



Survey Analysis and Insights

Skibbereen Town Centre First Plan



Comhairle Contae Chorcaí
Cork County Council

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Introduction

As part of the national Town Centre First Policy initiative, Skibbereen in West Cork has been identified as a 'pathfinder' town and funding has been granted to Cork County Council for the development of a regeneration plan. The policy represents a joint strategy by the Department of Rural and Community Development, in collaboration with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; to tackle vacancy and dereliction, drive future development and breathe new life into town centres.

A Playful City (as part of a wider design team) were commissioned to analyse a Town Centre First survey that was conducted by Cork County Council. This is in order to gain insights and feedback from the community on how the town thinks and feels towards their own Town centre.

This report will help steer the next steps in terms of consultation strategy for TCF Skibbereen and it will inform how the TCF plan will emerge.

Please note:

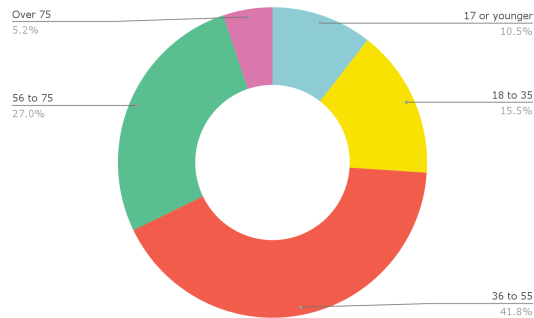
- Any reference to 'Fields Car Park' in this report refers to the Main Town Centre Car Park behind Fields.
- Any reference to the "Mart" in this report is referred to as 'The Fairfield'

About the Survey Participants

There were 930 survey participants

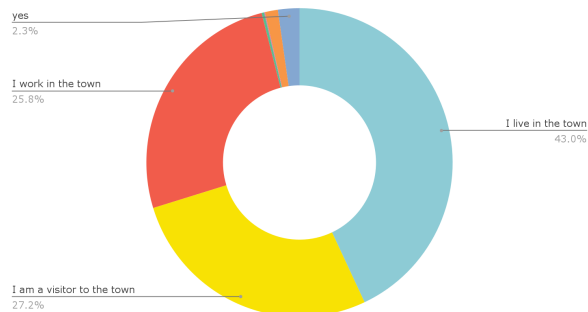
- 890 Online
- 40 In Person

Age



Do survey participants live in, work in or visit Skibbereen?*

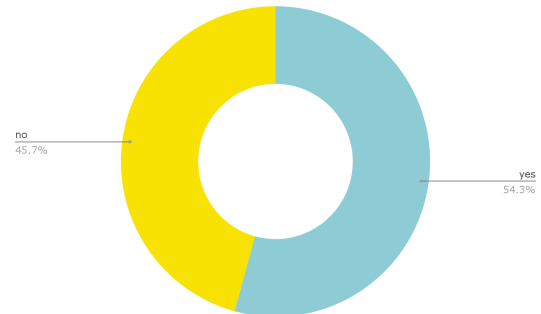
**Please note that participants could select more than one answer*



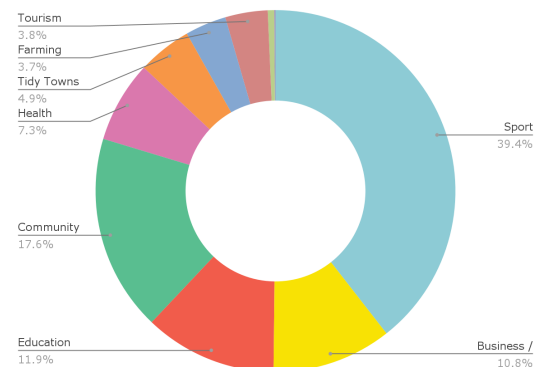
The majority of participants live in Skibbereen town.

Are participants a member of a club, sports organisation or other community / volunteer group?*

** Please note that participants could select more than one answer*



The majority of participants are members of sports, business, education and community groups.

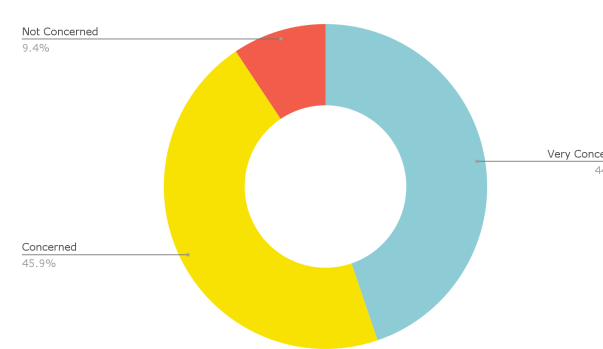


Other groups mentioned were: Active retirement, Approved Housing Body, Arts Groups, Carbery Show, Charity shop assistant now, Choir Groups, Church Group, Civil Defence Group, Fairtrade committee group, Fire brigade group, Irish Coast Guard, LGBTQ+, Mizen scouts, Philosophy Group, School boards, SEAI Sustainable Energy Community and the Centre of Excellence in Climate Action and Sustainability (CECAS), Parish Groups, Skibbereen Comha, Skibbereen Lions Club, Uillin activities, Union Hall Development

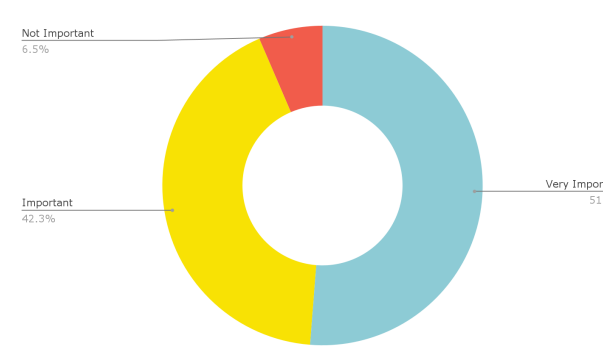
Committee, West Cork Rapid
Response, Youth clubs, Youth theatre

How concerned are participants
about climate change?

The majority of participants are
concerned or very concerned about
climate change.



How important are environmentally
sustainable initiatives and projects
to you?

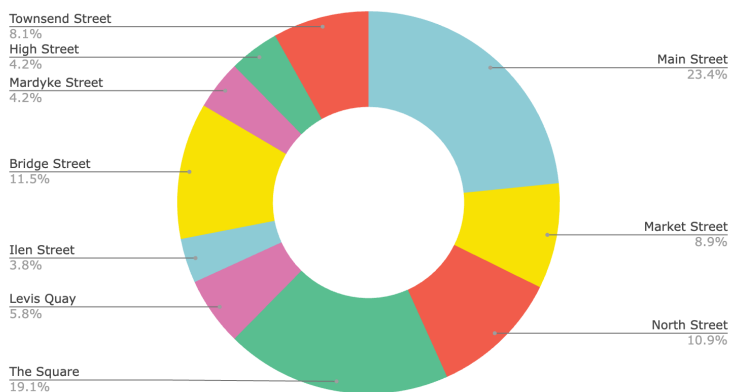


Tell Us About Your Town

Where in your view is Skibbereen Town Centre?*

* Please note that participants could select more than one answer

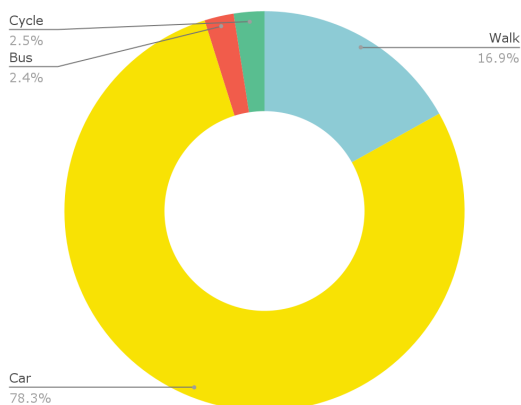
Main Street, The Square, Bridge Street, Market Street and North Street are the main areas in which participants viewed the Town Centre.



How do you travel TO TOWN?*

* Please note that participants could select more than one answer

The vast majority of Participants travel to Town via Car.



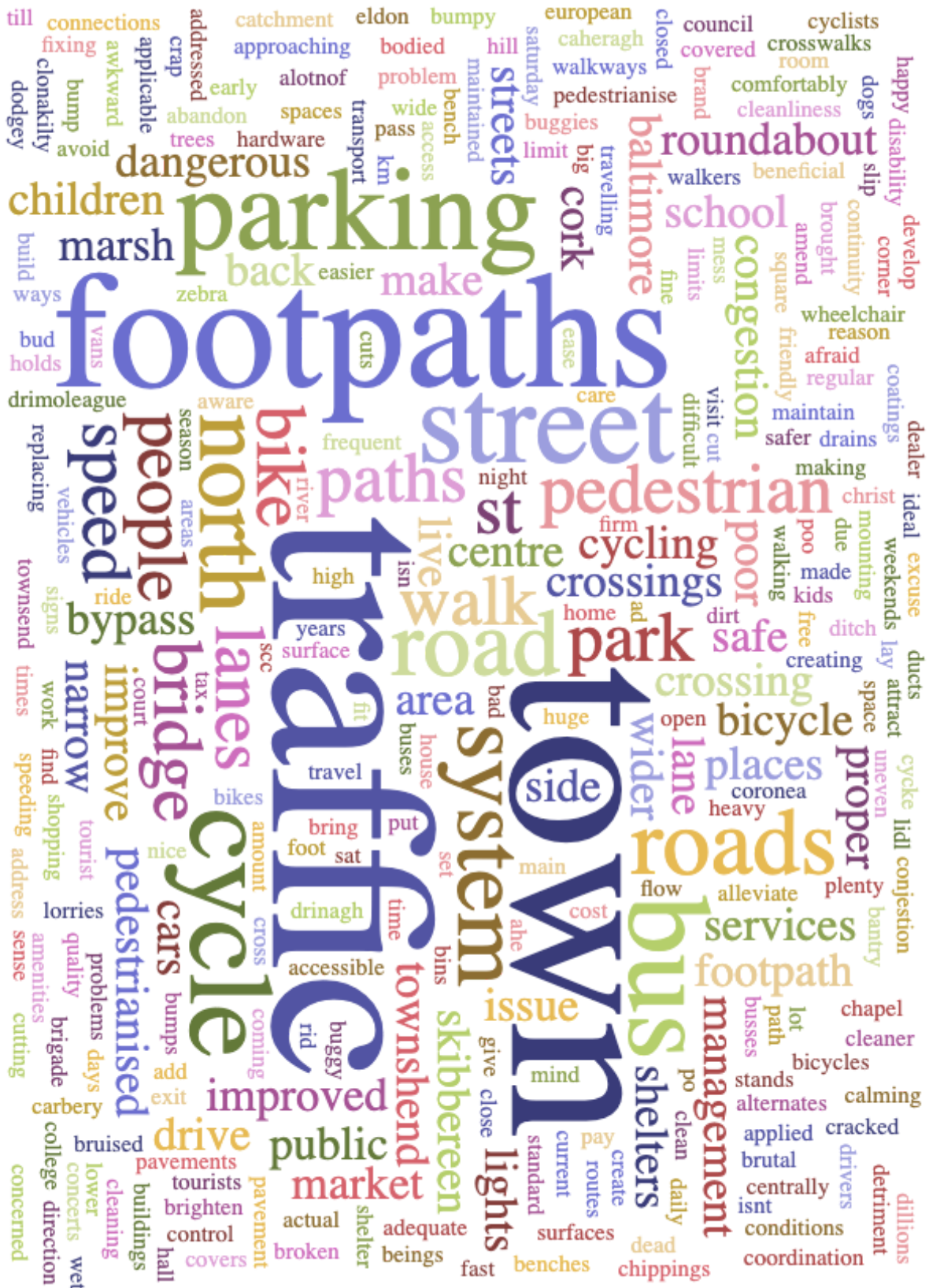
If Walk / Cycle / Bus, what might improve travelling to town for you?

Better and wider footpaths, improved roads, amended speed limits, amended traffic flows (one way systems), cycle lanes, speed bumps, bike parking, cleanliness of public realm, bus shelters, later opening times in the town for shops, Garda presence in the evenings and pedestrianisation are a part of how participants answered this survey.

"Open the car park on the bypass and foot bridge so people can park outside town and walk in which would be more sustainable and less traffic."

"Reduction in traffic along Bridge Street. The improvements to the pavements are excellent but moving vehicles still mount them, to the detriment of pedestrian safety."

"I am a college student with family. I visit Skibbereen, it is my home town... a shop up in that area open till about 8 or 9 is well needed in the area doing snacks essentials and minerals."



A word cloud generated from the answers of 'If Walk / Cycle / Bus, what might improve travelling to town for you' in the survey

If Car, what might make you consider other forms of travel?

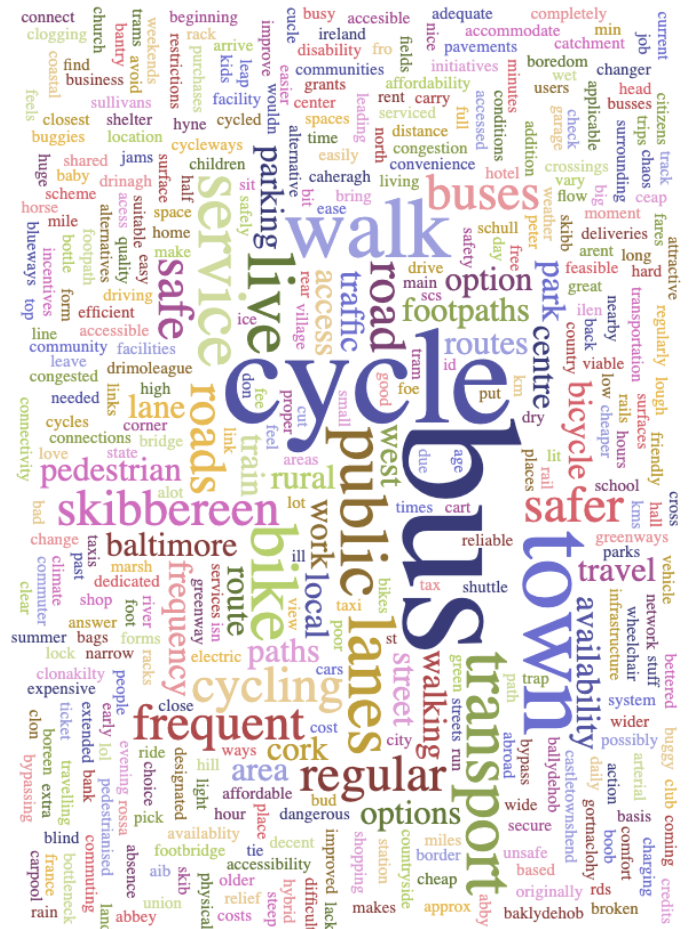
Better cycle lanes and connections, frequent local and accessible bus services, a train service, a greenway are some aspects that were suggested by participants to encourage non car modes of transport.

"Nothing, I have a physical disability and live on the outskirts of town"

"I also walk when possible as I do not live far away. It is not the most bike-friendly town as the streets are too narrow in places, most of the road surfaces are in a very bad state for all road users, pedestrian crossings are often ignored and the one by HENNESSY's shop is dangerous."

"Efficiency/ convenience. Until one of these factors is bettered by an alternative, the car remains as the #1 choice. It is difficult to live in West Cork without one!"

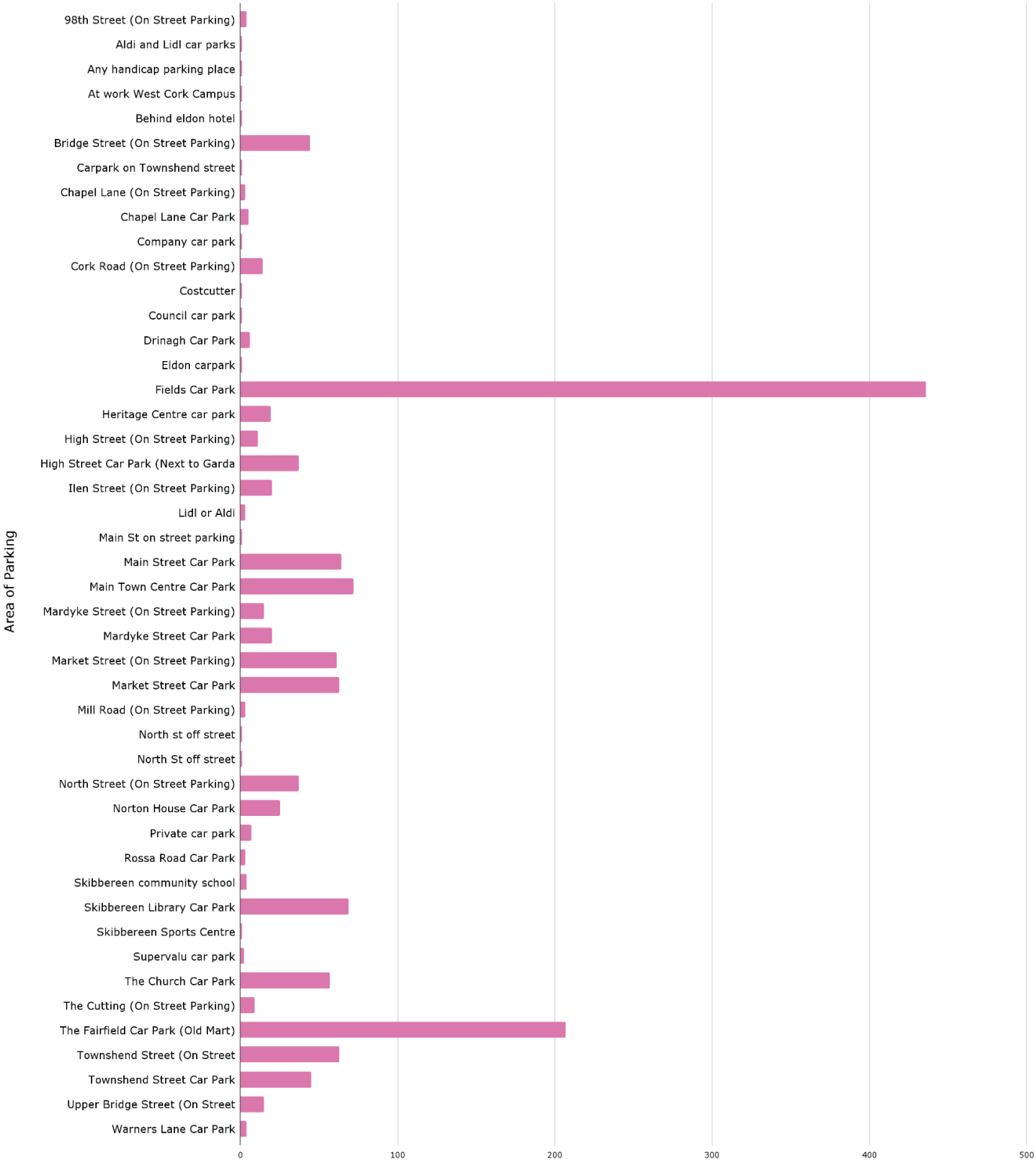
"Flexible bus routes with schedules that would allow for travel to town and return to my home area with enough time to shop, go to library, or see an exhibition."



A word cloud generated from the answers of this question in the survey

Where do you usually park?

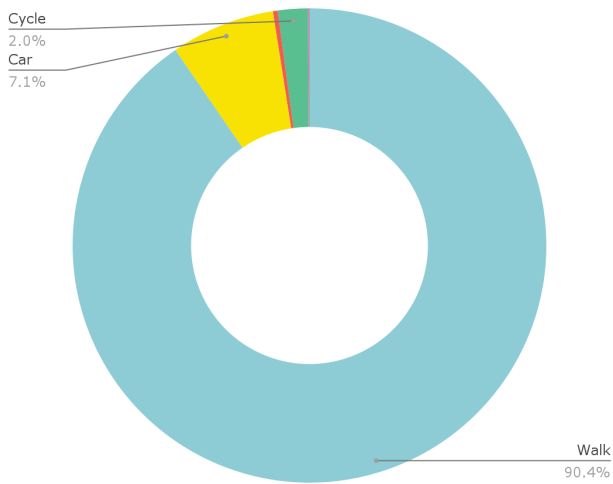
The majority of participants park in the Field Car Park.



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How do you get AROUND Skibbereen Town Centre?*

** Please note that participants could select more than one answer*



The majority of participants walk around the town centre.

What in your opinion might improve navigating around Skibbereen Town Centre?

Better town signage, New Road Bridges, better traffic management (ie. a one way system), a town map, better / wider footpaths, bike lanes, greenery, less cars / traffic, pedestrianisation and alternative car parking were some suggestions noted by participants.

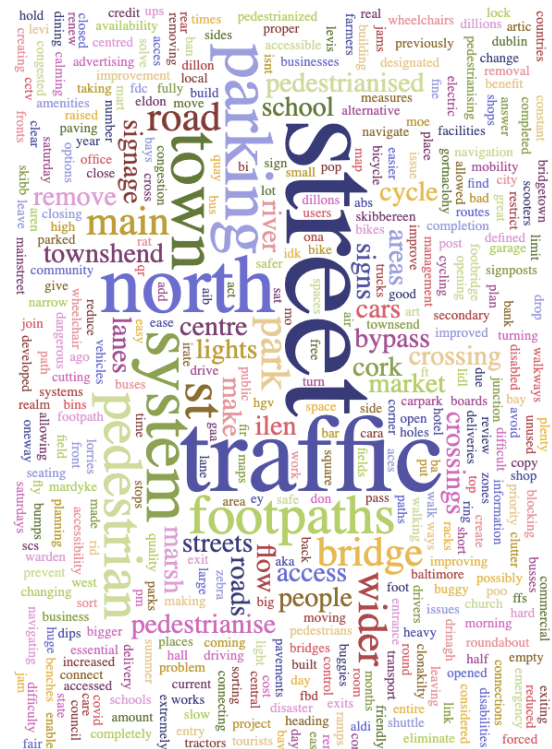
“Better road/pavement surfaces-these are essential for all users but in particular those with mobility issues”

"A new car park so it would take the parking off the streets and I good one way system in through Ilan Street and out north street And for all businesses to work together"

"One way system to move traffic quickly "

*“Bike rental scheme like Cork or Dublin, e-bikes could be an option
Money spent in local businesses could contribute to cost of bike rental scheme
Patrons could have a loyalty card with businesses that could give credits to bike rentals”*

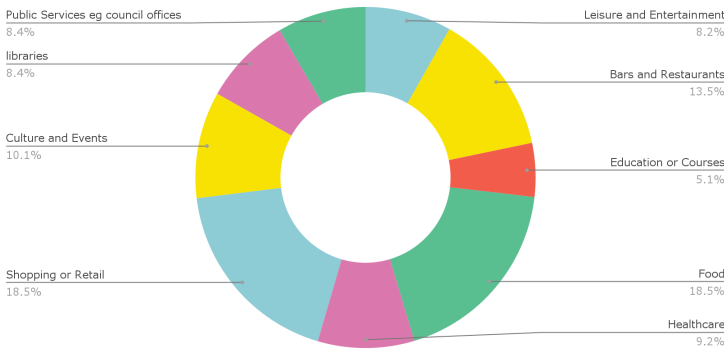
“Map of town with points of interest in town centre”



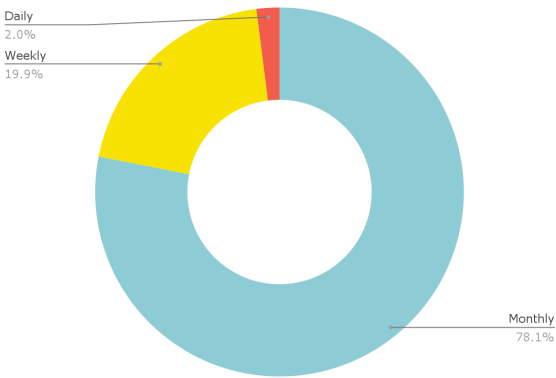
A word cloud generated from the answers of this question in the survey

Tell us what you do in Skibbereen and how often?

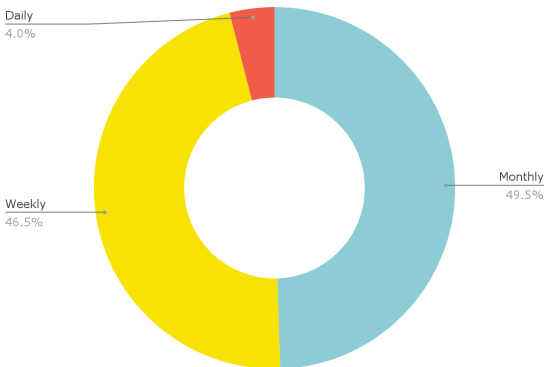
The majority of participants currently use the town for Shopping, Bar, Restaurants and Food, however the town is being used for a wide range of uses.



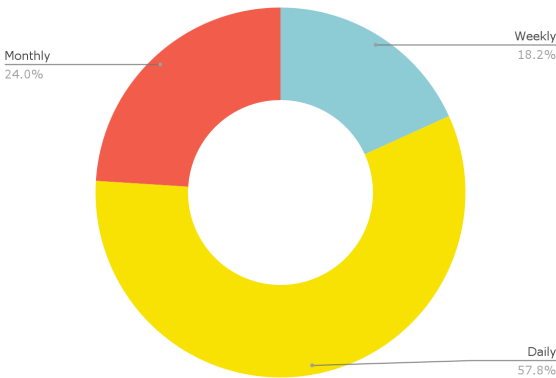
How often do participants use Skibbereen town centre, for those that answered 'Culture and Events'?



How often do participants use Skibbereen town centre, for those that answered 'Bar and Restaurants'?

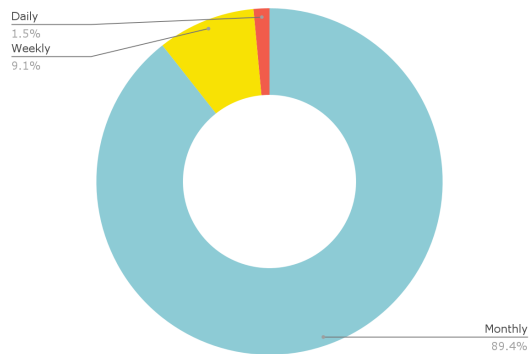


How often do participants use Skibbereen town centre, for those that answered 'Education or Courses'?

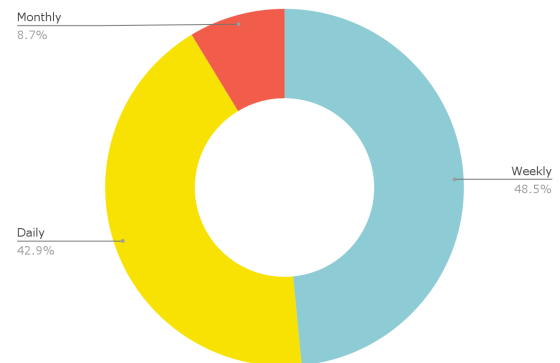


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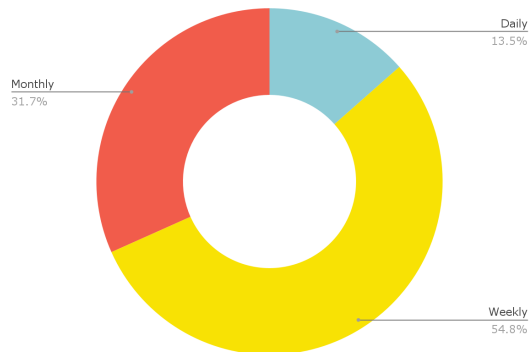
How often do participants use Skibbereen town centre, for those that answered 'Healthcare'?



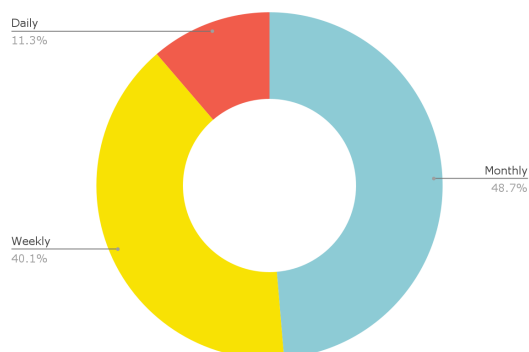
How often do participants use Skibbereen town centre, for those that answered 'Shopping or Retail'?



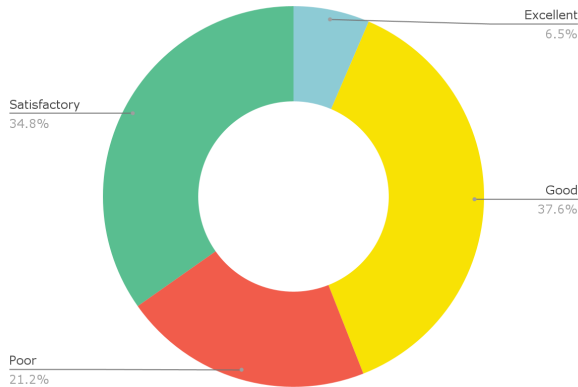
How often do participants use Skibbereen town centre, for those that answered 'Leisure and Entertainment'?



How often do participants use Skibbereen town centre, for those that answered 'Public Services eg Council offices'?



How would you rate the choice of retail and social outlets in Skibbereen?



Reasons participants answered 'Excellent' noted that the market is an **excellent asset** and **variety of shops for the size of the town.**

"Skibb is lucky to have energetic and imaginative business people."

Reasons participants answered 'Good' noted that whilst there was a **good selection of independent shops** however there could be a **more choice for a variety of ages** (ie young people).

"Need more investment in entertainment that brings in big business for bars and restaurants. Too many tourist focused shops/amenities that are mostly used in summer."

Reasons participants answered 'Satisfactory' noted that businesses could **cater for younger people** and have more of a **social outlet**. It was also noted that Skibb is **not a retail destination** despite the sops it has.

"There are some really nice independent shops but unfortunately not enough for it to be a retail destination. The variety could be a lot better. Regarding social outlets aside from a handful of pubs there is nothing."

Reasons participants answered 'Poor' noted that there is **no cinema or places for young people.**

"Social outlets don't exist in Skibbereen. The town practically shuts down at 6pm. No accessible cultural centre, music, cinema, theatre or performance space available to the people of the town. A handful of pubs and restaurants. No choice for cultural events.need to leave the town for these."

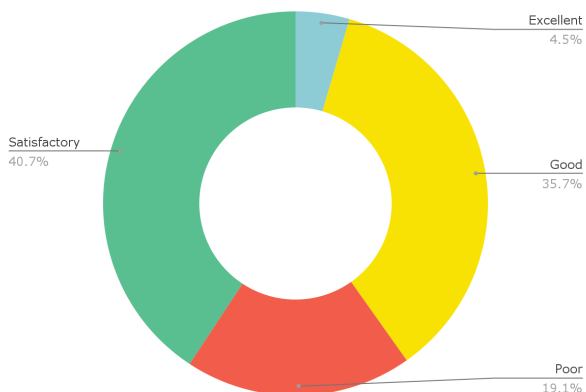


A word cloud generated from the answers of this question in the survey



A word cloud generated from the reasons participants answered 'Poor' of this question in the survey

How would you rate the choice of public services in Skibbereen?



Reasons participants answered 'Excellent' noted that **public services are very well serviced.**

"We are very fortunate to have many public services available in the town such as NCT centre, Driving Licence centre and Driving Test Centre to name just a few. These services need to be protected. "



A word cloud generated from the answers of this question in the survey

Reasons participants answered 'Good' noted that there is a good **range of facilities and that basic needs are met** but that there is always a need for **improving services like mental health services**

"Mental health facilities could be improved"

“HSE admin services good. Good to have Cork Co. Co. Planning office locally & Recycling facilities. Post Office & Social Welfare, choice of banking services available when much of these services gone from nearby smaller towns & villages so Skibbereen is a good centre for essential services.”

Reasons participants answered 'Satisfactory' noted that **services could be improved.**

"Improvement could be a swimming pool, extra healthcare choices, extra garda facilities and fire service is only surviving. Public park facilities in the marsh could be provided behind north st. And Main st."

Reasons participants answered 'Poor' noted that there could be an improvement to

- Access to public toilets
- Better healthcare services
- Poor signage
- Lack of bins
- Young people facilities\

"There is now no youth cafe which used to operate out of the Town Hall."

What is your favourite thing about Skibbreen?

- Community atmosphere (its people, diversity, friendliness, safety, welcoming, rich heritage) is noted as one of the most favourite things about Skibbereen.
- Close to good natural features (eg, beach, fields,)
- Sport facilities, farmers market, variety of shopping, free car parking, cafes
- The size of the town - small and close-knit

"Its potential to become a sustainable town by achieving net zero carbon emissions ahead of national targets and to become a comfortable location for walks and other social activities."

"The aspect I love most about Skibbereen is its incredibly rich heritage, which presents an exciting opportunity Skibbereen's rich heritage is like a hidden treasure waiting to be fully uncovered and appreciated. The town's history is woven with tales of resilience, cultural diversity, and significant events that have shaped its identity over the years. From its origins as a bustling market town to its involvement in the Great Famine, there's a wealth of stories that can offer valuable insights into the past."

*"When you walk down the street
your met with mostly smiles and
small chit chat...all the locals are so
welcoming."*

"Familiar friendly staff in shops and cafes, colorful shopfronts and houses, good choice of shops. The Arts Centre is an asset, with exciting projects, classes and exhibitions. "

"The setting of the town. The potential is there and the demand is there. It could be an incredible place to live "



A word cloud generated from the answers of this question in the survey

What is your least favourite thing about Skibbereen?

- 2 hour parking limit
- Derelict buildings, anti social behaviour at night
- Car dependency
- Busy/bad traffic/congestion
- Dangerous footpaths (narrow, clutter such as signage)
- Dog foul
- Limited evening activity
- Little amenities for young people
- Worn looking streetscape
- Lack of festivals / public events
- Lack of hotel accommodation
- Tourist attractions
- Lack of bins
- River ignored
- Entertainment facilities (cinema etc.)
- Lack of swimming pool
- Not enough parking

"I've lived here in the town centre, all my life. And my family has lived here for generations. The biggest problem at the moment is the shabbiness of dilapidated houses along North St, Market Street and Bridge Street. They give a very bad impression of the town. The owners need to be forced to own their responsibilities to the townspeople."

“Missed opportunities, of which there are many. The Ilén river is basically ignored.”

“So much potential to be a nice place - the pedestrian network doesn’t make it particularly inviting, easy or convenient to walk around to all the places that are spaced out all over the town.”

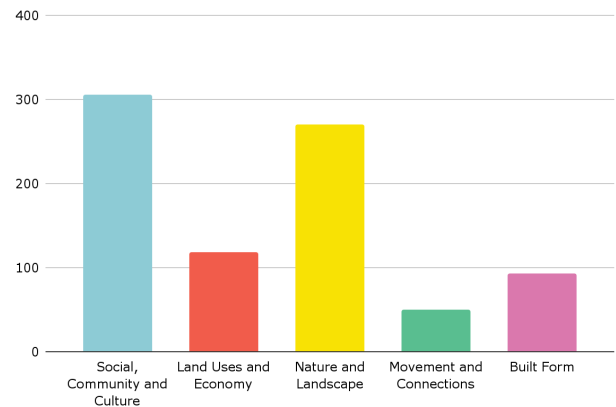


A word cloud generated from the answers of this question in the survey

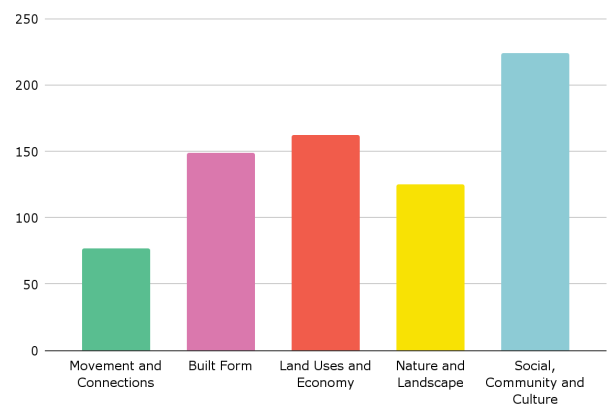
What do you think are Skibbereen's greatest assets or strengths?

Some assets that the the survey participants have noted:

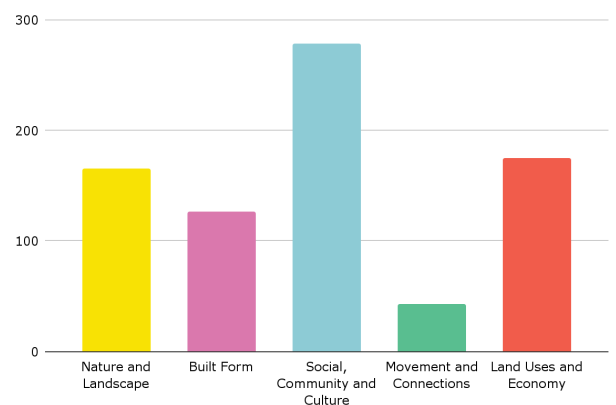
- Farmers Market
- The Arts Centre
- Ludgate Hub
- Heritage
- Great location and closeness to natural features and other towns - central to West Cork
- Strong sense of community - People of the town (friendliness)
- Quality of buildings and the streetscapes - a walkable town
- Variety of small shops
- Sports Clubs and tradition



First choice greatest asset



Second choice greatest asset



Third choice greatest asset

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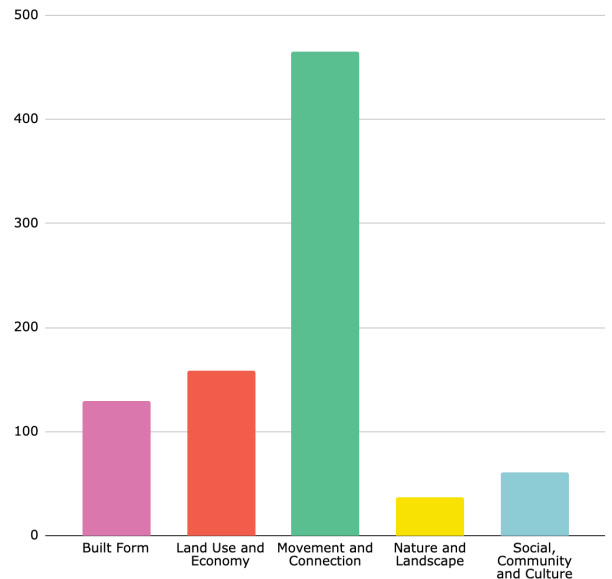
What do you think are Skibbereen's greatest challenges or weaknesses?

- Derelict Buildings
- Poor road condition
- Social issues (antisocial behaviour)
- Better public transport - local links
- Amenities for young people
- Not making use of natural features (River Ilen)
- Not enough restaurants / nightlife (inc. non drink culture) / hotels
- Traffic congestion
- Job opportunities
- Lack of public bins
- Lack of housing
- Accessibility of the town - Footpath conditions
- No cinema or swimming pool
- Disability Access
- Need for more biodiversity / environmental sustainability approaches for the town
- Lack of social outdoors and green spaces
- Facilities for long term town inclusivity and community (capacity) building
- Lack of parking

"There aren't spaces for people outside the mainstream stream Disability access is poor and diversity isn't a feature of council representatives, gardai, community groups etc"

"No committee to run the town, too many big business people restricting development"

"Difficulty in engaging with the community at large"



First choice greatest challenge

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What might make your town a nicer place to live, visit or work in?

- Better Traffic management
- A focus on art and culture
- Covered area for the Saturday market
- Address derelict buildings
- More greenery / planting / biodiversity in the town
- Use the River for the town - the town currently ignores it
- Support for 3rd level course
- Pedestrianisation and having public social spaces
- A car park - to help with no on street parking
- Social amenities such as a cinema / swimming pool / theatre
- More restaurants

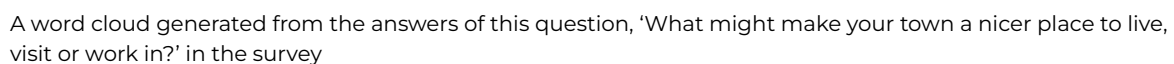
“More focus on art and culture in a broader sense than just the odd trad session or exhibition in the arts centre. The arts centre especially has such great potential to be a welcoming and creative atmosphere to provide opportunities to the town yet the management seems to have

very little focus on supporting local artists and musicians which I think is a massive shame.”

“Upgrade derelict buildings... encourage boutiques, cafes gift shops etc.”

“Good open spaces for seating, green spaces, trees, , use of nature rich space, the marsh for walking access, improvement of area around arts centre and illenn, very cramped and ugly”

“To enhance Skibbereen as a desirable place to live, a combination of community-focused initiatives and strategic development can play a pivotal role. Improving public spaces, fostering a strong sense of community, and promoting sustainable practices would contribute to making Skibbereen an even more appealing place to call home. Additionally, investing in local amenities, supporting small businesses, and maintaining a balance between preserving its rich heritage and embracing modern innovations can create a harmonious and vibrant living environment for residents.”

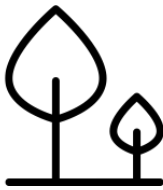


Highlights and Key Recommendations

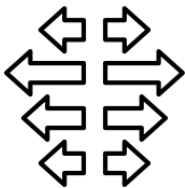
These recommendations should be read in conjunction with the full report.



- A **wide variety of participants were represented** as part of the survey - the majority of which live in the Town Centre



- The majority of respondents are **concerned about climate change** and **would like to see environmentally sustainable initiatives** and projects in the town.



- **Traffic management** in the town inc one way systems and slower traffic were part of solutions to the town



- **Improvement of public realm** (better / wider footpaths, signage and wayfinding)



- **Nighttime activities** are endorsed for the Town Centre



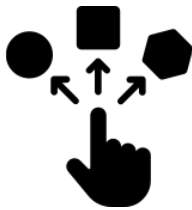
- The majority of participants use a car to travel to town but improvements to transport, cycle lanes and walkways / greenways would **endorse more non car transport**



- The **majority of participants walk in the town centre** but do see a need to make the town **more accessible** especially to those with mobility issues



- The town centre is currently most used for **food, shopping / retails, bar and restaurants**



- Shops/retail in the town centre are seen to be good with a **wide variety of independent and supermarkets outlets**, however, there is a want for entertainment facilities and young people spaces.



- **Public services were generally seen to be good** with public realm improvements, young people facilities, better signage/wayfinding, more healthcare facilities and lack of bins as noted by participants.



- Favourite assets of Skibberenn are:
 - Community atmosphere (its people, diversity, friendliness, safety, welcoming, rich heritage) is noted as one of the most favourite things about Skibbereen.
 - Close to good natural features (eg, beach, fields,)
 - Sport facilities, farmers market, variety of shopping, free car parking, cafes
 - The size of the town - small and close-knit with good streetscapes



- **Derelict buildings** are seen as both a problem and a solution by community members noting the eyesores and potential of these buildings and infrastructure.



- **Facilities for Young People**