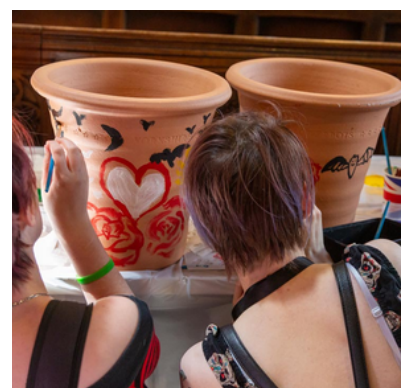


VITAL SIGNS

20
24



South
Yorkshire's
Community
Foundation

SOUTH YORKSHIRE
SYMCA
MAYORAL
COMBINED
AUTHORITY

Contents

About Us	2
Vital signs	3

Data	4
Priority Ranking	5
Top Priorities	6
Our Region	7

No.1 Priority	8
No.2 Priority	11
No.3 Priority	14
No.4 Priority	17

Next Steps	20
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THANK YOU

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to all those who participated in the Vital Signs research. Your insights and opinions were invaluable to us in understanding the key issues facing communities in South Yorkshire.

Your time and contributions have significantly helped create a rich body of valuable information. We are truly grateful for your support.

For more information regarding the Vital Signs research, including a full list of contributors and findings, please visit our website: <https://www.sycf.org.uk>



ABOUT US

SOUTH YORKSHIRE'S COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

South Yorkshire's Community Foundation (SYCF) has been a cornerstone of community support in South Yorkshire for over three decades. Since 1986, we've distributed more than £37 million to local groups, individuals, and organisations across Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield. As the largest grant-making charity in South Yorkshire, we connect generous donors with their chosen causes, providing funding advice and fostering lasting charitable giving.

Our grants have a tangible impact on the lives of local people throughout the region and beyond. By empowering local organisations and individuals, SYCF plays a vital role in strengthening communities across South Yorkshire.

UK Community Foundations - SYCF is a part of UKCF, a network of 47 quality accredited community foundations in the UK, which connect donors with local charities and supports grassroots organisations.

“

At South Yorkshire's Community Foundation, our mission is to connect generous individuals and businesses with the needs of our communities. To effectively support these needs, we've committed to a comprehensive understanding of the region's challenges and opportunities.

Our Vital Signs report serves as a vital tool in this endeavour. This triennial publication provides a detailed snapshot of the current state of South Yorkshire, highlighting key priorities and areas where targeted support is most needed. By investing in this research, we're ensuring that our grant programmes are aligned with the evolving needs of our communities and that we can make a lasting, positive impact.

Ruth E Willis MCIH FRSA
Chief Executive



VITAL SIGNS

WHAT IS VITAL SIGNS ?

Vital Signs is a comprehensive research initiative conducted by the South Yorkshire Community Foundation (SYCF) to identify and address the hidden needs and priorities of local communities. Every three years, SYCF gathers and analyses local data to provide a detailed snapshot of the region's current challenges and opportunities.

The research offers a thought-provoking perspective on the pressing issues facing South Yorkshire, highlighting the key priorities that must be addressed to enhance the region's strength, resilience, and growth.

The information gathered through Vital Signs is used to inform evidence-based solutions that improve the quality of life at the community level.



ORIGINS

Vital Signs was initially conceived as a tool to measure the specific issues, challenges, and strengths of communities. Developed by Canadian civic leaders, the goal was to increase community engagement and create a sustainable system for assessing community vitality and well-being. Originating in Toronto in 2001, Vital Signs has become an international initiative with over 85 participating communities worldwide.

WHY COMMUNITY RESEARCH MATTERS

Community-level research is crucial for understanding local needs, empowering communities, improving policies, and building trust. By involving community members in the research process, we gather valuable insights, tailor initiatives to specific needs, foster a sense of ownership, and inform effective policies ultimately leading to more equitable and sustainable community development.



DATA

METHODOLOGY

Every three years, the Vital Signs research collects data through community surveys, consultations, and existing statistical data. This process provides a comprehensive snapshot of the region's current challenges and opportunities.

The research employed various data collection methods to ensure that the voices of those often overlooked, or with limited access and opportunities for traditional research participation, were heard. The Vital Signs research seeks to gather these distinctive and specific perspectives, providing context and depth to the community level issues currently being experienced throughout South Yorkshire.



DATA COLLECTION

Vital Voices

A comprehensive survey that invites South Yorkshire residents to share their perspectives on a wide range of issues affecting their communities. By participating in Vital Voices, individuals can directly contribute to shaping the future of the region.

Vital Statistics

A rigorous analysis of existing datasets that compares South Yorkshire to the rest of the UK. This method provides valuable insights into regional trends and identifies areas where South Yorkshire may be overperforming or underperforming.

Vital Conversations

Focused discussions and consultations that prioritise the voices of marginalised and minoritised communities. These conversations offer a unique opportunity to understand the experiences and needs of groups that may be underrepresented in traditional data collection methods.

PRIORITY RANKING

The final report combines the Baseline Grade and Community Grade to rank the 10 Vital Signs themes from A - E. The lower ranks indicate a greater need and urgency for action. In cases where two priorities have the same overall rank, the Community's grade ranking of the different themes—which reflects the direct voice of residents—is given higher weighting. This approach ensures that both objective data and community perspectives are considered in identifying areas that require targeted interventions.

A

A lower letter grade indicates a higher priority

High Priority

E

COMMUNITY GRADE



This grade reflects the perceptions of residents on the ground. It is derived from the results of community consultations, the survey. A lower Community Grade suggests a greater perceived need.

A

Everything is great!

B

Things are going well

C

The situation is OK

D

Things aren't going very well.

E

Things are going very badly.

BASELINE GRADE



This grade compares South Yorkshire's performance on various indicators to other local authorities in the UK. It is calculated using existing research and data, including the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). A lower Baseline Grade indicates a higher level of need.

A

Better than 80% of comparable areas in relation to core indicator

B

Better than 60% of comparable areas

C

Better than 40% of comparable areas

D

Better than 20% of comparable areas

E

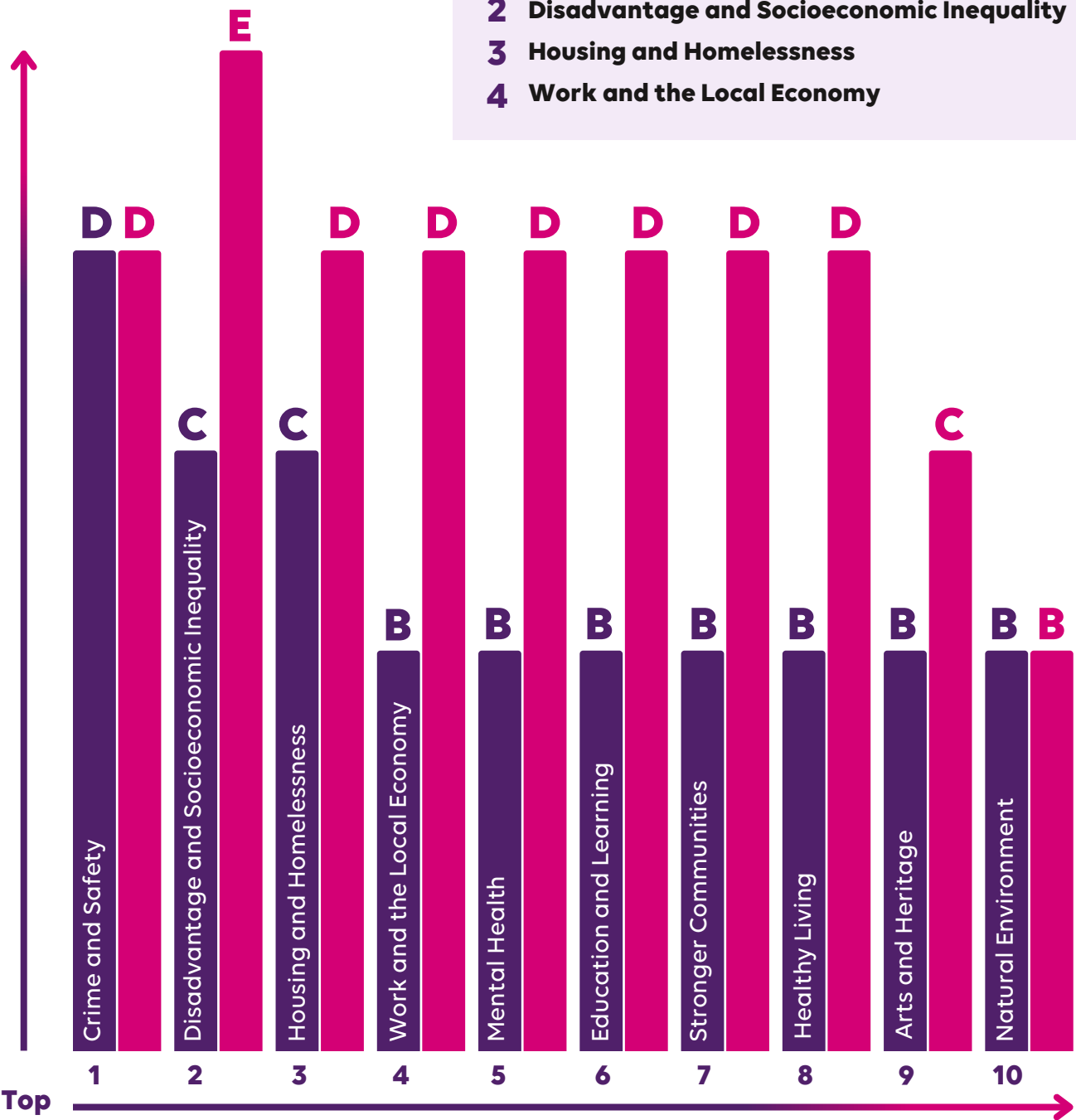
Worse than 80% of comparable areas

TOP PRIORITIES

TOP 4 PRIORITIES

The table compares community grades to baseline grades, with lower grades indicating a greater need for immediate action. The table ranks the priorities from 1 to 10, with 1 being the most urgent. Based on a comprehensive analysis, the top 4 priorities are as follows:

- 1 Crime and Safety
- 2 Disadvantage and Socioeconomic Inequality
- 3 Housing and Homelessness
- 4 Work and the Local Economy



VITAL SIGNS PRIORITIES



Community Grade



Baseline Grade

OUR REGION

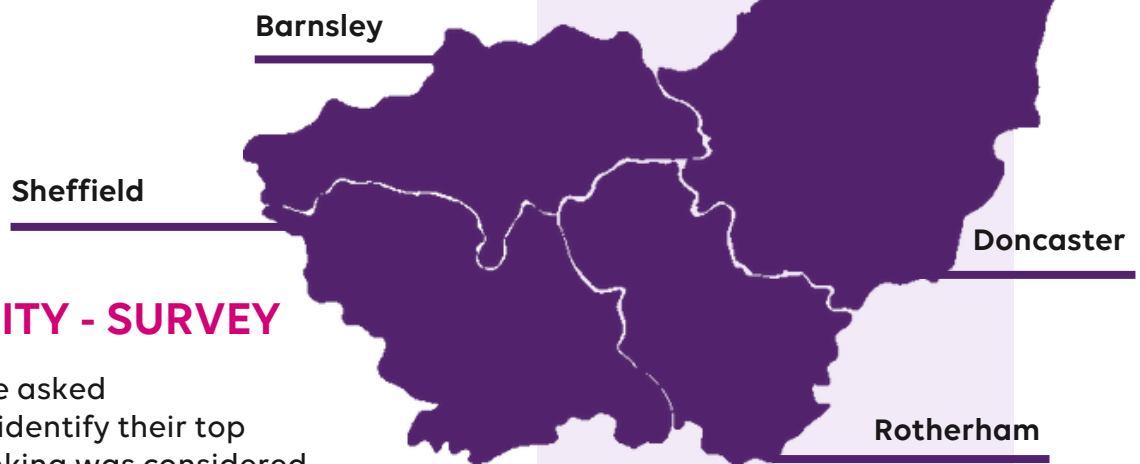
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

South Yorkshire is a vibrant region known for its diverse economy, rich industrial heritage, and beautiful landscapes. Comprising four major regions, Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham, and Sheffield, South Yorkshire offers a blend of urban and rural environments and unique experiences.

Barnsley - 248,449
Doncaster - 314,176
Rotherham - 271,195
Sheffield - 573,252

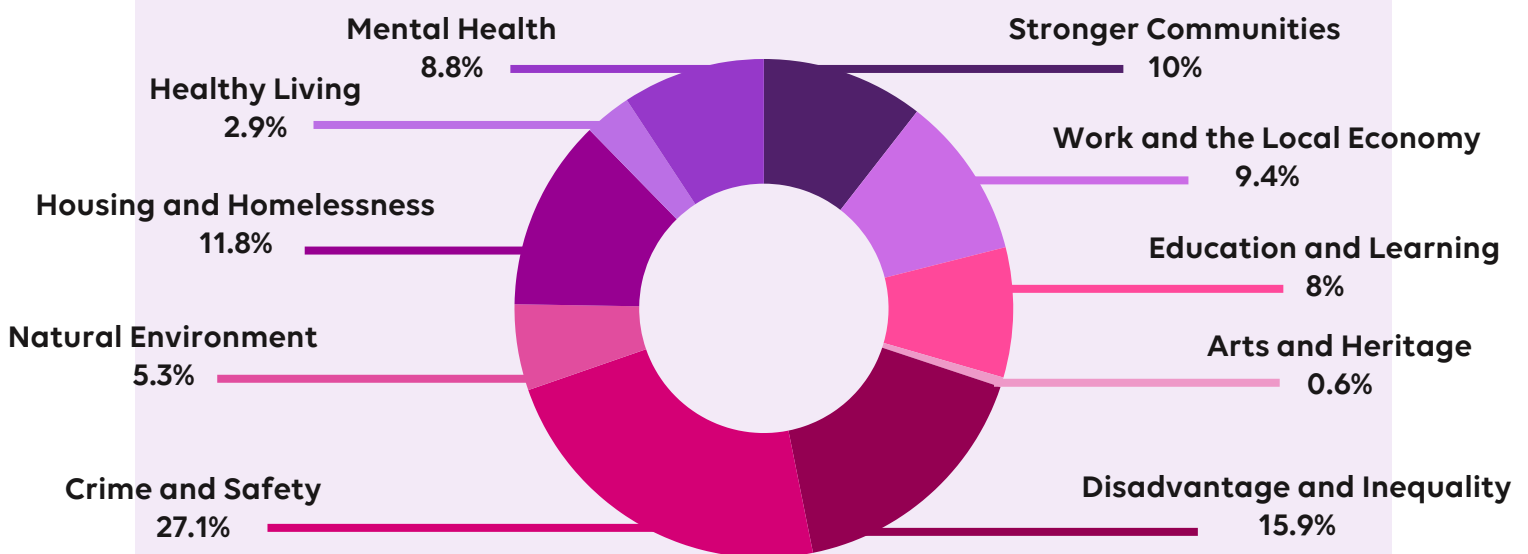
South Yorkshire 1,407,072

Population estimates for
England and Wales: mid
2023 - Office for National
Statistics



TOP PRIORITY - SURVEY

In the survey, we asked respondents to identify their top priority. This ranking was considered when assigning and calculating grades. The results, combined with consultation and other survey responses, informed the final ranking.



NO. 1 PRIORITY

CRIME AND SAFETY



D Community Grade

D Baseline Grade



European Sustainability Goal (EU SDG)

GOAL 16: Peace Justice and Strong Institutions

Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.



27.1%

Voted as the top priority for action

FINDINGS

Residents of South Yorkshire have mixed feelings about crime and safety in their neighbourhoods. There is growing concern about various crimes, especially those related to drugs, antisocial behaviour, and property theft. Many residents feel a decline in respect for authority and have witnessed a rise in youth-related antisocial behaviour. To address these issues, the community calls for increased police engagement, youth programmes, and funding for crime prevention initiatives.

Concerns about different types of crime, such as drug-related incidents, antisocial behaviour, property theft, and violent offences, have been prevalent and have dramatically increased in recent years, with crimes becoming more visible in local communities. Following COVID-19, individuals in the community demonstrated heightened awareness and concern regarding crime and safety issues. Furthermore, many residents have observed a rise in openly visible criminal activity, which has contributed to a greater sense of unease. Consequently, there is an overall reluctance among community members to report crimes due to fears of potential backlash.



"There is undoubtedly criminal activity, but probably no more here than in the wealthier areas, it's just more obvious, more honest. Most people are kind and generous". South Yorkshire Resident

35.9%

Have experienced harassment, discrimination or other forms of antisocial behaviour where they live.

CRIME AND SAFETY

Residents voiced a strong interest in fostering closer ties with their local police through enhanced community engagement initiatives and efforts. This encompasses improved communication, interaction opportunities, and a deeper understanding of the police's role within their neighbourhoods. Many older residents reminisced about their experiences with local officers, recalling how it contributed to a heightened sense of safety and community unity.

“

“There has been a visible rise in crime and burglary. Although where I live is considered safer than others in terms of knife crime, youth antisocial behaviour is high. Also seeing individuals on illegal substances and hearing conversations of stealing from local shops can be very scary.” **South Yorkshire Resident**

57.5%

Believe that too little is done to address the causes of crime in their local area.

31.6%

Don't feel safe in their local area, both in public spaces and in their home.

Residents have observed a noticeable decline in respect for authority, particularly among the youth in their communities. This erosion of respect for authority figures has manifested in various ways, including within education, towards the police, local government officials, elder community members, and within close-knit communities.

Youth-related antisocial behaviour emerged as a major concern in the research, playing a crucial role in the larger issues of crime and diminished quality of life in South Yorkshire. Participants highlighted the importance of enhanced initiatives and educational programs aimed at preventing the next generation from developing disrespect for authority, getting involved in gang activities, or engaging in criminal behaviour. It was commonly observed that antisocial behaviour, particularly among young individuals in public areas, was widespread, leading to feelings of unease, intimidation, and insecurity among residents, especially in shared spaces like parks, town centres, and public squares.

“

“We have issues with crime in our area at the moment. It would seem from the same group of people. Antisocial behaviour, damage to buses, theft from local businesses and properties, arson, nuisance off road bikes etc.” **South Yorkshire Resident**

“Not enough people report problems so the police don't really get the full picture.” **South Yorkshire Resident**

“The early routes are the best for starting points and going on to the teens and going upwards to adulthood and educating them on the dangers of crime” **South Yorkshire Resident**

Shoplifting offences have increased by 46% in South Yorkshire from the 12 month period ending December 2022 to the 12 month period ending December 2023. (ONS, Crime in England and Wales 24.07.2024)

CRIME AND SAFETY

There has been a call for increased focus on funding for youth centres, programmes, and anti-crime workshops in schools and communities. These initiatives aim to provide a safe haven for young people involved in or at risk of crime. The community seeks to deter vulnerable individuals from entering a life of crime by directing efforts towards preventing youth criminal activities.



Rotherham Blackburn Club for Young People

There were 156,748 crimes recorded by the police in South Yorkshire in the year ending December 2023. This equates to a rate of 113 crimes per 1,000 population. Overall Crime, Violence Against the Person, Sexual Offences and Theft Crimes Recorded by Police in South Yorkshire. (SYPCC, 2024)

South Yorkshire has the second highest crime rate per 1,000 population when compared to our most similar forces. (SYPCC, 2024)

The recorded level of total crime (excluding fraud) in South Yorkshire decreased by 2% in year ending December 2023, compared to the previous year. Overall Crime, Violence Against the Person, Sexual Offences and Theft Crimes Recorded by Police in South Yorkshire. (SYPCC, 2024)

INSIGHT

Deaf community members stated feeling unsafe due to antisocial behaviour, particularly from intimidating youths. They have observed increased crime and drug dealing but are afraid to report it to the police. The community desires more police presence and engagement with different community groups to clarify misunderstandings and gather input. This is especially important due to often feeling like the last individuals to know.

Due to being deaf, British Sign Language (BSL) is the community's first language, not English. This, combined with the need for interpreters, makes it difficult for the deaf community to hear individuals committing crimes or prey on them due to their vulnerability, increasing their sense of unsafety, especially in city centres.

“

“Where I live, I don't report it because I don't want them to know that it's me. But the neighbours have been telling me that they will report it to the police, but I don't want to be involved.” **South Yorkshire Deaf Resident**

“

“When somebody is coming up to pass you sometimes, you know, I feel paranoid.” **South Yorkshire Deaf Resident**

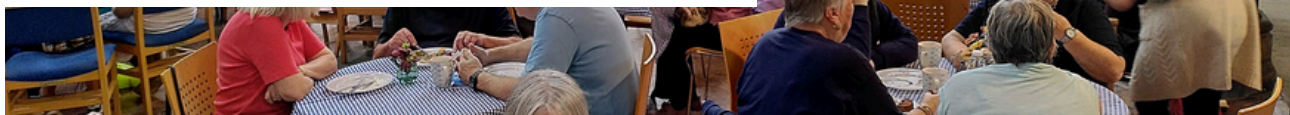
45.7% Think that the situation is OK, but could be improved.

40.4% Think that action should be taken immediately or as soon as possible.

NO. 2 PRIORITY

DISADVANTAGE AND SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITY

C Community Grade
E Baseline Grade



GOAL 1: No Poverty
End poverty in all its forms everywhere.



GOAL 10: Reduce Inequality
Reduce inequality within and among countries.

15.9% Voted as the top priority for action

FINDINGS

The cost of living crisis has significantly impacted residents, leading to financial strain and a decline in quality of life. Residents, particularly those from low-income backgrounds, have expressed frustration with rising expenses for essentials like food, bills, and transport. Many have resorted to cutting back on expenses and seeking cheaper alternatives. Community organisations have also faced challenges due to increased demand for their services and reduced funding. There is a clear need for greater access to financial literacy resources, including budgeting and bill reduction workshops, to help residents cope with the financial pressures.

Residents expressed feelings of significant financial strain due to escalating expenses, calling for more comprehensive financial management and budgeting classes. They demonstrated feelings of indifference towards recent information that they had received on reducing energy bills, primarily through pamphlets, finding that they had minimal impact. It was highlighted by some that financial management skills were a privilege. Greater resources and opportunities, especially in person, were called for to foster greater financial literacy across communities, especially individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

“Living on my own has been very hard, even though I have a good salary, with rent prices, food and energy prices it has been very hard this winter and I have needed the help of food banks at times.”
South Yorkshire Resident

52.5% **Social**

49.3% **Economic**

Agree that there are community groups working in their local area to support people experiencing any disadvantage as a result of the different types of inequality.

DISADVANTAGE AND SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Vulnerable individuals, including those with disabilities or health issues, reported that their quality of life has been declared as a result of the cost of living crisis. Many with mobility challenges stated that their reliance on ready-made meals, public transport, and community initiatives to maintain happiness and a decent quality of life have become increasingly expensive. This effect has been observed by many to have also adversely affected other areas of their lives, including mental health, diet, mobility, and overall quality of life.

“

“I live in a 'nice' area, but it is clear that everyone is struggling. I myself have been educated in financial responsibility, budgeting and saving in addition to having low spending habits as a result of growing up in a low socioeconomic household and wanting a life of stability. The impact of the cost of living prices having a major impact. I try to not live beyond my means, and only buy what I can afford. I think it would be beneficial for classes on financial responsibility and educating people on how they can save up and still enjoy their lives. I think many people would benefit from being more financially savvy and aware of healthy financial decisions.” **South Yorkshire Resident**

53.2% Thought that the gap between the wealthiest and the poorest in their local area is wider than ever before.

25.4% Said that they sometimes do not have enough money for basic needs such as food or heating.

The growing financial pressures were noted to have affected everyone, particularly individuals from low-socioeconomic backgrounds. There was a clear sense of resentment and anger amongst some of these individuals regarding job, pay, and living inequalities, with many expressing that the gap between the wealthy and the poor had become more pronounced. However, it was widely acknowledged overall that struggles were experienced across all socioeconomic classes, albeit to a greater degree amongst individuals from lower-income households. Consequently, many residents noted that they started opting for cheaper alternatives and cutting back on their expenses.

The costs of bills, fuel, food, and leisure activities were seen to have surged, leading to a significant rise in shopping expenses for all. Stores that were once considered 'financially safe' by some were seen to have lost their status as the 'cheaper alternative'. Many individuals also reported wrestling with issues related to utility usage and budgeting as a result of these changes. Crucially, there was a clear demand for greater access to diverse, effective free resources, including classes and community workshops, both in person and online. These resources should focus on budgeting, bill reduction, and saving techniques to meet the varied learning styles, preferences, and specific needs of the community.



DISADVANTAGE AND SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITY

The research highlighted a community facing the profound effects of the cost of living crisis. Residents are finding it difficult to afford basic goods and services, resulting in significant financial strain. Nevertheless, the community displays a remarkable spirit of unity, as individuals and local groups collaborate to improve their surroundings.

Burngreave Foodbank



In the period 22 June to 11 September 2022, over half (55%) of disabled adults reported finding it difficult to afford their energy bills, and around a third (36%) found it difficult to afford their rent or mortgage payments compared with 40% and 27% of non-disabled people, respectively. (ONS /Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, 25.10.2022)

Impacted by the cost of living crisis, the Opinion and Lifestyles survey data found that from July to October 2023 some groups were more likely to report difficulty with rent and mortgage payments, including lone parents, Asian and Asian British adults and Black, African, Caribbean or Black British adults. (OLS ,04.12.2023)

INSIGHT

Individuals with disabilities expressed that the increasing cost of living has greatly impacted their quality of life. Dependence on specialised goods and services, including assistive technology and specific dietary requirements, was seen to have resulted in significantly higher daily expenses. Additionally, limited mobility and accessibility often contributed to elevated transportation costs and grocery bills, particularly for those who depended on ready-made meals and tailored diets. The group acknowledged the widespread struggle due to rising expenses for all.

“

“Paying for gas and electricity has been huge for everyone. Paying for gas and electricity has been huge for everyone.” **South Yorkshire Disabled Resident**

“

“The disparity in educational provision, earning potential, generational wealth, health and wellbeing, and so on, is extreme. It is impossible for most people to work their way out of poverty or debt.” **South Yorkshire Resident**

43.1% Think that the situation is OK, but could be improved.

45.7% Think that action should be taken immediately or as soon as possible.

NO. 3 PRIORITY

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

C Community Grade

D Baseline Grade



GOAL 2: Zero Hunger

End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.



GOAL 1: No Poverty

End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

11.8%

Voted as the top priority for action

FINDINGS

Overall, participants expressed concern regarding the lack of affordable housing in the region, which poses challenges for young individuals, low-income families, and people with disabilities in securing suitable homes. The condition of private rented properties was often inadequate, whereas social housing was characterised by lengthy waiting periods and a complicated application process. Homelessness remains a pressing issue, evident in both visible rough sleeping and less apparent forms like sofa surfing. There is a pressing demand for enhanced support services for those experiencing homelessness, while also tackling issues related to potential exploitation of the system.

One of the most urgent issues recognised was the absence of affordable housing. Both rental and purchase costs were deemed excessively high, particularly for young people and low-income families. There were specific worries about the lack of accessible housing and bungalows for vulnerable and disabled individuals across the region. This challenge, along with a shortage of social housing and the steep costs associated with private rentals, was perceived to have significantly exacerbated financial inequalities.

“

“I think the issue currently is also with the affordable housing which we have found out, um is not affordable housing, it's housing but it's not necessarily affordable to people who perhaps might need the housing. It's just slightly cheaper than the four and five bedroom houses that they're building on the same land.” **South Yorkshire Resident**

29.7%

Sometimes feel worried that they will not be able to meet their housing costs over the coming months.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

One of the most urgent issues recognised was the absence of affordable housing. Both rental and purchase costs were deemed excessively high, particularly for young people and low-income families. There were specific worries about the lack of accessible housing and bungalows for vulnerable and disabled individuals across the region. This challenge, along with a shortage of social housing and the steep costs associated with private rentals, was perceived to have significantly exacerbated financial inequalities.

“

“They are often in private rented properties which are not kept in good repair. Tenants feel that if they complain they will be evicted. Landlords know they can get desperate tenants to rent any property, no matter how poorly maintained.” **South Yorkshire Resident**

35.1% Stated that it was common to see people sleeping rough in their local area.

66.3% Disagree that there is good quality housing available in their local area for people of all financial circumstances.

The overall quality of privately rented accommodations was perceived as poor, often leaving individuals feeling trapped and unable to move due to the steep costs of homeownership. Conditions in these rentals were frequently described as terrible, with private landlords profiting while neglecting to improve living standards. In contrast, the quality of social housing was generally perceived positively. However, negative perceptions arose from confusion surrounding the process involved, along with the lengthy waiting times and complexity associated with securing social housing.

In rural areas and the outskirts of cities, traditional forms of rough sleeping and homelessness were noted as visibility less common compared to urban centres. The latter was often perceived as intimidating, frightening, and highly prevalent. The feelings of sympathy and a genuine desire to assist homeless individuals were profoundly strong. Predominantly, homelessness was visible in everyone's daily lives when visiting supermarkets. However, some residents stated that it was widely known that some of these individuals were not genuinely homeless, but were part of well known local crime gangs, subsequently causing people to feel uncomfortable and scared when entering local supermarkets.

Around a third (35%) of adults in Great Britain who were paying rent, or a mortgage, said they were finding payments very or somewhat difficult to afford. (ONS Cost of Living Insights, 14.02.2024)

“

“Rent is high and quality of privately owned property often poor.” **South Yorkshire Resident**

Homeless Survival Guide

South Yorkshire



SYCF

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Community members expressed their concerns about the multifaceted issue of homelessness in urban areas, highlighting factors such as individuals potentially exploiting the system, the shortage of affordable housing, and the challenges faced in accessing support services for those who are truly in need.

However, 'hidden' homelessness, such as sofa surfing, was acknowledged by some but remained largely overlooked. As the term implies, awareness of this issue is limited because it is concealed from public view, leading to its frequent neglect by society due to its lower visibility compared to other forms of homelessness.

INSIGHT

The LGBT+ community highlighted that many individuals experience homelessness not primarily due to addiction or financial difficulties, but as a direct consequence of their sexuality and gender expression. This is a significant issue within the homelessness crisis that often goes overlooked.

“

“Many properties are also rented for higher than it would cost for people to buy the properties and pay a monthly mortgage. Private renting horror stories are also on the rise.” **South Yorkshire Resident**

Private rental prices continued to grow at a record high rate in the UK, rising by 6.2% (provisional estimate) in the year to January 2024, unchanged for the second consecutive month. This was the highest annual percentage change since this the UK data series began in January 2016. (ONS, 14.05.2024)

INSIGHT

Young people often expressed anxiety and felt unprepared for the process of buying a home. Many found financial workshops and educational resources helpful, though the prospect of homeownership remained daunting.

“

“And it's quite scary. Yeah, stuff like that. It's scary growing up these days especially with Mortgages and stuff like, well, I wouldn't even know where you would start. Like what if you're paying a mortgage off for the rest of your life. You just, you're gonna have that constant worry.” **South Yorkshire Young Resident**

“It's a sad thing that quite a lot of young people having to wait for relatives to pass away to be able to buy a house.” **South Yorkshire Young Resident**

43.7% Think that the situation is OK, but could be improved.

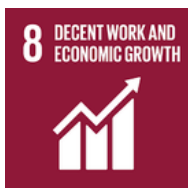
43.9% Think that action should be taken immediately or as soon as possible.

NO. 4 PRIORITY

WORK AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

B Community Grade

D Baseline Grade



European Sustainability Goal (EU SDG)

GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

9.4%

Voted as the top priority for action

FINDINGS

The research identified several barriers to employment for individuals from diverse backgrounds, including women, single parents, people with disabilities, and those from marginalised communities. Many individuals faced challenges balancing work and family responsibilities, while people with disabilities experienced discrimination and exclusion. To address these issues, employers were urged to increase their understanding of disabilities, provide accessible job opportunities, and create and advertise inclusive workplaces. Community groups and organisations were also seen as crucial in providing targeted support and advocating for the rights of marginalised individuals.

Many respondents with childcare responsibilities faced significant challenges in finding jobs that accommodated their family needs. The high cost of childcare, coupled with the ongoing cost of living crisis, made flexible work arrangements essential for many individuals with children. These individuals often sought jobs that offered flexibility in terms of hours, work location, or remote options.

“

“We have several warehouses in our area, but that job criteria doesn't fit with everyone in our area. We need jobs that parents can access with reasonable hours.”
South Yorkshire Resident

“It is incredibly sad to see lots of local independent businesses closing - they are the heart of the community.” **South Yorkshire Resident**

55.2%

Stated that local businesses struggle to stay open in their local area.

WORK AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

The cost-of-living crisis has significantly impacted individuals and families, placing additional strain on their finances. Rising costs have made it increasingly difficult to balance daily expenses with wages, leading to concerns about job security and the quality of available employment opportunities. Many respondents expressed a need for more support for small businesses and local communities to stimulate job growth and create more sustainable livelihoods. Additionally, there were concerns about the quality of jobs available, especially outside of the city centre.

“

“We still have a disconnect between those looking for employment and those with vacancies, both exist but they often can't find each other. Existing processes and systems don't seem to work for many people/employers.” **South Yorkshire Resident**

21.5%

Disagreed that there was a good level of support available to people looking for work in their local area.

Community groups and organisations were valued and seen to play a vital role in providing targeted support, challenging misconceptions, and advocating for the rights of individuals in the workplace. They are noted to provide informative workshops and educational training for applicants, employees, and employers, both as part of their own daily services and through being employed by companies to deliver training. For example, community groups were seen to offer impactful job training programmes, language classes, and counselling services to help individuals overcome barriers to employment but also have the capacity and expertise to educate employers on the support needed for their service users. Supporting such groups as they advocate for policy changes and actively improve accessibility and promote inclusivity due to their expertise in the workplace was highly encouraged.

Many respondents expressed concerns about accessing employment and training opportunities, particularly for young people who prefer alternative paths to traditional academic routes. They emphasised the need for more support and guidance to help these individuals explore and secure meaningful careers that align with their interests and skills.

“

“More help needed for young people, older workers and disabled people.” **SY Resident**

In May to July 2024, the number of people aged 16+ in employment was 33.23 million, and the employment rate for people aged 16-64 was 74.8%. Employment levels increased by around 150,000 over the last year, but the employment rate remained at a similar level. (ONS, UK Labour Market Overview, 13.08.2024)

Element Society



WORK AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

22.4% Agreed that they could access quality vocational training in their local area.

33.9% Didn't know if they could access quality vocational training.

INSIGHT

The majority of respondents with additional support needs stated that they had faced intentional or unintentional discrimination, exclusion, and limited accessibility in the workplace. Prominent feelings of isolation, distress, and frustration stemmed from a lack of understanding of diverse accessibility needs. They noted that even simple, low-cost accommodations could significantly improve the development of inclusive workplaces, ultimately fostering loyalty. Overall, those with additional accessibility needs encouraged employers not to shy away from hiring individuals with accessibility requirements due to fear or stigma. Overall, support and understanding were seen as essential for fostering loyalty and a positive work atmosphere.

Importantly, individuals with increased accessibility needs expressed concerns about being hired solely to fulfil diversity quotas and being treated as a token gesture. Many respondents emphasised their ability to perform the job but worried about facing tokenism. Overall, individuals requiring additional support highlighted the importance of disability and accessibility awareness education within the local economy in fostering loyalty and a positive work environment.

“

“There needs to be an increased awareness for employers training, for the employers themselves on different disabilities, and how to essentially accommodate us through simple changes”. **SY Resident**

“

“It's not only the opportunities themselves which need to be more accessible in terms of training job centres, for instance or employment, but also the events themselves need to be accessible”. **SY Disabled Resident**

More than a quarter (26%) of trading businesses reported a decrease in their turnover in August 2024 compared with July 2024. (ONS, Business insights, 19.09.2024)

Element Society



50.4% Think that the situation is OK, but could be improved.

35% Think that action should be taken immediately or as soon as possible.

NEXT STEPS

2021 VITAL SIGNS IMPACT

MOVING ON UP: YOUNG PEOPLE AND EMPLOYMENT GRANTS

In 2021, we created and launched a new three year pilot grants programme called Moving on up: young people and employment grants. The rationale for the pilot stemmed from findings within the 2021 Vital signs research. In order to respond and support the needs of communities across South Yorkshire, findings from the Vital Signs research were used to identify what issues were most in need of addressing from 2021 to 2023.

Out of ten, the top four 2021 priorities for action identified within the report were: Crime and Safety, Disadvantage and Inequality, Mental Health, and Work and the Local Economy. Working with the University of Sheffield, we decided to design and develop funding that specifically addressed this priority and the main findings from the 2021 Vital Signs research.

The Moving on Up programme focused on supporting young people by providing pre-employability opportunities and skills through established pathways. The programme adopted a three-tier approach based on community consultation, focusing on pre-employability skills, pre-employment pathways, and employment outcomes.

A total of £300,000 was awarded to 24 groups across the three rounds of funding.

2024 VITAL SIGNS IMPACT

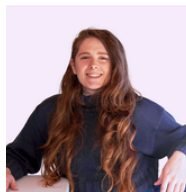
STEPPING UP: BUILDING A SAFER COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAMME

The 2024 Vital Signs research highlighted the pressing need for community-driven solutions to address crime and antisocial behaviour. In response to the findings, we've created the Stepping Up: Building a Safer Community grants programme.

The funding will support community organisations and charities seeking to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour within their communities.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO BUILD SAFER, STRONGER COMMUNITIES.

South Yorkshire's Community Foundation

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