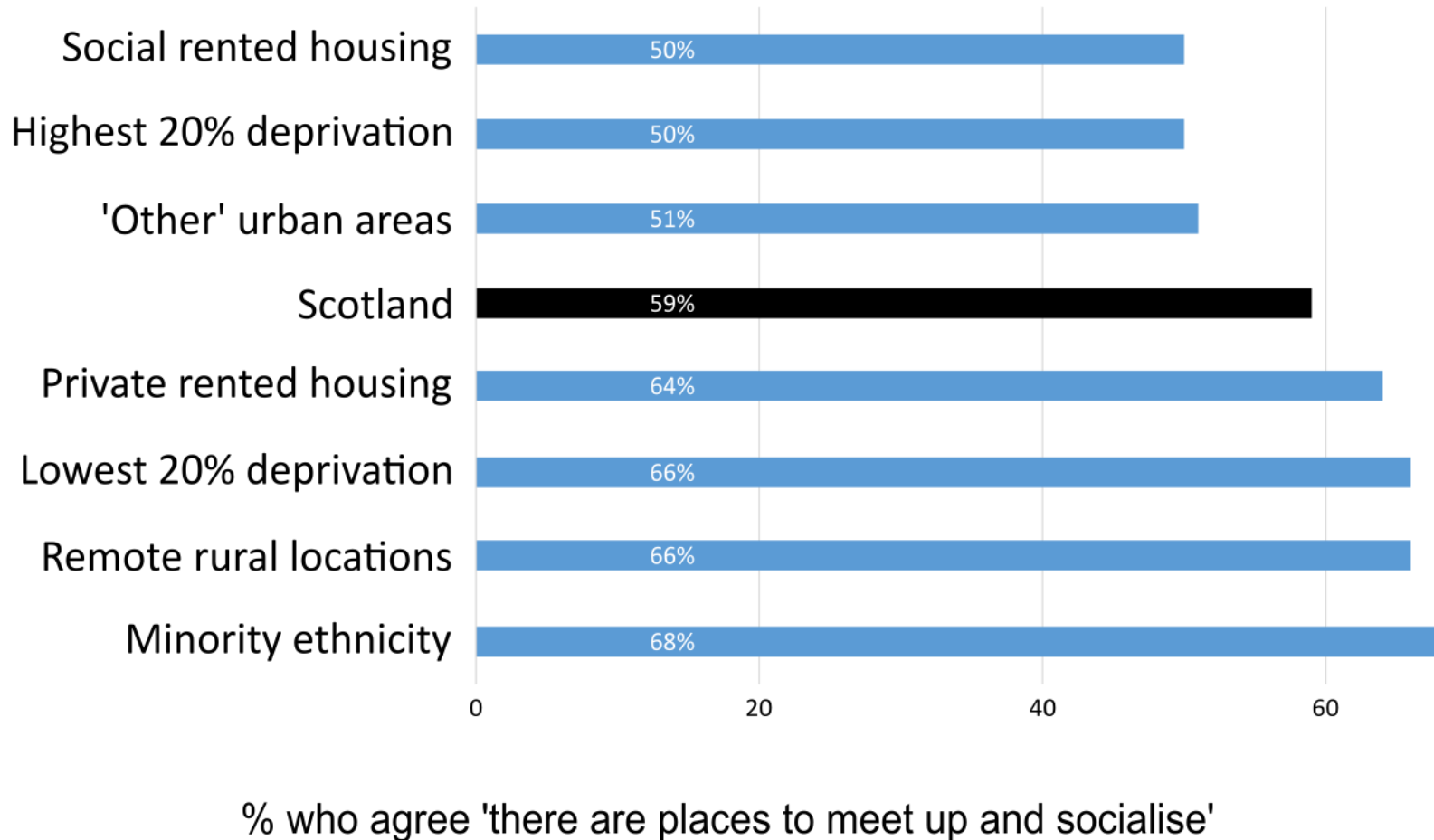
Public spaces and amenities

People are consistently more positive about the people in their neighbourhoods than they are about their places and spaces.

| I could rely on a neighbour to help | 86% |

| People are kind to each other | 85% |

| People can be trusted | 77% |

VS

| There are places to meet and socialise | 59% |

| There are welcoming places to meet new people | 53% |

| I would help my neighbours | 91% |

% agreeing with statements,
Scottish Household Survey, 2018

And lack of meeting spaces is more pronounced for some groups of the population.

% who agree 'there are places to meet up and socialise'

Some local authority areas have a more pressing need to look at their social infrastructure
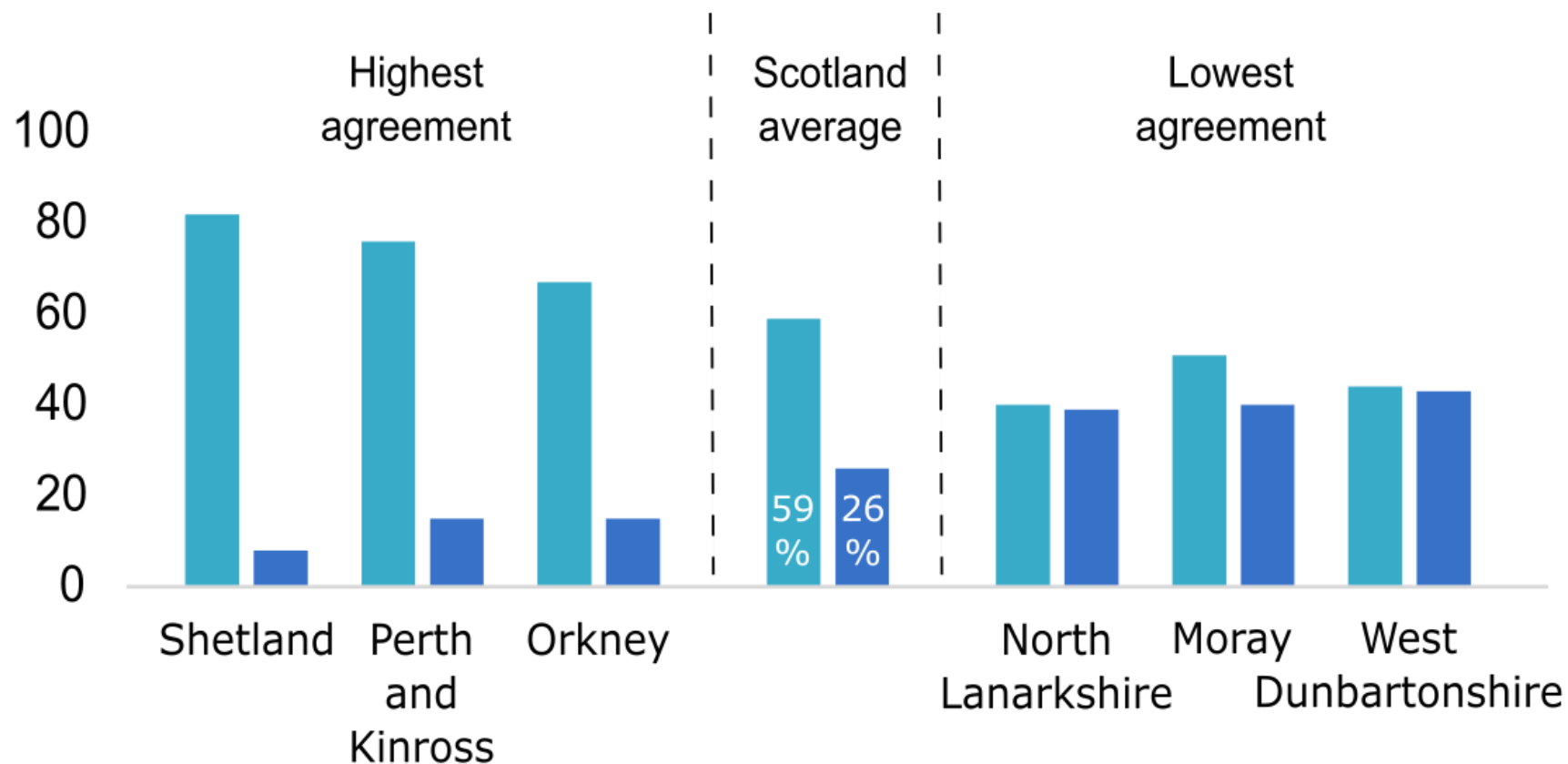
Table note: 3 highest and lowest LA by 'there are places to meet: disagree'

The number of **post offices** has fallen by 50% in 30 years and 93 branches closed in 2016

28,000 **pubs** have closed since the 1970s

121 **libraries** closed in 2016 alone

Between 2012 and 2016 an estimated 600 **youth centres** closed

762 **banks** in Britain are set to close in one year

In 2005 there were almost 600 **bingo halls** in the UK, compared to fewer than 400 in 2014

110 Anglican **churches** closed in Wales in just 10 years

At least 214 **playground** facilities have closed since 2014

1 in 5 regional **museums** at least part closed in 2015

45% of local authorities are considering either selling **parks and green spaces** or transferring their management to others

1200 **children's centres** have shut since 2010

Improving our neighbourhoods

People improve their neighbourhoods, but involvement in decision making feels remote for all groups

% who agree, 'People take action to improve the neighbourhood
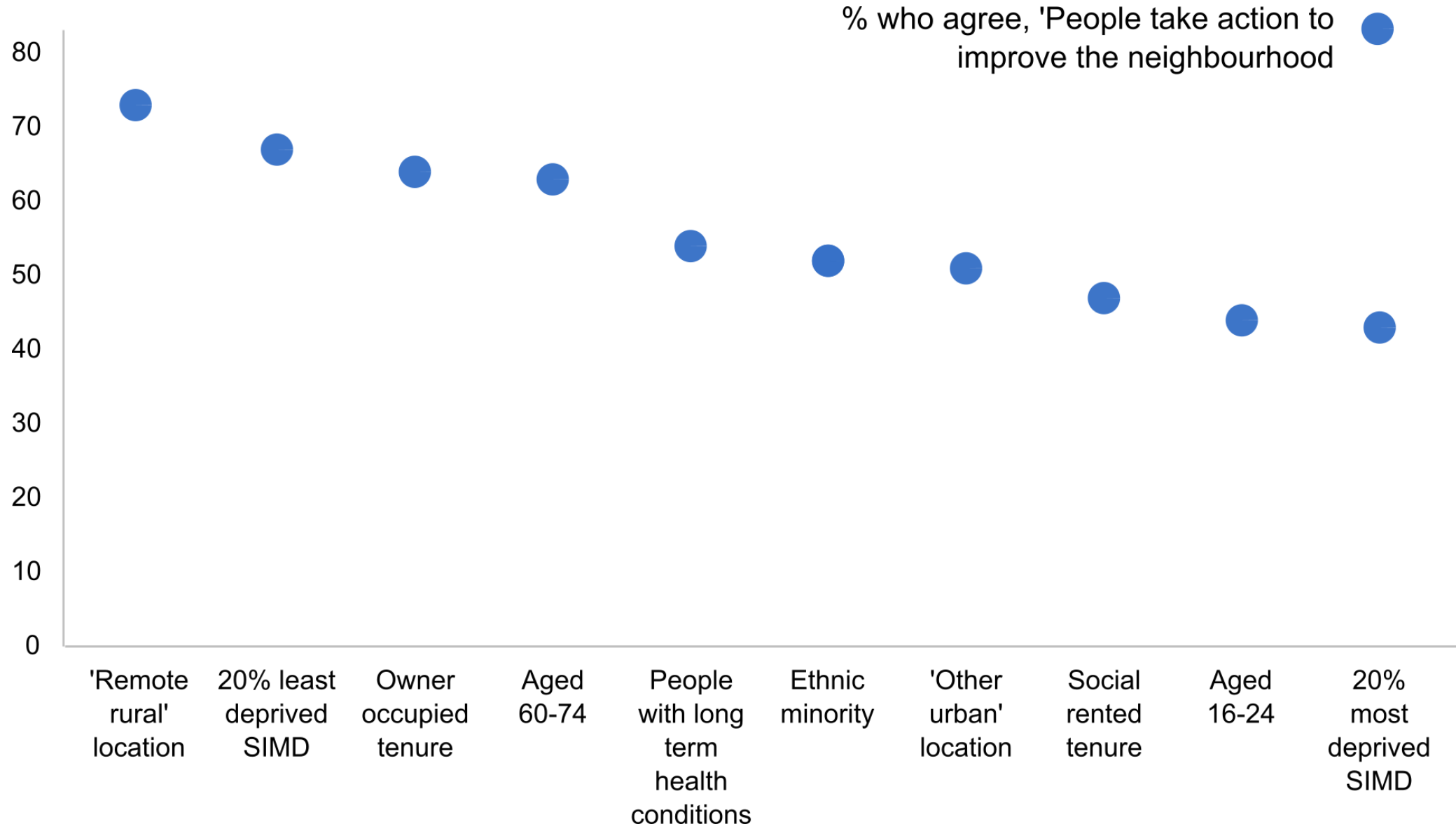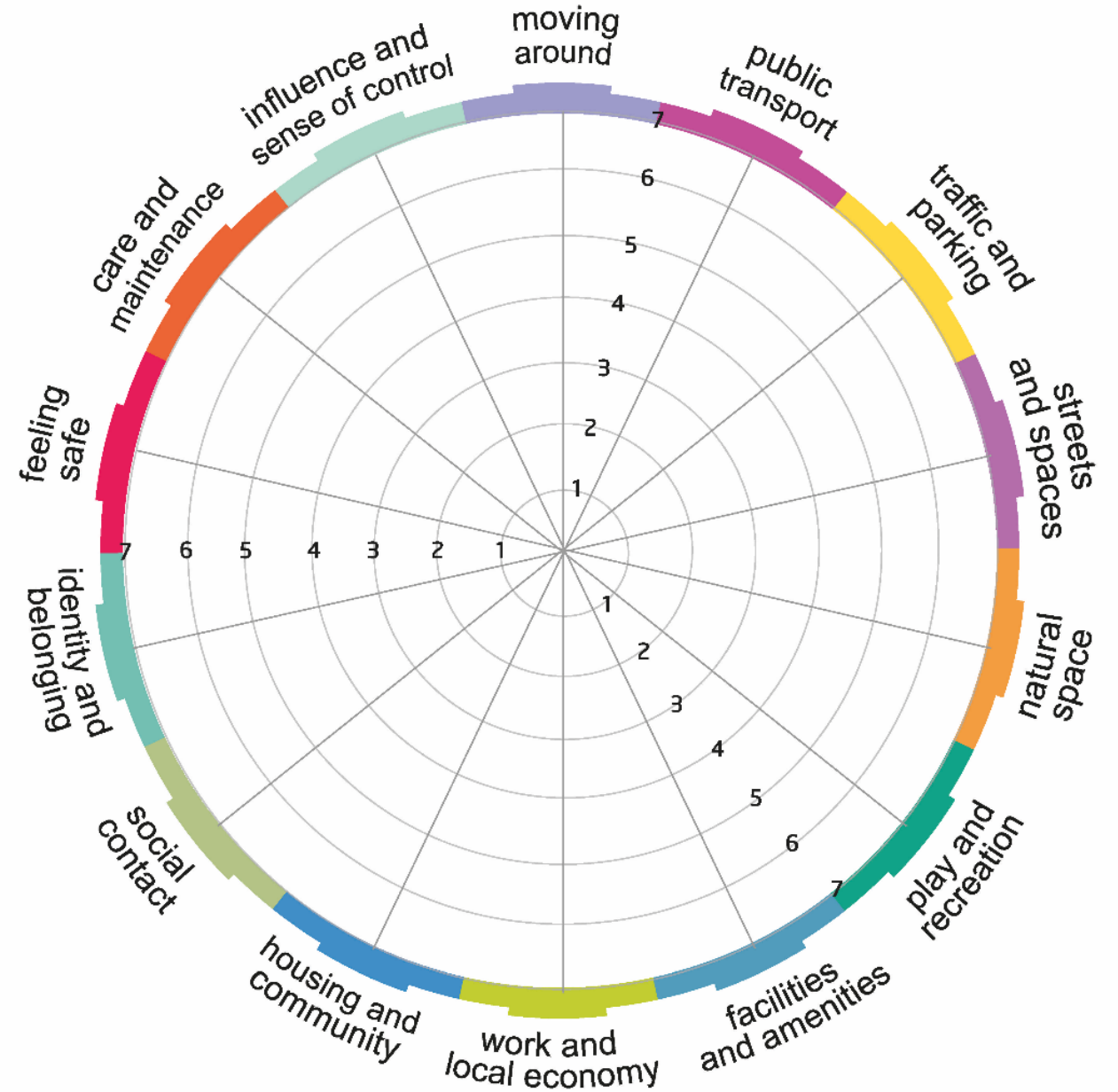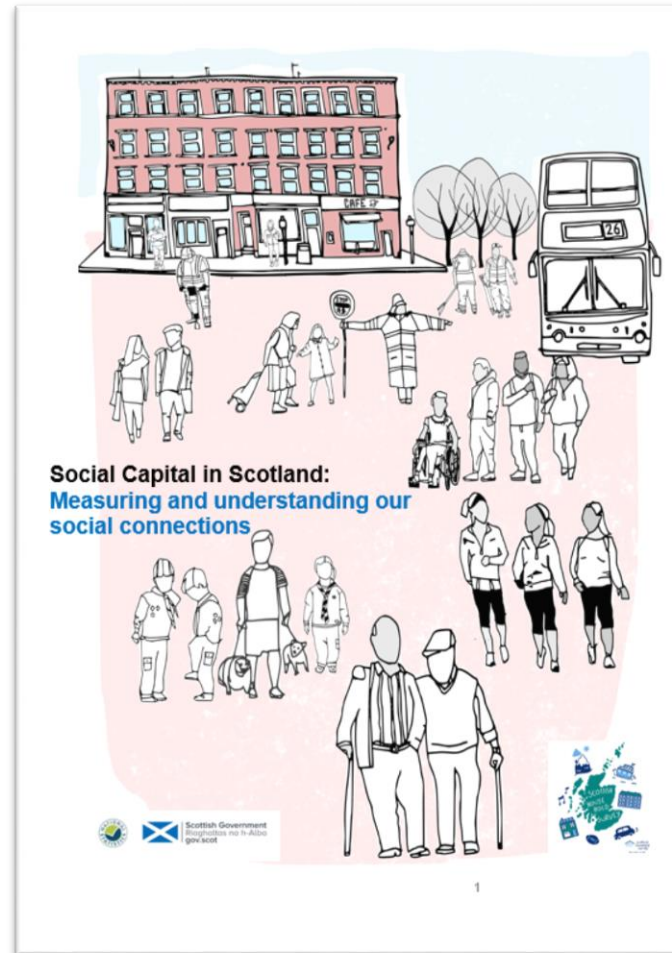
What can we do to improve social connections?

1. Tackle inequalities across places, our identities, life course and the design of public services.

2. Create, retain, maintain places and spaces within communities.

3. Improve the access to decision making – culturally deeper innovations?

4. Situate our understandings in people and places. Commit to plural and multi-dimensional accounts of community and personal wellbeing.

- People Factors inc. age, sex & genes

- Community Factors inc. capital & networks

- Lifestyle Factors inc. diet, physical activity & work-life balance

- The Local Economy inc. wealth creation & access to, & nature of market

- Activities such as working, shopping, moving around, living, playing & learning

- The Built Environment inc. buildings, spaces, streets, public realm & housing.

- The Natural Environment inc. air, water, landscape & natural habitat.

Forthcoming:

Social Capital in Scotland:
Measuring and understanding our social connections

People, places and relationships - Stories of Social Capital

Paula Jacobs, Scottish Government

"Social infrastructure is crucially important, because local, face-to-face interactions – at the school, the playground and the corner diner – are the building blocks of all public life.

People forge bonds in places that have healthy social infrastructures – not because they set out to build community, but because when people engage in sustained, recurrent interaction, particularly while doing things they enjoy, relationships inevitably grow."

ERIC KLINENBERG, 'Palaces for the People'