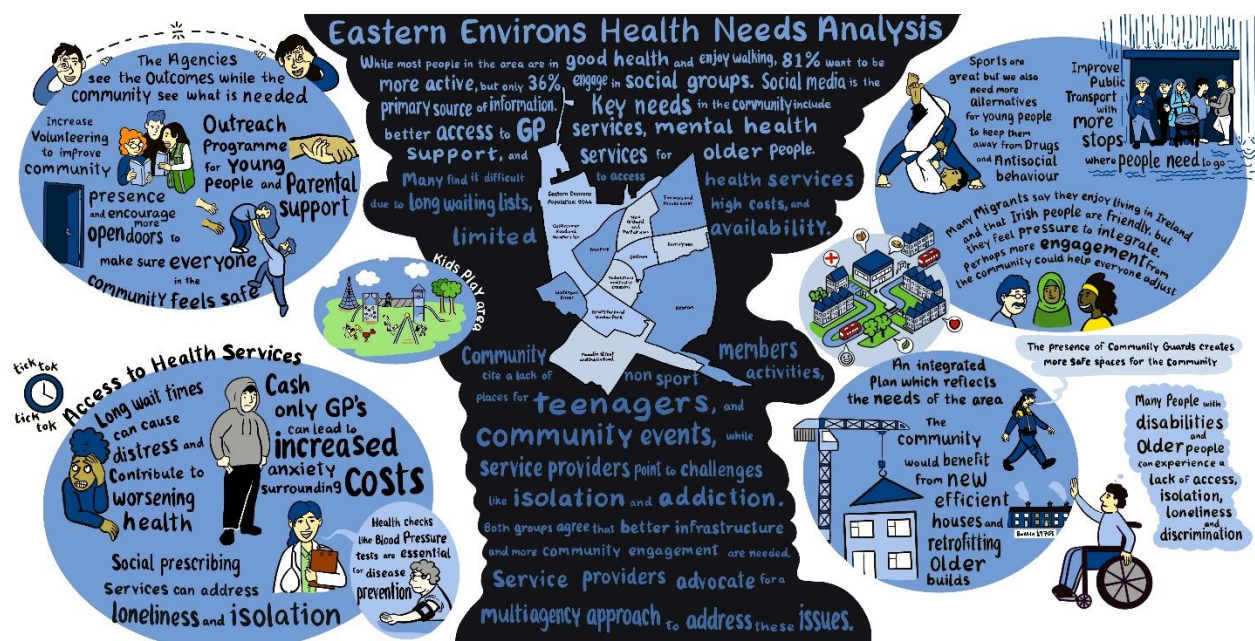


Kilkenny City: Eastern Environs Health Needs Analysis



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Kilkenny County Council



Kilkenny



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The Healthy Ireland Fund supported by the Department of Health

Kilkenny City Eastern Environs Health Needs Analysis

Aoife Dowling December 2024

This analysis was produced by Aoife Dowling, Research Consultant, supported by Sadhbh Gaston, Research Assistant and funded by Health Ireland, Kilkenny County Council and the Kilkenny Leader Partnership.

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Resident Representative: Marie Fitzpatrick

Probation Services: Derry Gahan

Most importantly, thanks to the residents of the Eastern Environs who took part in the consultation and participating in the surveys and the focus groups for giving up their time to share their views.

Message from the Chairperson of Kilkenny Local Community Development Committee

As Chairperson of the Kilkenny Local Community Development Committee (LCDC) it gives me great pleasure to introduce the Health Needs Analysis for the communities in the Eastern Environs of Kilkenny City

The LCDC Healthy Kilkenny Committee set up a sub-group to give oversight, monitoring and support in the development this Health Needs Analysis. the subgroup was made up of various stakeholders from the Statutory, Community and Voluntary sectors including residents from the area. The role of the sub-group also involved advising and supporting the independent consultant, Aoife Dowling, with the research, consultation and the development of a comprehensive Health Needs Analysis

The aim of this Health Needs Analysis is to strive to capture a true story of the health challenges and strengths and possible solutions within the communities of the Eastern Environs of Kilkenny City. This was achieved through, data analysis and direct community & Stakeholder consultation.

As chairperson of Kilkenny LCDC, I invite you to review this Health Needs Analysis, and we look forward to observing the community and stakeholder response to the health needs of the Eastern Environs

I would like to thank the Subgroup for the time and commitment given in bringing this worthwhile analysis together. I would also like to thank Aoife Dowling, Independent Researcher, who worked with and supported the group through the duration of the project.

Finally, I would like to thank all of those who took part in the consultation process your time and effort have helped to create a health needs analysis that is unique and a powerful tool in tackling health needs and inequalities for the communities in the Eastern Environs of Kilkenny City and beyond.

Mary Mescal,

Chairperson, Kilkenny Local Community Development Committee

Executive Summary

In 2024, a multi-agency team, including the Kilkenny Local Community Development Committee and Healthy Kilkenny Sub-Group assessed local community needs in the Eastern Environs of Kilkenny City, prioritising a comprehensive Health Needs Analysis to address specific health-related requirements.

The Eastern Environs of Kilkenny City faces persistent deprivation, with 20% living in very disadvantaged areas, according to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index. Meanwhile, a significant portion of the population lives in affluent areas, presenting unique challenges for service providers trying to address the diverse health needs of the community.

The health needs analysis had three phases over a 12-week period from September to December 2024. The first phase involved desktop research to create a detailed socio-demographic profile of the Eastern Environs. This data identified vulnerable groups and their challenges, guiding the design of the community engagement phase through focus groups and surveys reaching 175 residents and service providers in the Eastern Environs. This engagement culminated in co-produced recommendations from community representatives, stakeholders, and service providers.

The Pobal HP Deprivation Index suggests the Eastern Environs are slightly below or above average in deprivation. However, detailed Small Area data analysis reveals significant health needs in certain areas, highlighting issues like poor health, education levels, housing quality, and employment types.

The consultations aimed to assess the health status of Eastern Environs residents, identify their challenges, and determine their needs. Key findings from consultations with 175 community members and service providers include, amongst others:

- Residents are below the national average for healthy eating and exercise.
- Many reported unmet health service needs and difficulties accessing care, worsening health issues and raising future health concerns.
- Major concerns include a lack of community engagement and reduced volunteering, leading to increased social isolation.
- Limited access to public transport and places causes isolation and difficulty accessing services.
- Some areas face inadequate housing conditions, with residents unaware of housing improvement grants.
- Older people often feel unsafe in their homes or walking around, especially at night.
- Young people lack activities outside of sports to engage in.
- New communities face language barriers when accessing basic health services.

Addressing these challenges will require coordinated efforts from stakeholders to enhance the health and well-being of the Eastern Environs community. Despite systemic problems like staff shortages and lack of funding, key initiatives include preventive health programs, community engagement, improved accessibility, public transport, housing support, and assistance for both older

individuals and young people. Enhanced support for new communities, like better healthcare access and language services, is also essential.

Collaboration among community members, service providers, and policymakers, alongside a placemaking strategy, will foster a healthier, more inclusive, and cohesive environment.

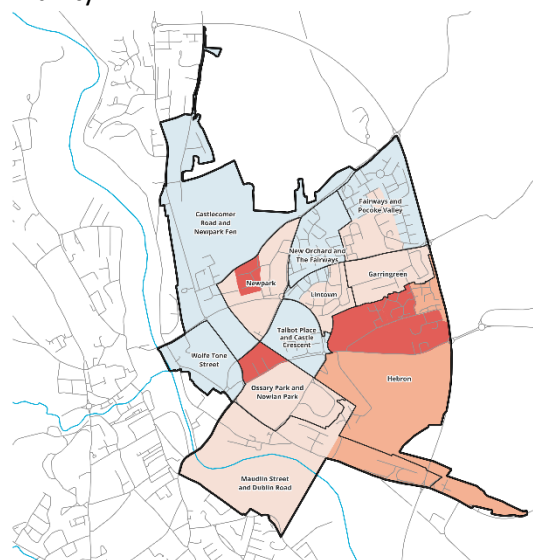
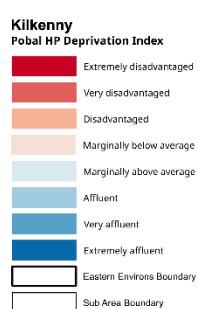
Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Sláintecare states that “health inequalities exist when a subgroup of the population suffers a disproportionate burden of ill health compared to the general population” and further states that “health inequalities are unnecessary, unfair and avoidable”. A Health Needs Analysis is used to identify the health needs of a community. It involves collating and analysing data to understand the health issues faced by community, identify unmet needs and prioritise actions to address these needs. The goal of this is to inform local service planning and increase health outcomes at a community level.

As part of the Healthy Ireland Programme (2023-2025), the Kilkenny Local Community Development Committee, in collaboration with the Healthy Kilkenny Sub-Group, identified key target areas in the Eastern Environs of Kilkenny City for community wellbeing interventions. In 2024, a multi-agency team convened to assess the needs of the local community in this area. Among the identified priorities was the development of a comprehensive Health Needs Analysis to understand and address the specific health-related requirements of the community.

The Eastern Environs is located to the east of Kilkenny City and is made up of 31 of Small Areas (Map 1.1) with a total population of 9,044 (Census 2022). The Eastern Environs is representative of the opportunities and challenges facing urban areas adjacent to cities and large towns across Ireland. The community has a robust social fabric, with active residents’ associations paving the way for community-led local development initiatives.



Map 1.1 Pobal HP Deprivation Index Eastern Environs

While also there are challenges facing the Eastern Environs. Compared to the national average a lower proportion of population feel that they have very good health. It has a high young dependency ratio resulting in economic and labour market strain as more resources are needed for education and healthcare. High rates of older housing stock indicating that some housing may be in disrepair and in need of improvements. In some of the areas of the Eastern Environs there is a higher-than-average concentration of lone parents, residents with disabilities, and individuals with restricted mobility, which can pose barriers to participating in community activities and local decision-making.

The experience of deprivation is persistent in the Eastern Environs as 20% of the local population are living in areas classified as very disadvantaged according to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index. While

also a significant proportion of the population are living in affluent areas. This gives its own set of unique challenges as service providers try to accommodate for the various health needs of the local community.

This health needs analysis was completed in three phases: leading to the co-production of a set of recommendations between the community representatives, project stakeholders and service providers. The first phase of the project was a mapping phase through desktop research. The purpose of this was to complete a detailed socio demographic profile of the Eastern Environs to inform the consultation process. Data collated in this phase was presented to members of the steering committee to outline the groups that are living in the Eastern Environs. During this phase vulnerable groups as well as challenges faced by them were identified. This informed the design of the community engagement phase.

1.2 Structure of the report

The identified community needs and subsequent recommendations stem from a thorough community-based needs analysis conducted during the community consultation phase of this project.

This comprehensive analysis helps to pinpoint health inequalities across different areas. Detailing these inequalities enables more effective resource allocation by service providers and allows for more targeted interventions. As a result, equity at the local level is promoted, fostering greater community engagement through increased awareness and encouraging a collective approach to improving the health and wellbeing of communities in the Eastern Environs.

Finally, robust, evidence-based, and detailed needs assessments like this can inform policy decisions, ensuring that health policies reflect the actual needs of the population.

The report is divided into five chapters:

- Chapter 1 provides an introduction
- Chapter 2 describes the methodology of the research conducted
- Chapter 3 is an analysis of the Census 2022 data collated
- Chapter 4 outlines findings identified from the community consultation
- Chapter 5 examines the recommendations arising because of the community health needs as noted by stakeholder involved with the project
- Chapter 6 sets out conclusions in relation to the analysis.

Chapter 2. Methodology

2.1 Overview

This needs analysis was conducted using a mixed-methods approach. A sub-group comprising of key-stakeholders from Healthy Ireland, Kilkenny County Council and Kilkenny Leader Partnership guided the research process and the Healthy Ireland Coordinator was appointed to liaise with the researcher.

Primary research included:

- Desk based research completing a detailed analysis utilising Small Area data from Census 2022 and a service mapping were completed.
- Community based online survey with people living in the Eastern Environs and service providers
- Series of focus groups with community groups based in the Eastern Environs
- Feedback sessions with project stakeholders

2.2 Timeline of the Project

The timeline of the project is outlined in Figure 2.1 and shows how the project began in September 2024 with the appointment of a researcher and the completion of desktop research. Following this there was a meeting with relevant stakeholders to outline the finding of the desktop research and identify seldom-heard groups that would be a part of consultations.

During the months of October and November an online survey was distributed throughout the Eastern Environs and a series of focus groups were completed. There was an analysis and feedback session with members of the community and project stakeholders to support the development of a set of recommendations based on the findings of the consultations. Finally, the report was published in December 2024.

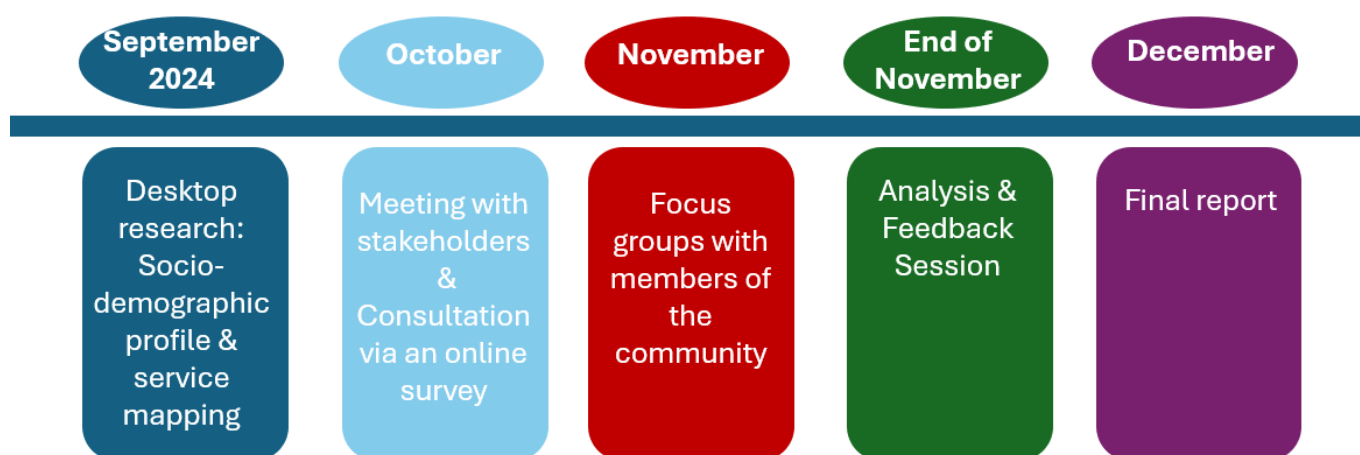


Figure 2.1 Timeline of the project

2.3 Community Consultation

One hundred and seventy-five people were involved with the community engagement process for this needs analysis and are outlined in Figure 2.2. Included in the consultation were:



- 49 people living in the Eastern Environs participated in the focus groups. This included Residents Associations, Men's Sheds, young people, older people, migrant communities, people with disabilities and Travellers.
- 100 people living in the Eastern Environs participated in an online survey disseminated via social media and a local newspaper.
- 26 service providers completed an online survey

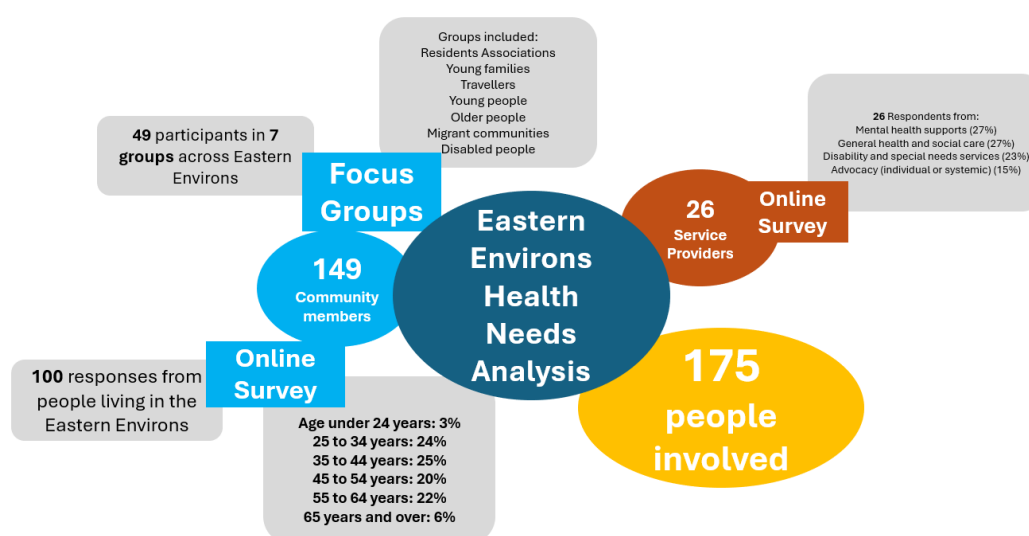


Figure 2.2 Overview of consultations

Members of the community that took part in the focus groups were asked:

- What was good about living in the Eastern Environs?
- What was not so good about living in the Eastern Environs?
- What would they change about living in the Eastern Environs?

The online survey provided an opportunity to delve deeper into the health status of the local community while the service provider survey gave an insight into the health needs of the community from a professional perspective. This engagement resulted in numerous datafiles which were coded and analysed.

2.3 GDPR

The research adhered closely to Kilkenny County Council GDPR Guidelines. All interview and survey participants were assured of anonymity. All participants were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary and that it was possible to terminate their participation at any time. Participants were informed that if they had any complaints, they could contact the Healthy Ireland Coordinator.

Chapter 3 Socio-Demographic Profile

3.1 Overview

The purpose of the socio demographic profile is to provide an overview of what life is like for the population of the Eastern Environs in Kilkenny City. Using insights and detailed mapping from the Census 2022 the communities in which local health services are operating in are outlined as well as the various factors that may be challenging the general health of the community.

3.2 Geography

Situated in the southeast of Ireland, Kilkenny has a population of 104,610 as recorded in the 2022 Census. Nestled along the banks of the River Nore, Kilkenny City and its surrounding areas are home to 27,184 residents (Census 2022). To see a full table of Census results please see Appendix 2.

The Eastern Environs of Kilkenny City, located to the east of Kilkenny City, spans the Kilkenny Urban No. 2 Electoral Division (ED) and the Kilkenny Rural ED. Starting from Maudlin Street in the southwest—an older part of Kilkenny City with an ancient castle near the city centre—it extends to John Street, known for its late-night establishments. Much of the housing here was constructed by the Kilkenny City Local Authority (Kilkenny Corporation) and has since transitioned to private ownership.

The area moves northward towards Wolfe Tone Street, featuring early 20th-century housing, and continues to Castlecomer Road, characterized by detached houses built from the 1970's onwards and considered affluent.

Near Castlecomer Road is Newpark Fen, an award-winning marsh Eco Park and sanctuary for various birds and animals. Adjacent to this is Newpark, a social housing estate built in the 1970's. Between Newpark and the Ring Road are newer housing developments such as The Fairways, Pococke Valley, Lintown, and Garringreen, developed from the late 1990's to 2005. The southwest features several housing estates like Hebron Park, St. Kieran's Crescent, and Millenium Court, mostly social housing developed by the county council, with Millenium Court developed by Respond Housing Association.

Bishop Birch Place is in the southeast in Hebron Industrial Estate, while Ossory Park is near Nowlan Park, Kilkenny's GAA Park. Nearby is MacDonagh Junction, a large shopping centre with many private apartments within and close to the centre.

Lastly, along Dublin Road is Shandon Park, a social housing development built by Kilkenny County Council.

Within the Eastern Environs there are 31 Small Areas and for the purpose of this study they have been amalgamated into the following subareas:

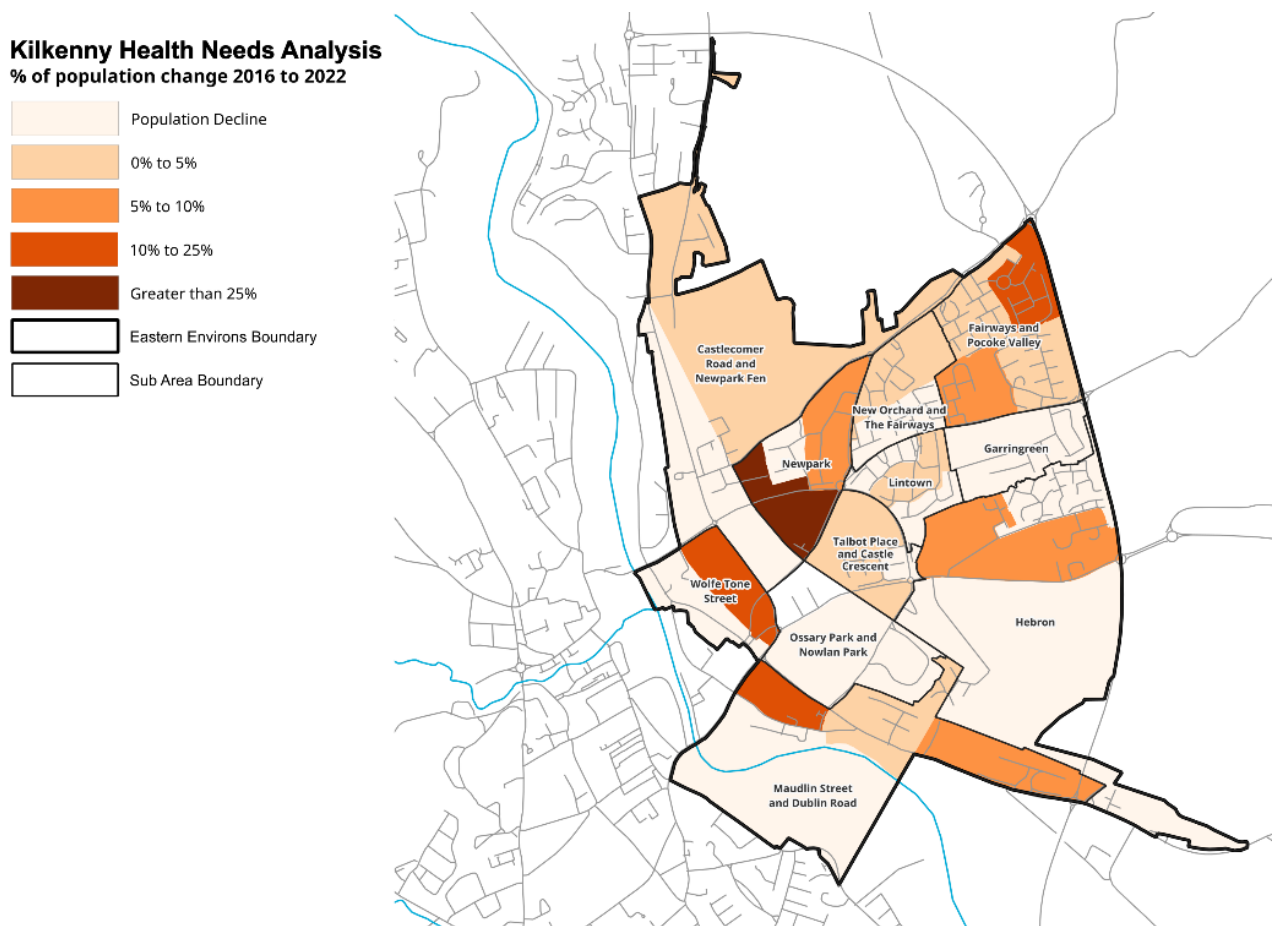
- Maudlin Street and Dublin Road
- Ossory Park and Nowlan Park
- Hebron
- Bishop Birch
- Castlecomer Road and Newpark Fen

- Fairways and Pococke Valley
- Newpark
- Wolfe Tone Street
- New Orchard and The Fairways
- Talbot Place and Castle Crescent
- Garringreen
- Lintown

3.4 Census Findings

Population

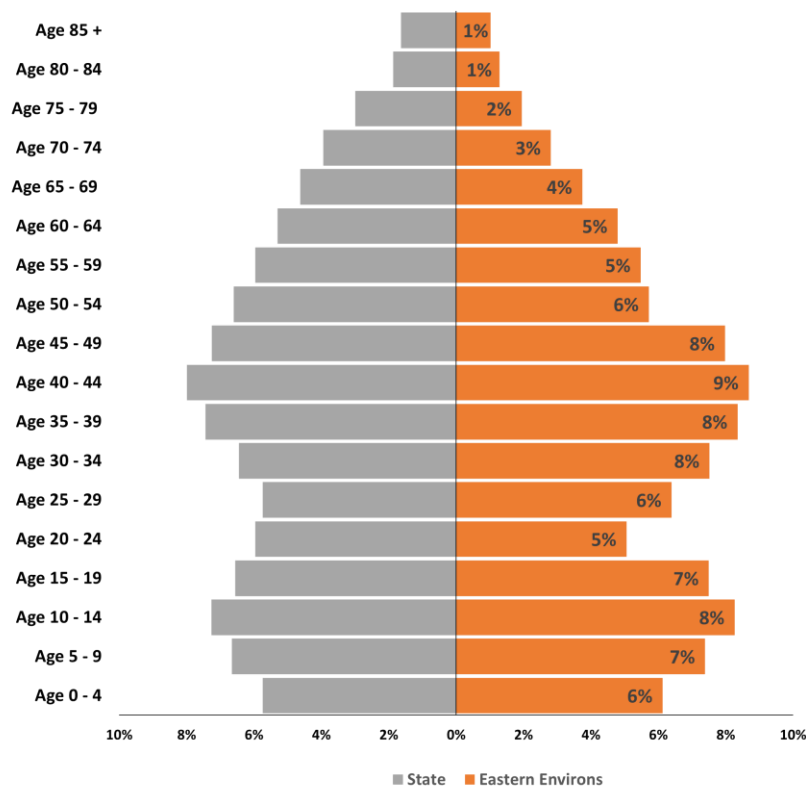
Census night in April 2022, the total population of the Eastern Environs was 9,044 (52% female and 48% male). This figure represents a population growth of 2.5% from Census 2016, far lower than the state growth of 8.1%.



Map 3.1 Population Change 2016-2022. Source Census 2022

Areas with this highest population growth of over 25% are in Newpark where a new housing estate was developed in recent years. Areas with a population decline at evident in older housing estates where there is an older population such as Maudlin Street, Hebron and Ossory Park.

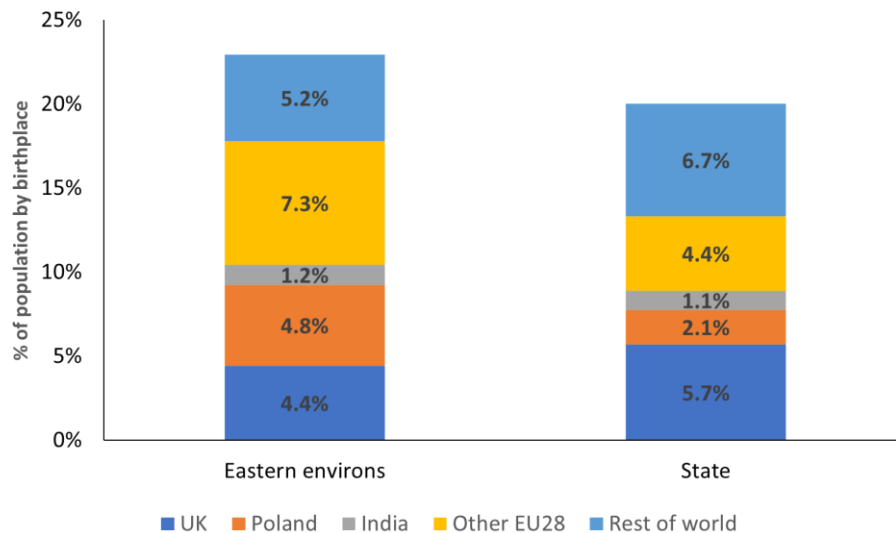
28% of the population in the Eastern Environs are aged under 19 years old, greater than the national figure of 25%. Overall, the Eastern Environs has a younger population compared to the State average, with higher percentages in most age groups under 50 (Graph 2.1).



Graph 3.2 Population Pyramid Source. Census 2002

Ages 0-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, 45-49 have higher percentages in the Eastern Environs compared to the State average. Ages 20-24, 50-54, 55-59, 60-64, 65-69, 70-74, 75-79, 80-84, 85+ have lower percentages compared to the State average.

In terms of citizenship of the population of the Eastern, 77.0% had Irish citizenship, 5.2% had UK Citizenship, 4.8% Polish, 1.2% Indian, 7.3% Other EU 28 and 5.2% Rest of World. In total 23% of the population were born outside of Ireland, greater than the national average of 20%.



Graph 3.3 Population by Birthplace

Concerning ethnicity and/or cultural background, 73.6% identified as White Irish, 1.4% White Irish Traveller, 15.1% Other White, 1.4% Black or Black Irish, 3.4% Asian or Asian Irish, 2.4% Other and 6.5% Not Stated.



Graph 3.4 Population by Ethnicity

Overall, in the Eastern Environs there was a greater proportion of population identified as ethnic minorities then at a national level.

Households

22.9% of families in the Eastern Environs were headed by a lone parent with a child under the age of 15. This was above the county and national figures. Ossory Park and Newpark Close both have proportions of lone parents greater than 43% while parts of The Fairways and Castlecomer Road have rates less than 12%.

42.6% of all the families in the Eastern Environs were in the child rearing lifecycle from preschool right through to adolescent far greater than the state average of 42.2%, with proportions in all of these phases falling in line with state levels.

Disability and Health

Two in ten or 22% of the population in the Eastern Environs described themselves as having a disability which the Central Statistics Office (CSO) defines as someone experiencing a 'long lasting condition or difficulty to any extent'. This proportion was in line with the county figure of 22%. The interesting figures are recorded at Small Area (SA) level where at least 28% of people living in Hebron Park, Ossory Park, Maudlin Street and Newpark Close said they had a disability or long-lasting health condition.

The lowest proportions (of less than 39%) of people living in the Eastern Environs who described themselves as in 'very good' health were also in Ossory Park, Newpark Close and Hebron Park where rates were far lower than the state average of 53.2%. These areas also reported far greater rates of population being in very bad health and smoking when compared to the other SAs in the Eastern Environs.

Education

The proportion of the population who had *no formal or primary level education only* in the Eastern Environs was 9.4% in 2022 which was in line with the county level of 9.6% and state level of 9.8%. The areas with the highest proportions, above 18%, of those with no formal or primary education in the Eastern Environs were in Newpark Close, Millenium Court and Hebron.

In total the education levels in the Eastern Environs are not in line with that of the State. Almost one third of people in the area (29.8%) had a third level education which was below the state figure of 36%. There are also significant variations with third level attainment in the sub areas, Ossory Park and Nowlan Park recorded the lowest at 22.5% and the Wolfetone Street had the highest at 44.1%, nearly double that of Ossory Park and Nowlan Park.

Economic status

Regarding the economic status, which examines the labour force (economically active population) 12.3% of the people living in the Eastern Environs described themselves as 'unemployed'. Of the 12.3% that stated that they were unemployed, 3.9% were looking for their first job, 4.2% were short term unemployed and 10.9% were long term unemployed. The rate of unemployment was lower in the Eastern Environs was higher compared to the national average. When this data is examined at SA level there was some areas with unemployment rates greater than 24% in Hebron.

Although employment levels are high in some areas of the Eastern Environs, 12.3% of employed individuals work in elementary occupations which could result in lower wages and more physical demands than other occupations. At the national level, these occupations account for only 8.2% of employment.

Housing

A review of the housing related data collated in Census 2022, showed that of the 3,280 houses within the Eastern Environs, 60% were built before 2000, reflecting a predominantly older housing stock. There is also a heavy reliance on expensive fossil fuels for home heating in the Eastern Environs as over two thirds of the houses (64.8%) use natural gas to heat their homes compared to only 32% at a national level. Notably there are far greater proportions of houses heating their homes with coal (6%) in some areas in the Eastern Environs compared to a county or a state average.

Homeownership in the Eastern Environs is lower than the national average (55.5% compared to 65.9% at a state level). Areas with high proportions of households renting from a private landlord are in Talbot Place, Wolfe Tone Street and Lintown all with rates greater than 40%. In contrast areas with the highest social housing and houses rented from a local authority are in Ossory Park, Hebron and Newpark all with rates greater than 30%.

Commuting and car ownership

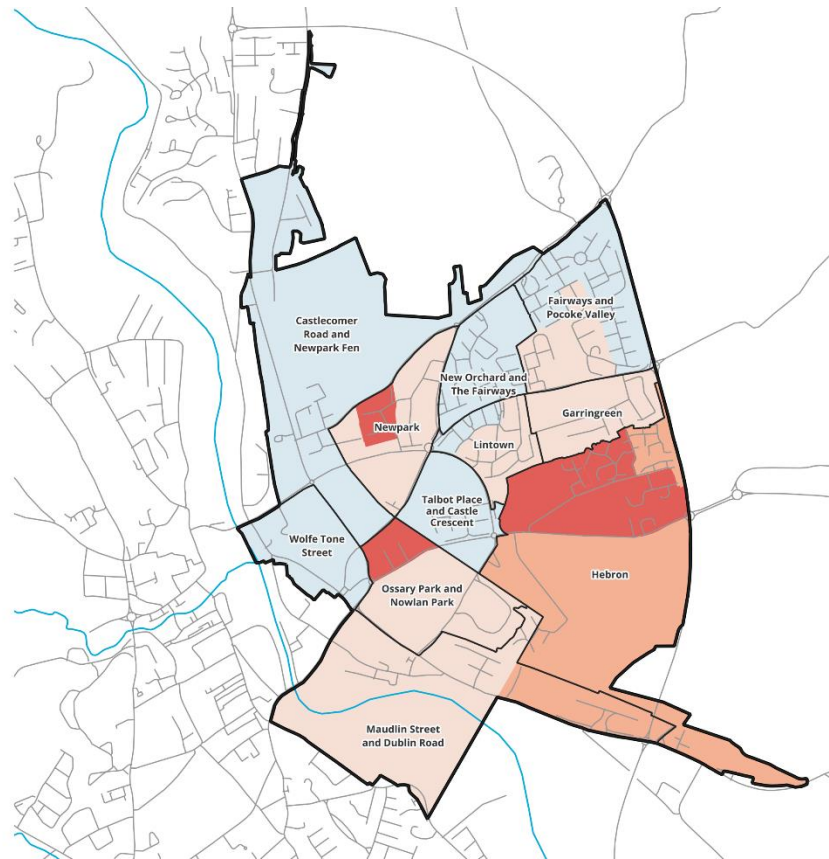
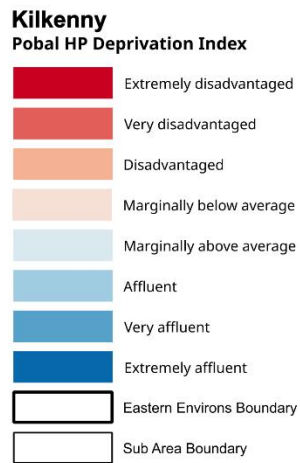
Nearly 20% of the households in the Eastern Environs population do not own cars a figure significantly higher than the national average of 13.4%. This suggests that there is strong reliance on current public transport system to serve the community of their commuting needs.

Pobal HP Deprivation Index

The Pobal HP Deprivation Index established a single indicator of disadvantage and affluence in Ireland. The Index was developed to understand and examine social conditions across Ireland. When examining the deprivation scores at a local level it is critical to note that it analyses census data related to population, age, principal economic status, education and home make up. It does not incorporate measure such as income, health or access to services which all influence the level of deprivation seen at household levels.

Deprivation scores show areas that are deemed to be more affluent or disadvantaged relative to other areas.¹ The majority (77%) of Small Areas in the Eastern Environs recorded a score of which is 'marginally below average' or 'marginally above average' in 2022. A total of 7 Small Areas in the Eastern Environs (or 23%) were classified as 'disadvantaged' or 'very disadvantaged', these were distributed between Hebron, Ossory Park and Newpark Close (Map 2.3).

¹ Scores range from >-30 (extreme deprivation) to <+ 30 (extreme affluence) with zero as the mean.



Map 3.5 Pobal HP Deprivation Index. Source Pobal 2022

Further analysis showed how 1,763 or 20% of the total population in the Eastern Environs were living in areas classified as disadvantaged or very disadvantaged.

3.5 Service Mapping

- General health
 - Primary Health Care Team
 - Private GPs (Lakeside and Kilkenny Medical Centre)
- Family resource centre
 - Newpark Close Family Resource Centre
- Youth Work
 - Foróige
 - Ossory Youth
- Community centres
 - St. Johns Parish Centre
 - Bishop Birch Community Centre
 - Millenium Court (rented to Alzheimer Society of Ireland)
- Minority specific supports
 - Kilkenny Traveller Community Movement (KTCM)
 - Twilight
- Primary schools
 - Saint John's National School (Junior and Senior)

3.6 Conclusion

Despite appearing marginally below or above average in terms of deprivation according to the Pobal HP Deprivation Index, a detailed analysis of the Small Area (SA) data reveals a different picture of the Eastern Environs. This granular analysis highlights areas with the highest health needs by identifying populations with the highest proportions of poor health. It also provides an opportunity to identify other contributing factors to health and compounding issues, such as education levels, housing quality, and types of employment.

Chapter 4 Community Engagement Findings

4.1 Overview

Engagement with the community of the Eastern Environs began in October 2024 and at the centre of this engagement was the people living in the Eastern Environs. To truly listen to the people of the Eastern Environs and to reach under-represented members of the community the researcher took time to meet and listen to varied groups throughout the two days. Groups were held from early in the morning to late in the evening to facilitate as many people as possible.

This work involved 7 focus groups and had a combined attendance of 49 people ranging from young people to older people. People in attendance at the groups included young people, members of the Traveller community, migrant community members, lone parents, older community members, residents with disabilities, community workers and volunteers.

In October a community survey was developed by the researcher and widely distributed throughout the community. The survey aimed to achieve two main goals: verify the findings from community engagement regarding key issues in the area and reach individuals who might not otherwise be able to participate. This survey reached 100 people living in the Eastern Environs.

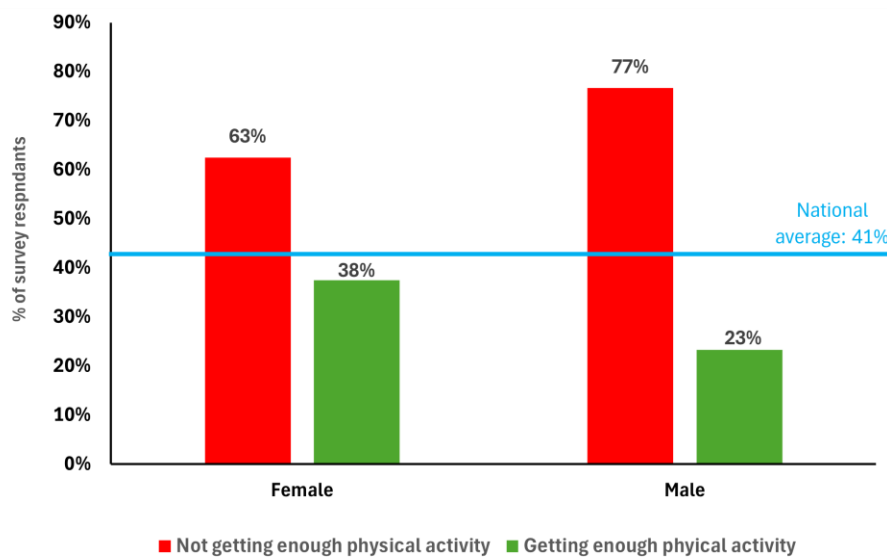
In this chapter, the data collected from the online surveys with both community members and service providers has been collated, analysed and set out in the following themes:

- Physical activities, nutritional habits and smoking
- General health service needs
- Community activities and engagement
- Housing
- Accessibility and public transport
- People with disabilities
- Older people
- Young people
- New communities

4.2 Physical activities, nutritional habits and smoking

The National Physical Activity Plan² emphasizes that adults must engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity daily, five times a week, or accumulate 150 minutes weekly. According to a community survey, only 33% (29 residents) of the Eastern Environs are meeting this health recommendation, and 67% (58 residents) are not. The national rate of people meeting this health recommendation is 41%, indicating that the population in the Eastern Environs falls below the national average.

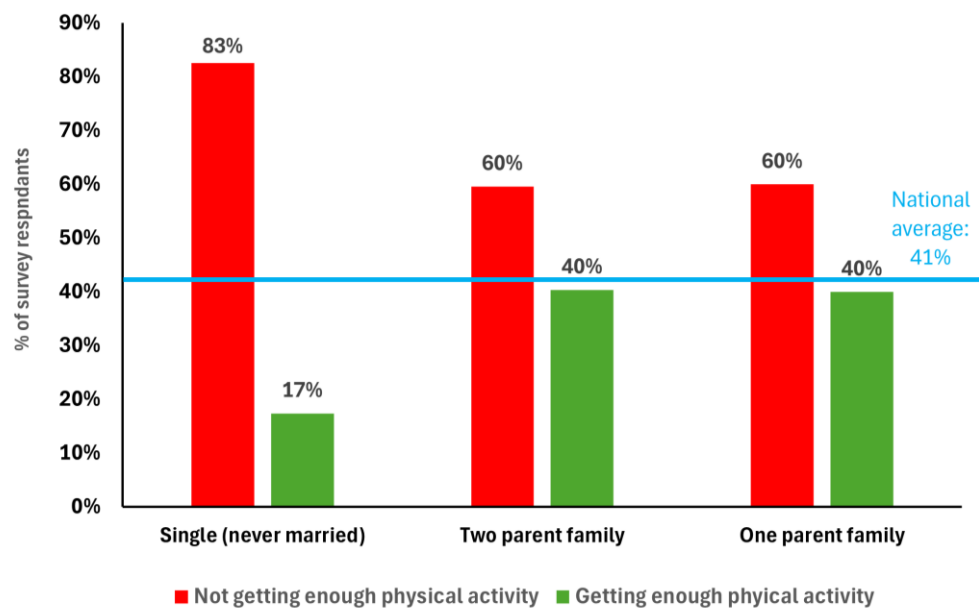
Further analysis was conducted on the survey results, and it found that more men (77%) than women (63%) were not engaging in enough physical activity on a weekly basis (Graph 4.1).



Graph 4.1 Physical activity amongst males and females

When the same data was analysed based on the family status of survey respondents, it was found that 83% of individuals who identified as single were not engaging in sufficient physical activity. In contrast, the proportion of individuals who identified as being part of a one-parent or two-parent family who were not meeting the recommended activity levels was lower, at 60%.

² gov.ie - National Physical Activity Plan



Graph 4.2 Physical activity by family/marital status

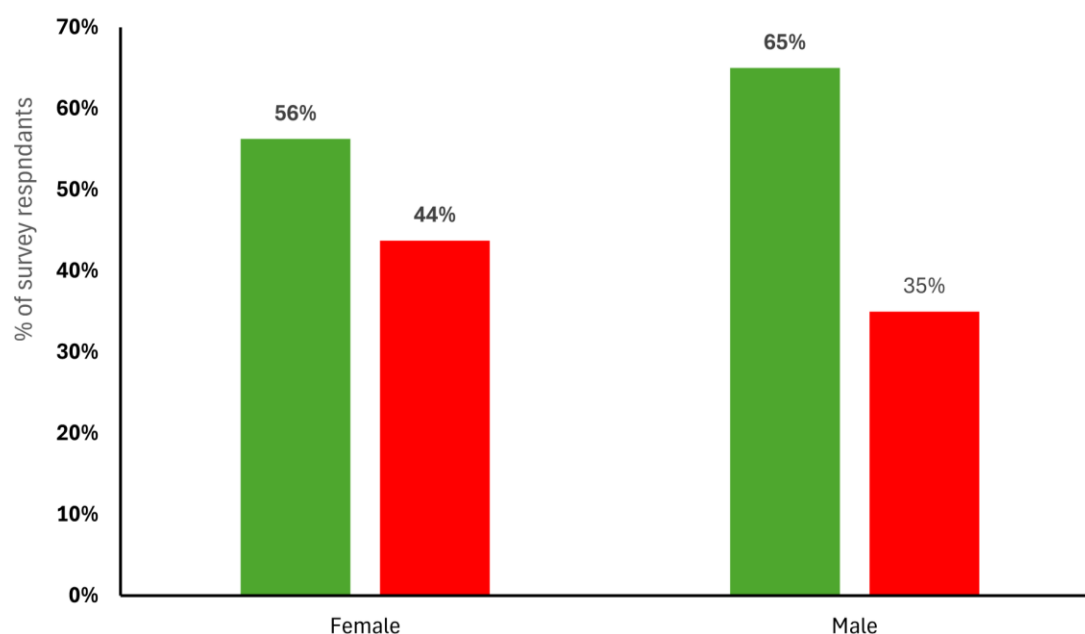
The variations between the locations of where people lived was also examined (Table 4.1) and found that residents over 70% of residents (who filled out the survey) from Hebron, Maudlin Street, Ossory Park, Pockoke Valley, Dublin Road, Talbot Place, Garringreen, Wolfe Tone Street and Castle Crescent were not engaging in enough physical activity on a weekly basis. Areas where there were lower proportions of population not engaging in enough physical activity were New Orchard (50%), Castlecomer Road (54%), Newpark (55%), Lintown (56%) and the Fairways (67%).

	% of population that participated in the online survey	
	Not getting enough physical activity	Getting enough physical activity
New Orchard	50%	50%
Castlecomer Road	54%	46%
Newpark	55%	45%
Lintown	56%	44%
The Fairways	67%	33%
Pockoke Valley	75%	25%
Dublin Road	75%	25%
Garringreen	75%	25%
Castle Crescent	75%	25%
Hebron	80%	20%
Maudlin Street	88%	13%
Ossory Park	100%	0%
Talbot Place	100%	0%
Wolfe Tone Street	100%	0%
Assumption Place	No responses	No responses

Graph 4.3 Physical activity by sub-area

According to Healthy Ireland's Eat Well³ guidelines, it is recommended to limit foods and snacks high in sugar and salt to one to two times a week. As part of the consultation, participants were surveyed on their daily intake of snack foods (excluding fruit, vegetables, or yogurt). Examples of snack foods provided were two biscuits, a standard chocolate bar, or a packet of crisps. The national of snack food consumption in Ireland is 27% of people report eating one snack food per day and 35% report eating two or more. In the Eastern Environs 58% of respondents reported eating one or fewer portions of these snacks daily, while 48% ate two or more portions each day, 13% higher than that national average.

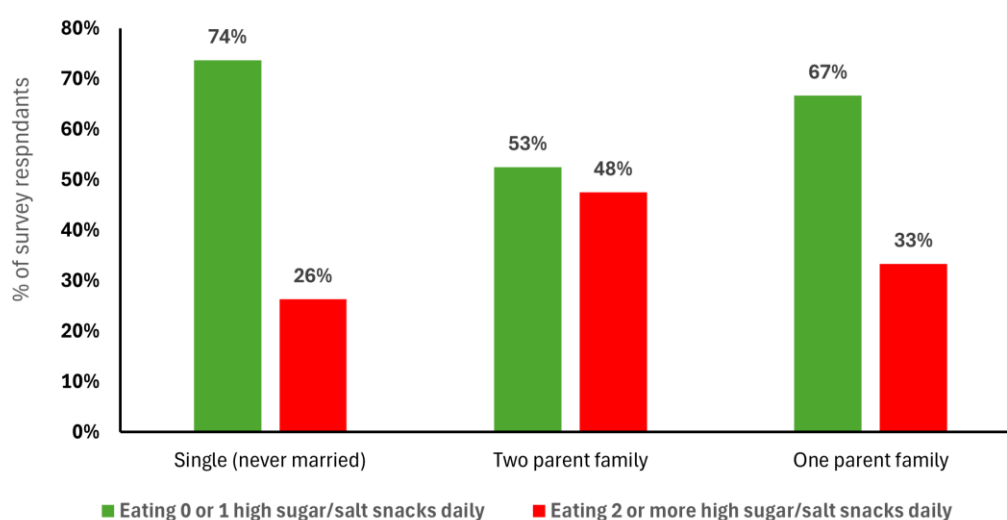
When further analysis was carried out on this data it was found that more females (44%) then males (35%) in the Eastern Environs were consuming 2 or more high sugar/salty snacks daily (Graph 4.3).



Graph 4.4 High sugar/ salty snack consumption by gender

When the same data was analysed based on the family status of survey respondents (Graph 4.4) and interestingly found that single people tend to consume fewer high sugar/salty snacks (0 or 1 daily) compared to those in one or two-parent families. According to the data single people (74%) were more likely to be only eating 1 or less high sugar/salty snacks than one parent (67%) or two parent families (53%).

³ [gov.ie - Eat Well](https://gov.ie/EatWell)



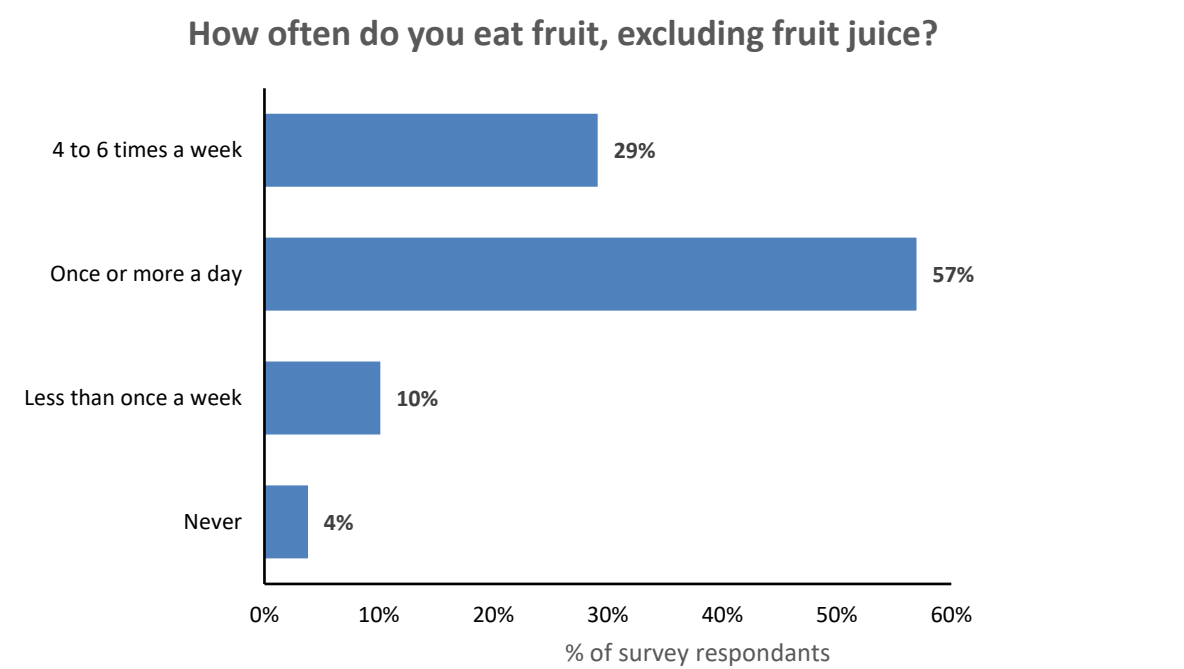
Graph 4.5 High sugar/ salty snack consumption by family status

The research also investigated the variations of eating habits in the locations of individuals that participated in the online survey (Table 4.2). More than 60% of those that participated in the survey from Ossory Park, The Fairways, Pocke Valley and Hebron were eating 2 or more high sugar/salty snacks on a daily basis. While the lowest rates of unhealthy snack consumption were recorded in Garringreen, Castle Crescent, Lintown, Maudlin Street and New Orchard.

	% of population that participated in the online survey said they are	
	Eating 0 or 1 high sugar/salty snacks daily	Eating 2 or more high sugar/salty snacks daily
Garringreen	100%	0%
Castle Crescent	100%	0%
Lintown	86%	14%
Maudlin Street	67%	33%
New Orchard	64%	36%
Dublin Road	60%	40%
Castlecomer Road	56%	44%
Newpark	50%	50%
Wolfe Tone Street	50%	50%
Hebron	33%	67%
Pocke Valley	25%	75%
The Fairways	25%	75%
Ossory Park	0%	100%
Talbot Place	No responses	No responses
Assumption Place	No responses	No responses

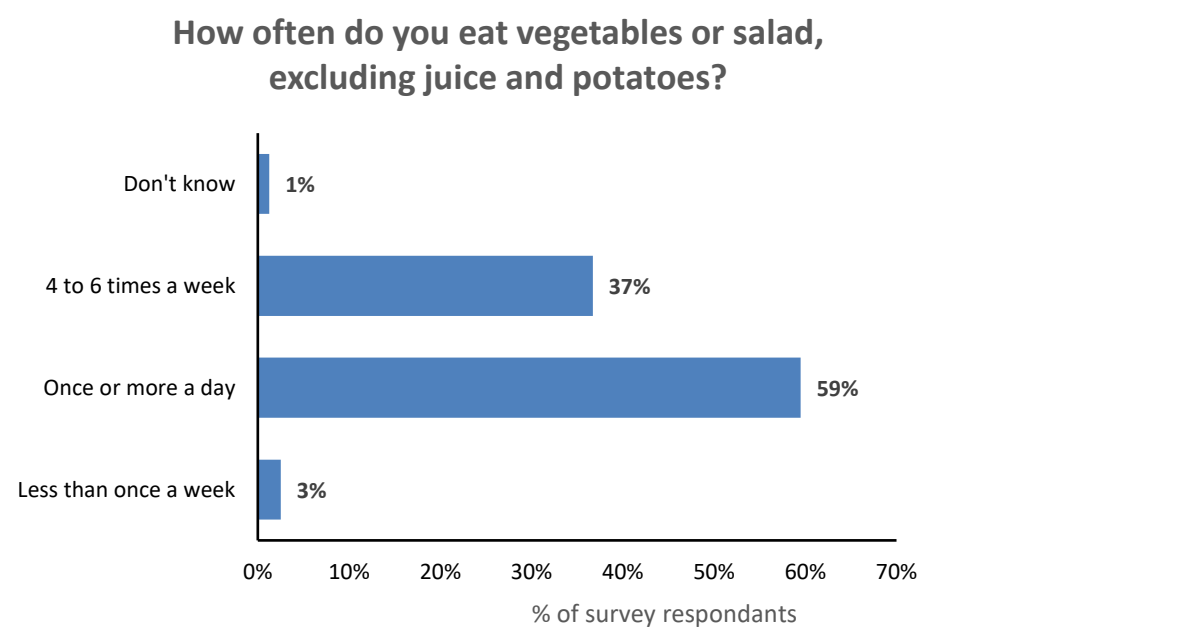
Table 4.6 High sugar/ salty snack consumption by sub-area

Survey respondents were also asked about other eating habits including fruit, vegetable and sugary/fizzy drink consumption. At a national level 62% of people report eating fruit one or more a day. The proportion is lower in the Eastern Environs at 57% (Graph 4.5)



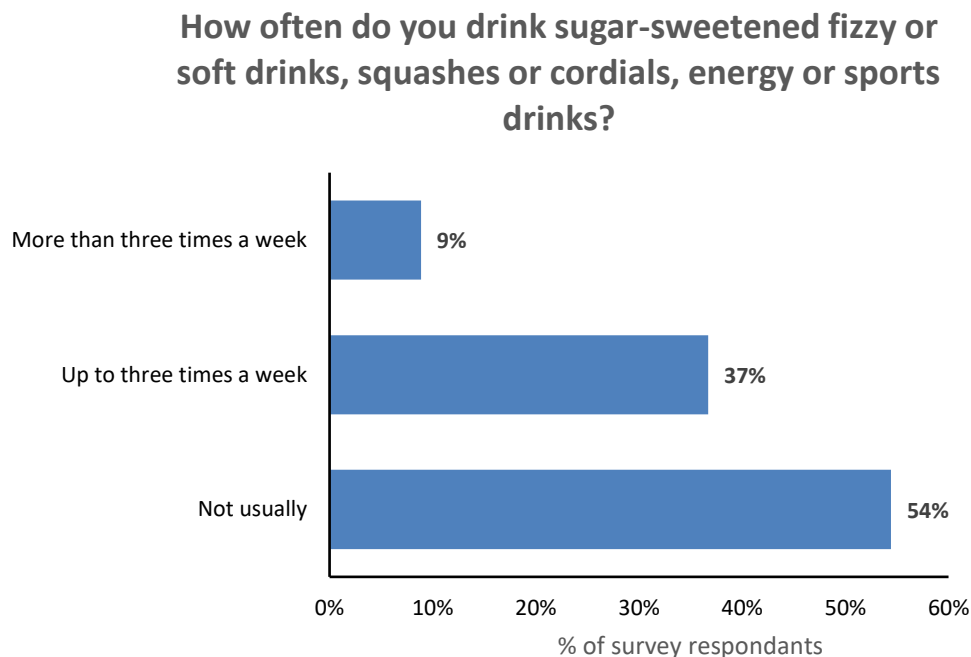
Graph 4.7 Frequency of eating fruit

he 2024 Healthy Ireland survey revealed that a 73% of the population are incorporating vegetables into their daily diet. This rate was lower in the Eastern Environs where only 59% of the population were eating vegetables in their diet daily (Graph 4.6).



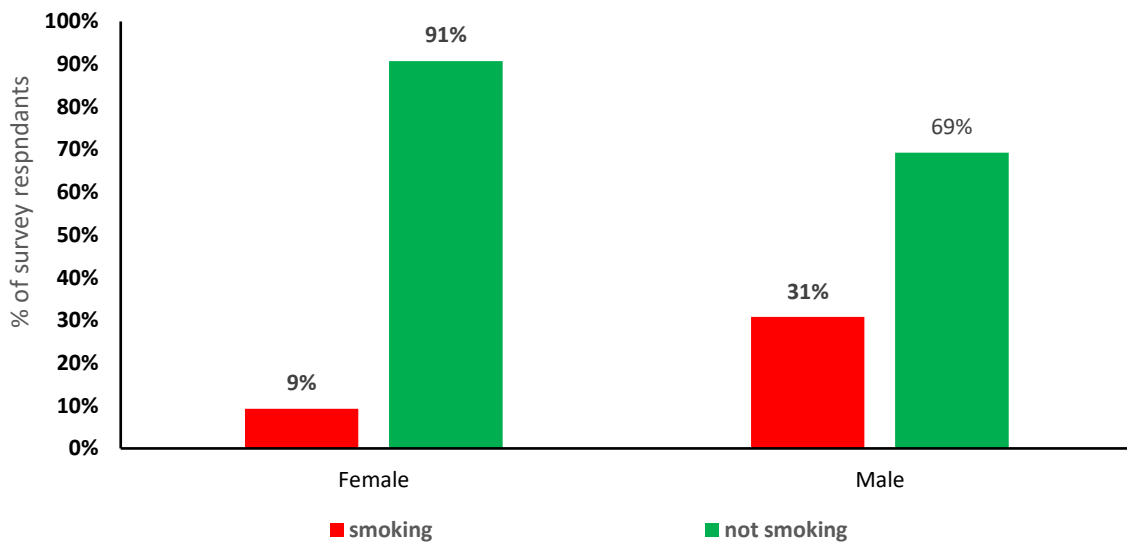
Graph 4.8 Frequency of vegetables

Graph 4.7 shows that 9% of survey respondents in the Eastern Environs reported drinking sugary or fizzy drinks more than three times a week, which is consistent with the national average of 9%. However, a larger proportion (37%) in the Eastern Environs reported drinking sugary or fizzy drinks up to three times a week, exceeding the national rate of 32%.



Graph 4.9 Frequency of drinking sugary or fizzy drinks

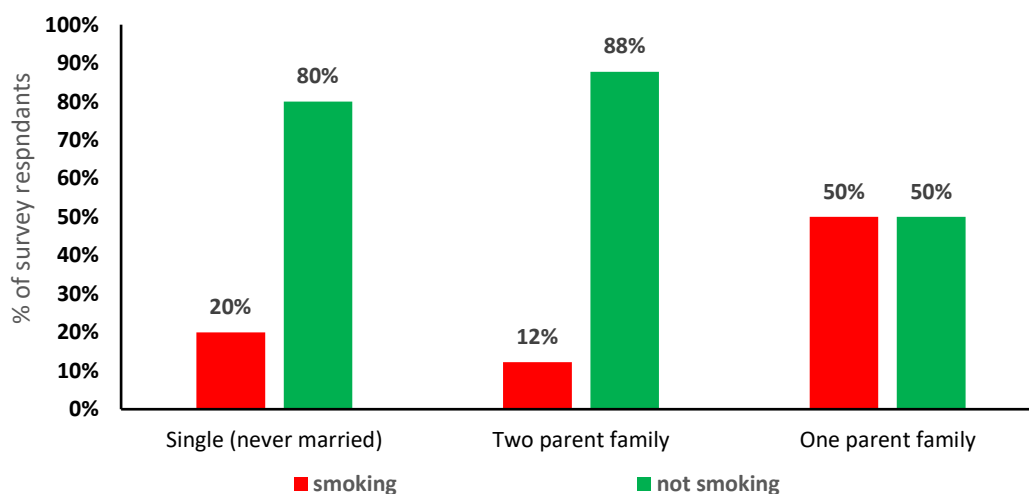
According to Census 2022 17% of the population living in the Eastern Environs reported smoking daily. Areas with this highest proportions of smokers, according to Census 2022 were, amongst others Hebron and Newpark. Results from the survey carried out on residents of the Eastern Environs yielded similar results with 16% of those surveyed stating that they smoked tobacco or vaping products. The national rate of smokers reported in the Healthy Ireland 2024 survey was 17%. When the Eastern Environs results were analysed by gender the results showed how a great proportion of males reported smoking compared to females (Graph 4.8).



Graph 4.10 Smoking tobacco or vaping products by gender

Within the survey only 9% of females reported smoking while 31% of males reported that they smoked tobacco or vaping products daily.

This data was also analysed by marital or family status of which the results showed that those in one-parent families were far more likely than, those who are single or in two-parent families to be smoking. Graph 4.6 shows how 50% of those in one-parent families stated that they are smoking daily compared to 20% who are single and 12% who belong to a two-parent family.



Graph 4.11 Smoking tobacco or vaping products by family or marital status

Finally, the rate of smoking was significantly higher in those there were not born in Ireland compared to those that were born in Ireland. Analysis showed that 12% of people born in Ireland reported to smoke daily which was quite low compared to 50% of those that were not born in Ireland.

4.3 What was heard during the community consultations

4.3.1 General Health Service Needs

“Current services are struggling - we need more GPs”

In the online survey, over 70% of respondents rated their general health as good or very good. Meanwhile, 14% described their health as fair, 3% as bad, and 0% as very bad, with some participants not answering the question. This was generally in line with the Census results.

The survey asked what services should be improved in the Eastern Environs. The results identified an urgent need for more GP services and mental health support in the Eastern Environs. Respondents identified shorter waiting times and improved access to health and mental health services as the things that would make life better in general for people in the Eastern Environs.

If you could pick ONE thing only, what would you do, or change, to make life better for people in the Eastern Environs? (community)

“A new medical centre with walk in appointments”

Difficulties access mental or physical health services, mental health challenges, substance misuse and physical health challenges were identified by service providers as the top challenges facing people living in the Eastern Environs. Easier access to health services in general was identified as what needed to be changed the most, according to service providers. To achieve this, a multi-agency approach as well as more staff and funding is needed according to service.

If you could pick ONE thing only, what would you do, or change, to make life better for people in the Eastern Environs? (service providers)

“Recruitment and retention of staff to provide the services people need in a timely manner”

“Increase clinical staff numbers within the HSE to allow treatment time and waitlist reduction.”

The quality and accessibility of services in the Newpark Primary Care Centre was highlighted throughout the consultations. People living in the Eastern Environs see the Primary Care Centre as a well-regarded facility and see it was delivering quality healthcare to those that are accessing it.

"The primary care centre in Newpark is really good"

"Can access the new doctor when I need them"

Some members of the community with disabilities described how there has been positive shift in the patient-doctor relationship, where medical professionals are seen as more empathetic and attentive

to their needs. More affordable and accessible GPs available close to the Eastern Environs were providing services to residents when their own GPs were not accessible.

Despite this, throughout the consultations people that participated in the consultations painted a picture of the various challenges they face trying to access necessary health services. 30% of survey respondents reported that health services in general were either difficult or very difficult to access. Older people and parents with young children reported not always being able to access GP appointments throughout the consultations. Some older people stated that they accessed a cheaper and more accessible doctor when their own was not available but were not asked about previous treatments or their medical history. Young parents described having to wait up to five months for GP appointments for their children as they were not deemed to be emergency appointments.

“I couldn’t get an appointment in the GP office, so I went to the new GP, but he didn’t ask about my medical history”

“I was told in November that I would have a GP appointment for my son in March!”

These people highlighted a serious issue with accessibility in the primary healthcare system. They also expressed concerns that difficulty in securing GP appointments can lead to delayed diagnoses impacting overall on their health outcomes.

Concerns about health services extended beyond access to GPs, and included:

- Access to dental care in general
- Access to podiatry care, particularly for older people
- Access to multi-disciplinary teams for adults with disabilities
- Access to mental health services for children, young people, and adults
- Access to assessments, especially for school-age children



4.3.2 Loneliness and limited community participation

“We have community spirit, but we need more”

Residents were asked their feelings of loneliness over the past four weeks in the online survey, 16% of residents never felt lonely, 16% hardly ever felt lonely, 15% occasionally felt lonely, 19% felt lonely some of the time, and 8% felt lonely often or always as reported on the online survey. Residents in the focus groups reported feeling socially isolated and having reduced support systems due to decreased community engagement. They also noted that this negatively impacts their overall well-being.

Over a quarter (27%) of residents in the Eastern Environs reported experiencing loneliness either *some of the time* or *often/always*. Higher rates of people experiencing loneliness some of the time or often were higher (more than 50% of survey respondents) in areas that would be traditionally seen as under-resourced (or disadvantaged) such as Hebron Park and Ossory Park. Higher rates of loneliness were reported among younger residents, with those aged 24 years and under, as well as those aged 25 to 34 years, standing out as the most affected age groups.

During the focus groups Eastern Environs residents stated the strong sense of community and the local people as their greatest strengths. Some community actions were unique to communities within various areas in the Eastern Environs such as one street always “buying a wreath” for fellow community members when they passed away and another having “a community garden” that most residents participated in.

“Community spirit is alive here, but we need more of it”

Community members celebrated the vibrant “community spirit” alive in the Eastern Environs. This spirit is evident in various ways, such as sacrament parties for children receiving their First Holy Communion as well as throughout the year for Halloween and Christmas. Community development workers have significantly strengthened engagement and participation in some areas according to residents. Additionally, access to community spaces has empowered resident associations, bringing people together and working as a community.

In the survey only 36% of respondents said that they participated in local social activities locally, the remainder said that they did not participate or did not answer the question. 15% of the respondents stated that a lack of community events or things to do was one of the biggest challenges about living in the Eastern Environs. Community events needed to change and having more locally based social activities would benefit the community in general and have positive outcomes or residents according to 16% of survey respondents.

“Community events all year around to bring community spirit back”

A strong call for an increase in community events, inclusive spaces, and active groups emerged as the predominant response in the survey when respondents were asked about the most crucial change desired. This clear majority highlights the strong desire for increased opportunities for social interaction and communal activities within the community. Service providers agreed with this, also stating that more community events were one key change that they would make in the Eastern Environs.

“More community events or community spaces for people to make connections, where people can have a purpose or pursue an interest.”

The focus groups with residents identified the greatest challenges related to community-based activities. These include a lack of engagement with young people and the working-age population, as well as insufficient accessible and suitable community spaces. Throughout the consultations older members of the community described how they felt that community spirit and activities was stronger in the past. These people reported how their local communities had changed significantly over time. Changes that they discussed included that more people in households are working meaning that people have less time to engage with local activities. Residents said the same people are always asked to volunteer, and they're feeling burnt out as a result.

“People come in and the evenings and close their doors”

Difficulties in accessing local community space, especially in community buildings where non-local anchor tenants frequently use these facilities were reported by some residents. This situation often leaves these spaces unavailable for residents. A specific example is the Community Building in Millennium Court, currently rented to the Alzheimer's Association.

“Increase the number of community events - that would engage people more”

Residents in the focus groups emphasized the need for greater encouragement to participate in local community activities and events. They highlighted the necessity of recruiting more volunteers, particularly young people, to foster community engagement. Additionally, they stressed the importance of providing accessible and suitable community spaces to support these activities. Some residents from Millenium Court described a time when community engagement and activities were more common within the community. They explained that when their children were younger, they were more active in the community to provide more activities for their kids. The heightened engagement was achieved by them themselves having more time for community engagement and they also had access to suitable community buildings. At present they feel that parents of young children no longer have time for community activities, there are many barriers facing people who do want to volunteer (need for Garda vetting and suitable training) and there is no access to suitable community space. These factors present significant challenges to support and generate more community engagement.

“Kilkenny is a lovely place to live in – there is a lot going on, but I don't always feel safe”

During the consultations, many community members expressed their love for living in the Eastern Environs due to the walkability of the city and its amenities. Residents appreciate the convenience of being able to easily access shops, parks, and other essential services without needing to rely on cars or public transport. This walkable environment not only enhances their quality of life it encourages healthier, more active lifestyles. People reported enjoying walking also in the survey with 34% describing it was their main activities that they participated in. A diverse range of activities are

enjoyed by residents, 13% engaging in multiple activities like going to the gym and running, 11% running, 4% going to the gym, and 2% each participating in badminton, cycling, and football.

“I love living in town because – I can walk everywhere”

“Festivals are great and there is loads always going on”

Festivals and large social gatherings were noted as some of the great things about living in the Eastern Environs especially as most people have access to the many festivals held locally in Kilkenny City. Younger and older people reported on benefiting from activities. Young people reported how being engage with sports or hobbies kept them busy while older people felt that activities gave them more of social outlet and way to feel included in their local community. While older people benefited from daily activities and reported how it kept them busy and gave them things to look forward to.

As reported in the consultation several concerns regarding participating in activities locally. Older residents do not always feel safe walking in the streets. They described how larges gangs of young people ‘hanging around and with nothing to do’ make them feel unsecure. While others reported how more and more young people were paying more attention to their phones as opposed to ‘where they should be a walking’. A lot of residents reported anti-social behaviour and substance misuse in areas such as playgrounds, graveyards, the skateboard park and Newpark Fen amongst other places. They felt this antisocial behaviour was a result of young people not having other places to go or things to do, being bored, a lack of community Gardaí and a lack of CCTV.

“Anti-social behaviour is constant, and I feel like I can’t go outside sometimes”

As a result of these contributing factors, residents felt that many public spaces were inaccessible to those they were meant for, such as children playing in playgrounds and people walking in public areas.



4.3.3 Accessibility and Public Transport

“Because I can get around - I can have hobbies and live independently”

There is a local bus available in Kilkenny City that travels to through Eastern Environs. This bus service was reported by members of the community as reliable and mostly meets their needs. Having access to a bus allows residents to easily access work, shopping and social activities.

“Bus is great, it gets us into town when we need to go”

The availability of free transport is highly appreciated amongst the older people that participated in the consultations. They described how it reduces financial burdens and increases accessibility, particularly for community members that do not have access to a car or do not know how to drive which according to Census 2022 accounted for nearly 20% of households in the Eastern Environs. Having access to accessible public transport also promotes greater social inclusion and equality.

“Free transport is great”

There is huge importance of inclusive public transportation that caters to the needs of all individuals, including those with disabilities. The proportion of people living with disabilities was 22% in the Eastern Environs and accessibility ensures that everyone, regardless of physical ability, can utilise public services and participate fully in community life.

“Wheelchair users can access the bus that is great because they are not all like that”

The short supply of wheelchair taxis was emphasized in Kilkenny by people that participated in the consultations. They stressed that this led to even more reliance of people with limited mobility on the public bus because at times it was their only option for travel.

Some of the facilities in and around the Eastern Environs were applauded by some of the community members because of how they provide extremely accessible services. This included public spaces and building such as the newly developed cinema and accessible toilets in a local shopping centre.

“Cinema is really accessible”

“Market Cross has great facilities”

As reported in the consultation these are the concerns with accessibility and public transport:

- **Accessibility Challenges:** Persistent issues include a lack of accessible amenities and services.
- **Cinema Accessibility:** Although the new cinema is physically accessible, its no-cash policy limits use for community members without bank cards.
- **Community Events:** Some large-scale events are not accessible for people with disabilities due to insufficient parking, inadequate pathways for wheelchairs, and unsuitable toilets.
- **Parking Issues:** Accessible parking spaces placed next to bollards hinder wheelchair users.
- **Bus Access:** Not all areas in the Eastern Environs have equal bus access; some residents must walk long distances to bus stops, often along poorly lit paths.
- **Bus Routes:** The bus does not serve key locations such as the mart, the linear park, and major retail units outside the town.
- **Public Transport Improvement:** 4% of survey respondents indicated that better public transport would significantly improve life in the Eastern Environs.



4.3.4 Housing

“Some people are living in poor housing conditions and don’t know what to do about it”

As identified in Chapter 3 on the socio-demographic profile, Census 2022 revealed that some areas of the Eastern Environs have older housing stock (pre-1971), primarily owned by local authorities and rented by residents. Additionally, these homes heavily rely on fossil fuels for heating. While other areas in the Eastern Environs had a high reliance on private rented accommodation.

Some residents, especially those in Bishop Birch Place and New Park Close, reported poor housing conditions. These houses, built by Kilkenny Corporation (now Kilkenny County Council) in the 1970’s, are mostly still rented from the county council, though some are privately owned. Residents highlighted the urgent need for repairs, including replacing windows and doors, and upgrading heating and insulation to modern standards. Additionally, some residents noted that coal heating is negatively affecting their long-term health, leading to consistent lung conditions directly linked to the coal fuel used for heating.

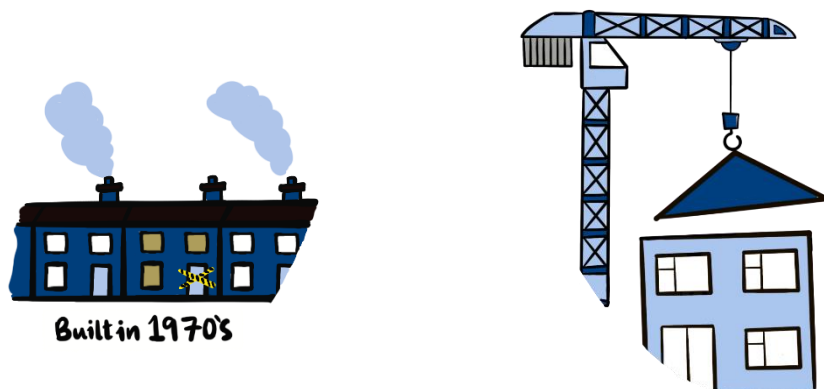
“I have coal heating, and it is causing consistent bronchitis it is always sitting on my lungs”

Older residents shared their unique housing challenges, mentioning a lack of suitable homes for their needs. Many expressed a desire for more one- and two-bedroom housing options to better fit their lifestyles. Others mentioned wanting to stay in their own homes but were unsure about the housing improvement grants available to them or how to access these grants for retrofitting.

“I heard adaption grants for houses are difficult to get and I don’t feel I could access them.”

Young families and migrant communities emphasized the severe shortage of housing supply in the Eastern Environs. They reported how they were worried they would not be able to afford to privately rent homes or that homes would not be accessible to them if they needed them.

Residents emphasised the need for more affordable and higher-quality housing. They expressed a desire for a mix of housing sizes and better access to housing improvement grants, particularly for older people and those living in local authority housing.



4.3.5 People with disabilities

“People with disabilities are being respected and accepted more and more”

According to Census 2022, there were 2,046 people with disabilities living in the Eastern Environs, representing 22.6% of the population. Distribution varies significantly within the area. For example, Talbot Place and Castle Crescent have the lowest rates at less than 17%, while Newpark has the highest rate at 30%

As part of the consultation a focus groups were carried out in a service providing support for adults with intellectual disabilities and autism with individual from the Eastern Environs. People with disabilities that participated in this focus groups were supported by their carers during the session. In this group it was reported that people with disabilities are more respected and listened to now than they were in the past. Adults with disabilities that participated reported how doctors listen to them, that they enjoyed living in supported accommodation with carers and that care in general that they received is good and most of their medical needs are fulfilled. They also reported a good standard of life and have opportunities to participate in hobbies and community events.

“Local services are great with people with disabilities – they (the services) make an effort so that they feel welcome and that their needs are catered for”

Care workers have reported that many local businesses have improved their accessibility for people with disabilities by adapting menus, providing accessible spaces and facilities, and treating customers with the utmost respect and care. They also noted that when people with disabilities feel welcomed, they are more likely to become regular customers and provide ongoing patronage due to their positive experiences. Service providers and staff emphasized how some local business owners had attended training on how to be more inclusive and accessible for all customers. This included adapting their menus, providing staff with appropriate training and making sure that there is accessible space and toilet facilities on their premises.

People with disabilities described how having interests and being able to live self-sufficiently enhanced their quality of life. Having hobbies not only provides fulfilment as well as encouraging mental and emotional well-being. People with disabilities also described how living independently often contributed to higher self-esteem and confidence, as individuals take pride in their ability to navigate their daily lives their own terms and with the support of others when needed.

People with disabilities reported how accessibility is an ongoing issue for the and this is reported in the Accessibility and Public Transport section of the findings in this chapter. People with disabilities reported how not everywhere was accessible to them and that it often impeded their ability to attend events and regularly attend activity when public space was not accessible for wheelchairs or when there was a lack of accessible public toilets.

“The new cinema has the best facilities we have ever seen.... but it doesn’t take cash so the lads cannot go”

People with disabilities have also reported not always having access to cards for payments, which limits their ability to access facilities like the new local cinema. During focus groups, many expressed their enjoyment of going to the cinema, emphasising the excitement of choosing films and planning visits.

Carers have described the newly opened cinema in Kilkenny, located in the Eastern Environs, as one of the most accessible public spaces in the city, with state-of-the-art facilities. However, the cinema only accepts card payments, making it inaccessible to many service users who only use cash.

Carers reported a lack of accessible one-stop shops for various healthcare professions needed by their service users, such as optometry, chiropody, and dental care. They stated that these services, which were once available through the HSE in a single clinic, now must be accessed through different providers at various locations.

“It can be so difficult to get appointments for the lads (service-users) – we had a great optometrist, but she moved to a building with bollards in front of the door and we can’t get the wheelchairs in”

Carers highlighted significant challenges, such as securing enough suitable and timely appointments and finding providers whose buildings are accessible to all service users.

During the consultation, people with disabilities were asked what would improve their lives. They mentioned the need for more supportive learning and employment opportunities, as well as better public infrastructure, including public transport.



4.3.6 Older people

“Retired social groups very good and keep me active”

As of April 2022, the latest Census figures show that there were 976 people aged over 65 years living in the Eastern Environs, representing nearly 11% of the total population. This rate is lower than the national average of 15%. However, the proportion of older people varies greatly within the Eastern Environs. For instance, in areas with older housing such as Maudlin Street and Dublin Road, 25% of the population are over 65, while in newer housing developments like Castle Crescent and Talbot Place, only 2% of the population are over 65.

Many older residents in Kilkenny spoke warmly about their community during the focus groups as part of the consultations. Some of the older people praised the active and engaging retired groups, which provide opportunities for social interaction and outings as well as having access to free public transport. However, not all older people in the consultations were satisfied with their overall quality of life. In addition to facing barriers in accessing everyday healthcare, older people expressed concerns about their safety when walking around their locality, both during the day and at night. They reported feeling unsafe due to anti-social behaviour, people socializing late at night near their homes, and large groups of young people or migrants "hanging around." Personal safety was a major concern, with some older people even reporting that they did not always feel safe in their own homes.

The quality of housing for from some older people and their limited access to housing improvement grants were major concerns. Some older residents reported their homes were very cold. While they were aware of available retrofit grants, they felt unable to navigate the application process on their own, describing it as 'very complicated.'

“My house is cold, and I don’t know how to access grants to make it warmer – they are too complicated”

Older people expressed concerns about their future care needs as they age. They emphasized the importance of having the freedom to choose their care and accessing appropriate services. Some were unsure if the necessary home help and care would be available as they grew older. Most older residents wanted to remain in their own homes but were not confident that suitable care would be accessible to support this preference.

“I am worried about how I will be cared for in the future”

Other residents also reported a lack of care support for older people during the consultations. Some shared that they had to take on the care needs of their older parents, which was often inappropriate or not feasible. They mentioned experiences of family members being discharged from hospitals with significant care needs that could not be met by family members without proper training.

Older people reported in the consultations that more activities for older people, for warmer and more energy efficient homes and more frequent and wider public transport routes would make their lives better.

4.3.7 Young people

“I Like coming to youth club – it gets me out and connected with other people”

During the consultations, young people highlighted the benefits of accessing various youth services, such as youth clubs, groups, and sports activities. They described how these opportunities allowed them to meet friends, hang out in youth-focused spaces, and connect with young people from other areas and schools.

Young Traveller boys shared their positive experiences with sports clubs and youth groups. The sports clubs allowed them to interact with settled young people outside their community, while Traveller-specific youth groups provided a space to access local youth services and support when needed. Other young people reported that youth groups offered them safe spaces to spend time with friends, providing alternatives to sports activities for those who weren't as interested in them.

“There are plenty of sport activities for kids – but not everyone is interested in the GAA”

They also discussed how participating regularly in sports also improved their overall well-being. Young Travellers who took part in the consultation explained that they are now barred from using a local handball alley because of previous anti-social behaviour during their youth. These young people now feel that they have learned from their mistakes in the past and feel that having an opportunity to participate in local sports clubs would improve their overall well-being, engagement in the community in general and encourage mixing with settled members of the community.

“Young people are bored – that is why some of them get into drugs”

Young people also reported on how substance misuse, and anti-social behaviour were very much present in the Eastern Environs. They emphasized how they felt that the presence of these behaviours (substance misuse and anti-social behaviour) was a direct result of some young people being bored and having nothing to do.

In some areas of the Eastern Environs, smoking rates reported in Census 2022 were nearly double the average rate in Kilkenny. Additionally, focus groups revealed high rates of vaping among young people. They mentioned that vaping is widespread in schools, vapes are easily accessible to young people, and some use them to cope with stress.

Too much phone usage and bullying amongst young people both online and in person were other areas of concern amongst young people consulted with. They reported how these factors had at times a very negative contributing impact on their overall health and well-being.

4.3.8 New communities

“It is good living here, but we need more things to help us integrate”

Data gathered in Census 2022 showed that as of April 2022 23% (or 2,054) of the population in the Eastern Environs were born outside of Ireland. The distribution of population born outside of Ireland varied greatly across the Eastern Environs with the lowest proportions in Garringreen (12%) and the Castlecomer Road (13%) and the highest proportions in Lintown (45%) and Talbot Place and Castle Crescent (47%). Of the 23% born outside of Ireland resident in the Eastern Environs, 4% were born in the UK, 5% in Poland, 1% in India, 7% in the Other EU 28 and 5% the Rest of World.

As part of the consultations for this health needs analysis a focus group with new communities was held. This group included people living in Ireland for over 20 years as well as people newly arrive and living in international protection accommodation located in the Eastern Environs. People in this group spoke about how people are friendly and said that the Eastern Environs and Kilkenny is a pleasant place to live. Newly arrived residents appreciated the availability of English classes and found the support workers helpful and informative. Long-term residents living in Kilkenny for over 20 years expressed enjoyment in living there, highlighting their secure housing and employment.

“Kilkenny is a great place to move to – we have managed to secure a home and jobs – it is great”

A primary concern among newly arrived communities that participated in the focus groups was the difficulty in accessing basic healthcare and medical records. They expressed a lack of awareness about how to access healthcare in Kilkenny and emphasized the need for general information and multilingual resources on accessible everyday healthcare. Residents of IPAS also reported how they were worried about their future in Ireland and if they would be able to access secure employment and housing when they left the IPAS system.

One of the primary concerns for new communities, similar to the general population that participated in the consultations, was access to healthcare. A significant issue was the lack of information on available services and the scarcity of appointments. New communities reported difficulties in accessing GP or dental appointments for themselves or their children, often having to travel long distances to obtain these services.

“It is impossible to get an appointment with the GP – it feels like the system is broken”

IPAS residents reported that they had an opportunity to cook their own food which is not always the case in other IPAS centres. Residents appreciated the ability to cook their own meals, as it allowed them to choose what they were eating and make healthy food choices. In contrast, some young people living in hotels mentioned during the consultation that they

lacked access to kitchens and couldn't prepare their own meals. They had no choice in the types of food they consumed and reported that the food options provided were poor, preventing them from having a healthy and varied diet.

Poor quality accommodation was reported by IPAS residents, stating that their bedroom space was cramped and damp and that there were not enough bathrooms to accommodate all the residents.

When asked what would make life better for new communities in general in the Eastern Environs new communities reported; more information in different languages which could be supplied through QR codes, more English classes, more health services and more community events to support them to integrate with the local community.

Service providers identified support for immigrant families as one of the top areas needing improvement in the Eastern Environs. They also reported that the population's diversity is rapidly increasing, and services must adapt to include all community members.

4.4 Conclusion

The purpose of these consultations was to assess the current health status of Eastern Environs residents, identify their challenges, and determine their health needs. Consultations with 175 community members and service providers revealed several key findings:

- Residents are below the national average for healthy eating (consumption of snack foods, vegetables, and fruits) and participating in enough exercise.
- Many residents reported unmet health service needs and difficulties accessing care for themselves or their families, worsening their health issues and raising concerns about future needs.
- A major concern was the lack of community engagement and activities, with fewer people volunteering due to societal changes and time constraints, leading to increased social isolation and disengagement.
- Limited access to public transport and places was highlighted, causing isolation and difficulty accessing services.
- In some areas, housing conditions were inadequate, and residents lacked knowledge about housing improvement grants.
- Safety was an issue for older people, who often felt unsafe in their homes or walking around, especially at night, impacting their housing and care needs as they aged.
- Young people reported a lack of activities outside of sports to engage in.
- New communities faced many barriers, including language barriers when trying to access basic health services.



Chapter 5 Recommendations

5.1 Overview

The last formal part of the engagement phase was a stakeholder solution focused workshop held in early December. During this event, community members and project stakeholders collaborated to create solution focused actions, developed by and for the community. The goal was to establish shared future objectives and build on the current momentum and emerging sense of community captured through a graphic harvester. Shared objectives offers both hope for the future and the potential for significant change.



Figure 5.1

5.2 General Health Service Needs

There is no simple or locally based solution to the lack of health services in the Eastern Environs. Staff shortage and a lack of resource funding is well documented in Kilkenny and in Ireland overall which needs to be solved at a government and policy level. In the meantime, at the stakeholder workshop the following was proposed:

- To improve community health and well-being, we need to implement more health-promoting initiatives focused on prevention and ageing well. These initiatives could help reduce hospital admissions and the need for regular GP care. Examples include:
 - Adult and older adult physical activity programs
 - Community healthy eating initiatives
 - Mental health promotion
 - Health literacy awareness campaigns
 - Climate action awareness

- Healthy homes projects/initiative
- Increasing local access to Social Prescribers can help residents find the right supports and services
- Providing more Community Health Screening such as blood pressure checks and general health advice
- Offering support to fill out the My Service My Say application forms online will empower community members to directly engage with policymakers, making their voices heard about the impact of insufficient health services in their area.
- Offering parental support, for example occupational therapy (OT) for parents waiting on assessments of needs for their children

5.3 Combat loneliness and more community engagement

To foster a stronger and more connected community in the Eastern Environs and prevent loneliness, several key initiatives have been proposed by the stakeholders:

- First, adopting a multi-agency approach ensures that various sectors work together cohesively to achieve common goals.
- Providing more access to local development workers ensures that the community would provide support needed to implement various projects.
- Improving community safety should be a top priority, creating a secure environment where residents can thrive.
- Enhancing community engagement through various activities will help build stronger bonds among residents. Introducing more green spaces and community gardens will provide communities with safe areas to connect and implement nature-based solutions to improve cohesion and wellbeing.
- Free physical activities throughout the community encourage a healthy lifestyle and foster social interaction. For example, establishing more walking groups promotes health and offers an opportunity for social interactions among residents of the Eastern Environs
- Funding the implementation of social groups will facilitate the creation of more community-focused groups, enhancing social cohesion.
- Lastly, improving communication about future ensures that all residents are informed and can actively participate in the community's development.

5.4 Accessibility and Public Transport

Regarding Public Transport the stakeholders discuss how the current public transport system serving the Eastern Environs was designed by the National Transport Authority and consultations were completed by Kilkenny County Council. A representative from the county council explained how the current bus route needed to remain under thirty minutes for it to work efficiently. They went on to explain how if the bus entered some areas (housing estates and retail centres) the bus would no longer be able to run efficiently. Together the stakeholders made the following suggestions:

- A walkway across the main ring road is planned but will take two years to complete. Before proceeding, it's essential to evaluate the evidence to determine the best location for this walkway. Residents of the Eastern Environs should engage with this consultation process to ensure they have an opportunity to voice their view on local needs.
- There is also a need to consider creating a 'village centre' in the Eastern Environs to foster community interaction.

- Demand Responsive Transport is necessary for older people in housing estates who lack cars, ensuring they have access to essential services, and this should be explored in the Eastern Environs.

5.5 Housing

Similar to the health needs of the local community issues surrounding access to and the affordability of housing is well documented at a county and at a national level. Regarding some of the housing issues as noted in the consultations, the stakeholders have recommended that:

- Exploring partnerships with the Regional Energy Agency can enhance consultation and engagement with residents, ensuring their needs and opinions are considered in energy-related decisions around their homes.
- Additionally, examining ways to make community building more efficient can foster stronger connections among residents.
- Supporting the upgrade of Local Authority housing would also improve living conditions and sustainability and it should be examined how best to do this at a local level.
- Furthermore, constructing more mixed housing like in Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny can provide diverse housing options that cater to various needs within the community.

5.6 People with disabilities

Based on the findings of the consultations, stakeholders have proposed several initiatives aimed at enhancing the overall wellbeing of people with disabilities, including:

- Ensuring that all community and public buildings are accessible with adequate toilet facilities. This should be considered at a pre-planning stage of development to ensure that all members of the community can access comm spaces.
- There should be more consideration for people with disabilities during the planning stages of services, festivals, events, and public spaces.
- Additionally, providing more community and professional-level training will help create a more inclusive environment for all residents in both private establishments and community organisations.

5.7 Older People

Based on the findings of the consultations several initiatives have been proposed by stakeholders in relation to the overall wellbeing of older people, these include:

- Locally based OAP Tea meetings with access to citizen information and community talks can provide older adults with valuable resources and social opportunities.
- Increasing intergenerational activities, such as befriending initiatives, can foster connections between young and old people.
- Reviewing the possibility of a Healthy Homes Pilot for retrofitting older homes can improve living conditions for residents.
- Additionally, implementing social prescribing specifically for older people can help address their unique health and well-being needs.

5.8 Young People

Throughout the consultation it was reported that not all young people are accessing youth clubs, groups, sports and other activities. Social isolation amongst young people, anti-social behaviour, overuse of phone and poor mental health are just some of the consequences of young people being bored.

- Increasing policing and security initiatives in targeted areas like Newpark Primary Care Centre and the Skatepark can help reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Proposing a street football league for young people between housing estates can encourage community spirit and provide positive outlets for their energy.
- Organizing more youth-centred activities provides safe and engaging spaces for younger residents
- Exploring alternatives to current health promotion methods around the negativities of drug use is essential since existing approaches are not effective. Speaking to young people earlier about substance misuse can help prevent these issues before they escalate.
- Additionally, providing access to a pump track⁴ for young people will offer them a safe and engaging place for physical activity.

5.9 New Communities

Non-native residents make up nearly 23% of the Eastern Environs population. Consultations revealed that many new communities lack access to appropriate healthcare and language support. People living in IPAS expressed concerns about their future access to employment and housing, highlighting the need for more integration support, including access to English classes. Based on these findings, the stakeholders agreed that:

- Local services need to offer information on the supports they offer in multiple languages
- More English classes should be provided for new communities
- Strengthened outreach into IPAS centres from local community service providers
- Healthy eating initiatives to target people living in IPAS centres, especially those living in centre where they do not have access to their own cooking facilities.
- Integration needs to be strengthened through community events.

⁴ [BMX Pump Track latest addition to Dungarvan's Linear Park - Waterford City & County Council](#)

Chapter 6 Conclusion

A Health Needs Analysis identifies a community's health challenges by collating and analysing data. This approach helps understand the issues faced, highlights unmet needs, and prioritizes actions. The goal is to inform local service planning and enhance health outcomes at the community level.

The consultations carried out for this Health Needs Analysis have brought to light several significant health challenges within the Eastern Environs. Residents fall below the national average for healthy eating and exercise, contributing possibly contribute to ongoing health issues. There is a notable difficulty in accessing healthcare, with many residents reporting unmet needs that exacerbate their health problems. Social isolation and a lack of community engagement were also prevalent, driven by fewer volunteering activities and limited public transport access. Housing conditions in some areas are inadequate, and a lack of knowledge about improvement grants persists. Safety is a major concern for older residents, impacting their well-being, while young people report a lack of activities beyond sports. Additionally, new community members face substantial barriers, particularly language-related, in accessing basic health services.

Addressing these challenges will require a coordinated effort from stakeholders to enhance the overall health and well-being of the Eastern Environs community. The consultations highlight the complexity and breadth of health and wellbeing issues facing the Eastern Environs community.

While local solutions alone cannot address the systemic problems stemming from staff shortages and lack of funding, key initiatives have been identified to improve community health and well-being. Stakeholders propose a variety of programs focused on preventive health, community engagement, accessibility, public transport, housing, and support for both older individuals and young people. Additionally, increased support for new communities is essential, including better access to healthcare, language services, and integration initiatives.

Implementing these comprehensive solutions will require collaboration among community members, service providers, and policymakers. By leveraging a multi-agency approach and prioritizing local development and engagement, the community can foster a healthier, more inclusive, and cohesive environment for all residents. To further enhance the Eastern Environs community's overall well-being, stakeholders propose initiating a placemaking strategy. This comprehensive approach will address:

- The area's overall permeability
- Connections to public transport
- Mobility
- Open spaces, greening, and nature integration
- Quality of housing
- Physical activity promotion
- Community safety

This cross-cutting initiative requires collaboration among Kilkenny County Council (KCC) Planning and Community Sections, Transport/Active Travel, Healthy Ireland, and other stakeholders such as Kilkenny Leader Partnership (KLP) and the Gardaí. KLP will specifically support efforts in the following areas:

- Lone Parents: Through Kilkenny One Parent Community and SICAP.
- Young People: Focusing on isolated and unmotivated youth, offering training and development opportunities. Partnerships will include ETB, Foroige, and Ossory Youth. Addressing bullying and promoting engagement will be key.
- Long-term Unemployed (LTU): Providing SICAP support to offer alternative, less pressured perspectives for those in ongoing labour market activation cycles.
- Supporting Community Groups: Strengthening communities at the estate level to build capacity and deliver projects.

Other areas of focus:

- Older People: Ensuring safety, quality housing, energy efficiency, and active involvement with support from KLP, HI, Gardaí, ETB, Health Services, Energy Agency, and KCC.
- Health: Enhancing access to health information and screening programs, promoting well-being, organizing health events, and delivering accessible health programs led by physiotherapists with comprehensive lifestyle inputs.

By working together on these initiatives, a more cohesive, safe, and healthy environment can be created for the Eastern Environs community.



Appendix 1 Survey with community members and service providers

This analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the survey results, highlighting the main issues and areas for improvement as identified by 100 people living in the Eastern Environs and 26 service providers.

What the community said in the survey

General Health:

- 34% of respondents rated their health as very good.
- 40% rated it as good.
- 14% rated it as fair.
- 3% rated it as bad.
- No respondents rated their health as very bad.

Activities:

- 34% enjoy walking.
- 13% participate in multiple activities like gym and running.
- 11% enjoy running.
- 4% go to the gym.
- 2% each participate in badminton, cycling, and football.

Sources of Information on Local Services:

- 40% use social media.
- 33% rely on friends.
- 32% use internet searches.
- 22% refer to online groups or newspapers.
- 14% use printed newspapers, local libraries, and community centres.

Physical Activity:

- 81% of respondents expressed a desire to be more active.

Quality of Life:

- 17% rated their quality of life as very good.
- 41% rated it as good.
- 15% said it was neither good nor poor.
- 4% rated it as poor.
- 1% rated it as very poor.

Loneliness:

- 16% never felt lonely in the past four weeks.
- 16% hardly ever felt lonely.
- 15% occasionally felt lonely.
- 19% felt lonely some of the time.
- 8% felt lonely often or always.

Social Group Participation:

- Only 36% participated in social groups.

Most Needed Services:

- 23% identified more GP services.
- 15% highlighted the need for mental health services.
- 6% mentioned services for older people.

Access to Health Services:

- 30% found it difficult or very difficult to access health services in the Eastern Environs.
- Barriers included waiting lists (23%), cost of services (21%), and lack of availability (19%).

Challenges in the Eastern Environs:

1. Lack of non-sport activities for children and young people.
2. Insufficient places for teenagers to hang out.
3. Difficulties accessing education (early learning, childcare, school places, etc.).
4. Environmental/climate concerns.
5. Lack of community events or things to do.
6. Money worries/cost of living.

Top Changes Needed in the Eastern Environs:

1. Shorter waiting times for services.
2. Safe spaces for children to play.
3. More community events/things to do.
4. Better access to services for older people.
5. Improved access to mental health supports/services.
6. More youth clubs or supervised activities.

One Key Change Suggested by Residents:

1. More community events/spaces/groups.
2. Better access to health services in general.
3. Improved public infrastructure (roads, housing).
4. More schools.
5. More cycle routes.
6. Better public transport.

What the service providers said in the survey

Challenges in the Eastern Environs:

1. Health: Difficulties accessing mental/physical health services
2. Social Isolation
3. Health: Mental health challenges
4. Health: Addiction (e.g. drugs/ alcohol/ gambling)

5. Health: Too much drug/alcohol use
6. Health: Physical health challenges

Top Changes Needed in the Eastern Environs:

1. Shorter waiting times/ waiting lists for services
2. Access to services generally for older people
3. Access to physical health services
4. Supports for immigrant families
5. Access to mental health supports/ services
6. Access to disability supports/ services

One Key Change Suggested by Service providers:

1. More community event/space/groups
2. Multiagency approach
3. More staff and resources
4. More facilities for older people
5. Promote physical activity
6. More use of existing space

Appendix 2 Table of Census Results

This detailed table provides a breakdown of Census 2022 results and provides a comparative breakdown with county (Kilkenny) and state results also.

			Eastern Environ		Kilkenny		State	
			Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Population	Population change	Population 2022 Population 2016 Percentage population change since 2016	9,044 8,825		104,160 99,232		5,149,139 4,761,865	
	Population by age	Population aged 0 to 17 years	2,435	27%	25,603	25%	1,218,567	22%
		Age 0 - 4 years	554	6%	5,860	6%	295,415	5%
		Age 5-9 years	668	7%	7,248	7%	342,670	6%
		Age 10-14 years	747	8%	7,986	8%	374,202	7%
		Age 15-19 years	678	7%	7,048	7%	337,628	6%
		Age 20 - 24 years	457	5%	5,157	5%	307,143	5%
		Age 25 - 29 years	578	6%	5,045	5%	295,808	5%
		Age 30 - 34 years	680	8%	5,789	6%	332,223	5%
		Age 35 - 39 years	755	8%	7,156	7%	382,869	7%
		Age 40 - 44 years	785	9%	8,080	8%	411,524	8%
		Age 45 - 49 years	721	8%	7,886	8%	373,504	7%
		Age 50 - 54 years	517	6%	7,093	7%	340,003	7%
		Age 55 - 59 years	485	5%	6,683	6%	307,165	7%
		Age 60 - 64 years	433	5%	6,073	6%	272,670	6%
		Age 65 - 69 years	338	4%	5,238	5%	238,144	6%
		Age 70 - 74 years	254	3%	4,409	4%	202,884	5%
		Age 75 - 79 years	176	2%	3,398	3%	154,260	4%
		Age 80 - 84 years	116	1%	2,110	2%	96,586	2%
		Age 85 and over years	92	1%	1,901	2%	84,441	2%
		Young Dependency Ratio		36%		32%		29%
		Old Dependency Ratio		16%		26%		21%
	Citizenship	Ireland	6,895	77%	88,736	84%	4,283,490	87%
		UK	397	4%	5,197	5%	83,347	2%
		Poland	430	5%	1,807	2%	93,680	2%
		India	107	1%	600	1%	45,449	0%
		Other EU28	657	7%	3,179	3%	219,229	3%
	Ethnicity	Rest of world	463	5%	3,517	4%	190,080	2%
		White Irish	6,205	69%	86,988	84%	3,893,056	81%
		White Irish Traveller	161	2%	637	1%	32,949	1%
		Other White	1,355	15%	7,571	7%	502,081	10%
		Black or Black Irish	127	1%	751	1%	76,245	1%
		Asian or Asian Irish	308	3%	1,818	2%	166,206	2%
Households	Families by type	Other	214	2%	1,256	1%	101,166	1%
		Pre-family (No. of families)	261	12%	1,885	7%	119,145	9%
		Empty nest (No. of families)	208	10%	2,737	10%	120,771	9%
		Retired (No. of families)	167	8%	3,402	13%	154,136	12%
		Pre-school (No. of families)	193	9%	1,993	7%	104,086	8%
		Early school (No. of families)	251	12%	2,629	10%	126,380	10%
		Pre-adolescent (No. of families)	310	14%	3,236	12%	152,171	12%
		Adolescent (No. of families)	263	12%	3,450	13%	157,687	12%
		Adult (No. of families)	505	23%	7,474	28%	345,575	27%
		One Parent Families with children under 15 years	173	23%	421	21%	69,745	18%
Employment	Unemployment	Unemployed (No. of people)	556	12%	4,007	8%	210,802	8%
		Unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability	407	6%	4,068	5%	189,308	5%
Disability and Health	Population with a disability, population by general health and population identified as carers	Pop with a disability	2,046	23%	22,402	22%	1,109,557	22%
		Very good - Total	4,511	50%	57,649	55%	2,740,994	52%
		Good - Total	2,871	32%	31,248	30%	1,527,027	32%
		Fair - Total	874	10%	8,884	9%	444,895	9%
		Bad - Total	153	2%	1,344	1%	72,556	1%
		Very bad - Total	31	0%	350	0%	16,843	0%
		Not stated - Total	604	7%	4,685	4%	346,824	6%
		Carers total	443	5%	6,501	6%	299,128	6%

Source: Census 2022