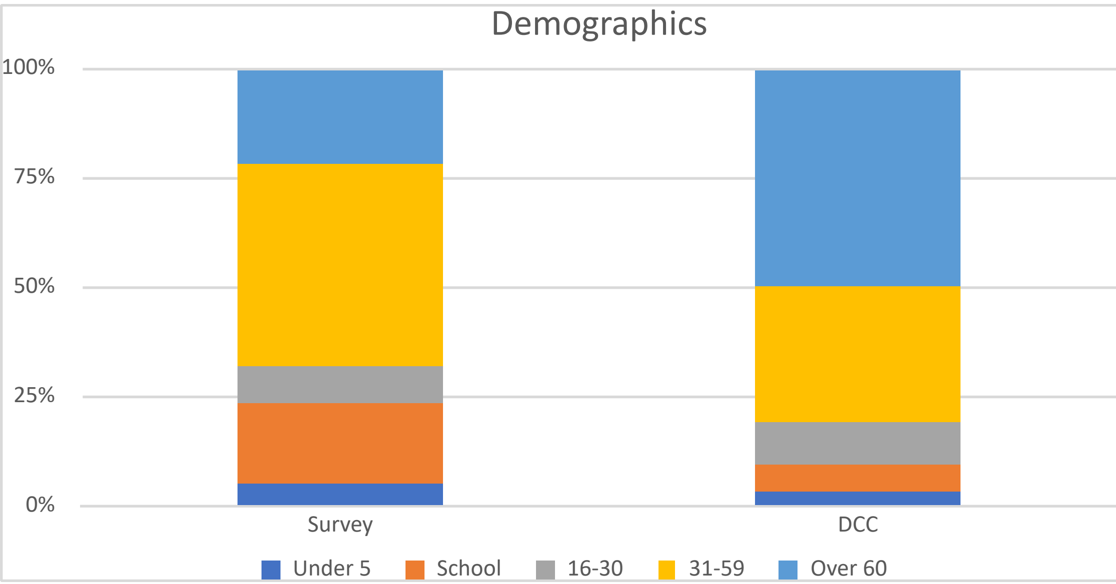
Housing Needs Survey Comments

The survey received a high level of responses (27% of households, 28% of population). These included a very high response from households with children. The residence of respondents was broadly in line with the overall division of 50/50 village/townships, but with a slight bias towards living outside the village.

Most respondent households (72%) were owner-occupiers, 15% living in social housing, 5% each in private rents or tied housing. 12% were currently in insecure housing (n.9) and the same proportion said their current home did not meet the needs of all household members. Of individuals in responding households, 22% were over 60, 46% 30 to 59, 9% 16 to 30, 18% school age, and 5% under 5.



As noted elsewhere, the local over-60 population is growing (because they have fewer problems affording housing in the area). Therefore, although these respondents skew younger, they are indeed very representative of the sections of the community affected by housing issues.

Further to the report’s comments, we can also look at respondents’ agreement with various statements covering housing priority, housing features, and community attitudes. Extremes of agreement/disagreement are highlighted, along with any results above 11% unsure.

Priority (in order of consensus):

Priority to those living/working locally: **96% agree**, 4% unsure.

Priority to those with family connection: 80% agree, **14% unsure**, 6% disagree.

Priority to those with desirable skills: 77% agree, **18% unsure**, 5% disagree

Priority to people from outside: 5% agree, 3% unsure, **92% disagree**.

Analysis: No respondents disagreed that people already living/working in NW Skye should be given priority for future housing, therefore this should become a given in decision-making. Equally, 92% of respondents disagreed that being new to the area alone should give people priority (just 4 respondents agreed. This likely reflects local understanding that there are already plenty of people moving into the area at market prices. Lack of desire to move here is not the issue!) In terms of housing new residents, family connections outweighed desirable skills slightly. As noted below, proven turnover of new residents suggests that this is not sentimentality. People with lived experience of the area will more reliably make permanent homes here (if offered the chance).

Locally desirable affordable-housing features:

High energy-efficiency: 98% agree, 1% unsure. *Obviously important in the local climate and low-income economy. (Many residents are comfortably-off, but wages are generally seasonal and/or under the national average. Energy costs meanwhile – despite local generation capacity – are above average.)*

More housing for families: 89% agree, 8% unsure, 3% disagree. *Demographically, families are indeed what the area needs. However, it is not objectively clear – given that the vast majority of all homes, as well as homes for social rent, are already family-sized – that additional family-sized housing is all that is needed. For example, there is certainly a dearth of 'starter' homes: housing for residential rent, smaller homes for young couples.*

Disused houses: 87% agree, 11% unsure, 2% disagree. *There are very few disused properties capable of being upgraded. Also, local people understand those there are, tend to belong to families wanting to maintain a connection with the area, rather than sell for profitable conversion to STL or holiday homes. This is nevertheless a high degree of support for community-owned housing.*

Need more smaller, accessible homes: 82% agree, **14% unsure**, 4% disagree

Croft creation: 67% agree, 18% unsure, 15% disagree

Tiny homes: 61% agree, 22% unsure, 17% disagree

There is less consensus about housing solutions beyond family homes. However, the figures show that respondents are generally open to a variety of ideas.

Suitable for working from home: 47% agree, 33% unsure, 20% disagree. *Working from home is a more complex proposition in DCC than anywhere jobs are mainly office-based. Does this mean more space, better internet, something else? This is an issue to investigate further.*

Community Attitudes:

Our community needs more affordable housing: 95% agree, 3% unsure. *An overwhelming majority.*

Local people have had to leave for housing: 85% agree, **15% unsure**. Local people will have to leave: 85% agree, 11% unsure, 4% disagree. *Matching percentages in agreement suggests that differences in opinion are a matter of experience of this issue.*

Too many second homes: 81% agree, 14% unsure, 5% disagree. *Again, likely reflects differing experiences: only 4 respondents disagreed here.*

Community welcomes newcomers: 78% agree, **15% unsure**, 7% disagree

Most who live in area want to stay: 68% agree, **27% unsure**, 5% disagree

Most people who move here want to stay: 53% agree, **33% unsure**, 14% disagree

It is worth noting for external readers that NW Skye has experienced significant lifestyle in-migration in recent decades. This has shown that many of those attracted to buying a home here do choose to leave after one or two winters: not everyone copes with harsh weather, short daylight hours, and the social isolation of off-season. As a result, the community cannot always be actively welcoming to those likely to be transient until proven otherwise, or indeed perceive great loyalty to the area among them.

Local Housing Need

Almost 1 in 5 (18%) of responding households see a need to change housing within the area by 2030. Half were families with children, 29% single adults, which maps to the bedroom choices expressed. Cost was clearly a factor in tenure preference. Although a majority wanted to move into (or stay in) the Village, 2 in 5 households were seeking housing in townships (mostly Roag, but also Harlosh/Vatten and Orbost).

Further, another 1 in 5 of responding households will need independent housing for some members in the coming years, mostly one or two bedroom (74% combined). Preference for Village/township (Harlosh, Orbost, any) was 53%/47%.

It is worth noting that this is a total of 29 households already in the area, over and above the extra families needed to ensure sustainability.

Non-residents Survey

18 people (?) responded who are currently looking for housing in DCC. Just 41% are already homeowners, and statistically, few of them will make a sale capable of covering a market prices in DCC. 61% specifically want to move to the Village, 11% would move to any area, and 28% specify a township (again, Harlosh/ Vatten, Orbost and Roag). A third are in families with children, a third couples.

18% are looking to move into DCC from elsewhere in NW Skye, 35% from the rest of the island, total 53%. 12% are elsewhere in Highland, or Scotland (24%). By and large, those who chose to respond had already lived in DCC (2 in 5) or Skye (44%) for a total of 83% experienced potential residents (see above for importance).

Business Needs Survey

Three quarter of responding businesses were employers, to whom housing has become especially significant. (The business location of respondents maps to business rates and company registration data.) Collectively, these businesses employ around 50 people, but half have been directly affected by housing-related staffing issues, and 83% find housing (in commuting distance) inadequate. Several businesses were prepared to consider joint ventures to address this, in order to ensure their businesses can grow through 2030.

The business respondents not only indicate direct housing need, but also illustrate how this will increasingly affect accommodation providers, visitors and residents. This will manifest in terms of reductions in service provision and standards, as well as restricted growth in the local economy to the benefit of other areas.