



SOCIAL CONNECTION REPORT 2024

**Third annual survey of social connectedness in
and around the Summer Hill Little BIG House**



SVA and Little BIG acknowledge and pay respect to the past, present and future traditional custodians and elders of this country on which we work. We also accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart to walk together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

Professional Disclosure statement

Social Ventures Australia (SVA) have prepared this report in good faith on the basis of our research and information available to us at the date of publication, without any independent verification. Information has been obtained from sources that we believe to be reliable and up to date, but SVA do not guarantee the accuracy, completeness or currency of the information. The information in the report is general in nature and is not intended to and should not be used or relied upon by readers as the basis for any strategic, business, financial, tax, accounting, legal or regulatory decisions.

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Foreword

FROM THE LITTLE BIG FOUNDATION

We are pleased to present the Annual Summer Hill Little BIG Impact survey for 2024. A heartfelt thank you to all 385 individuals who took part. Your participation has made this our most wide reaching response to date.

Kindness remains a hallmark of our local community. Nearly three-quarters of respondents reported experiencing acts of kindness. Notably, a significant proportion (80%) of hyperlocal respondents agreed that they live in a kind and caring community — a trend that is growing year on year.

We are incredibly grateful to see this result at a time when we have recorded an increase in loneliness and a decrease in social participation. We know that loneliness is a complex issue, especially in the moderate to high (3+ days a week) category, which saw the most significant jump. While we don't know the contributing factors for individuals, we do know that continuing this kindness, showing a high level of empathy to others, and holding space for people looking to connect is a critical part of the solution.

We are thrilled that you value the Little BIG House, that it is one of the many things you love about living here, and that three-quarters of people make new connections when they come to our events. Each year, we learn more and more about the art of connection and this community — thank you to Social Ventures Australia (SVA) for providing this analysis again this year.

Last, but certainly not least, we extend our deepest gratitude to our staff, board, management committee, and our incredible team of volunteers. Your dedication and hard work are a testament to the power of community. It is a privilege to know each and every one of you.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Mathews'.

Sarah Mathews
CEO
Little BIG Foundation

FROM SOCIAL VENTURES AUSTRALIA

It has been fantastic to conduct the third annual impact survey of the Little BIG House this year and explore the changes in the community. In 2023, we reported on dramatic positive increases in results, and we can now see that several measures of social connection remain at the high levels seen last year (or have even increased). In addition, we are now starting to collect emerging evidence that local community members value the Little BIG House so highly that it can even shape their decision-making about where to live. At the same time, overall levels of social contact in the community have slightly declined, and the level of loneliness has increased. The precise reasons for this increased loneliness are unknown and there may be many contributing factors, to be further explored over the coming months.

The results from this year's report present both an opportunity and a challenge for the Little BIG House to explore how to sustain its highly positive results, while better understanding the drivers of loneliness and the role it can play in reducing loneliness. We look forward to seeing how Little BIG House continues to listen, learn and respond to the experiences of its community.

A big thank you to all those who participated in this research and shared their reflections and feedback with me so openly. Congratulations to the Little BIG team and all hosts and volunteers for the achievements over the past year, your hard work, and for being a much loved part of the community in both times of celebration and hardship.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E Burke'.

Emily Burke
Researcher and Manager
Social Ventures Australia

2024 Little BIG Community

KINDNESS



71%

of locals experience acts of kindness in their community.



60%

of locals can count on people in their community to bring them groceries or essentials in a time of need (compared to 48% of people nationally).

NEIGHBOURLINESS

56%

of locals interact with five or more people in their community on a regular basis.

62%

of locals who have attended at least one Little BIG House event know many of their neighbours' names.

73%

of locals have met someone through a Little BIG House event.

69%

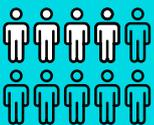
of locals rate a community with a Little BIG House a top three priority when moving house.

47%

of hyperlocal respondents agree that the Little BIG House has impacted their decision to stay in the area.

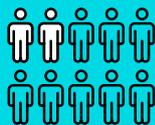


LONELINESS AND SOCIAL PARTICIPATION



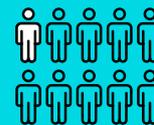
39%

of locals feel lonely one or more days per week (national comparison 36%).



22%

of locals did not have weekly social contact outside the home in the last three months before the survey.



4%

decline in local satisfaction with their current community interaction from 2023.

Snapshot of findings

The results detailed in this report show that the significant improvements in community sentiment that were achieved in 2023 have largely remained stable in 2024. Key findings include:

- 01. Kindness in the community remains high.**

In the 2024 survey, almost three-quarters (71%) of local respondents agreed they experience acts of kindness in their community on at least an occasional basis (comparable to 72% in 2023). A significantly increased proportion of hyperlocal respondents “strongly agreed” that they live in a kind and caring community (44%, as compared to 28% in 2023, and 12% in 2022).
- 02. Interactions with neighbours remains stable.**

In our 2024 survey, 56% of local residents reported they regularly interact with five or more people in the community (comparable to 57% of local residents in 2023). This remains much higher than the baseline of 28% in 2022.
- 03. More people know their neighbours’ names, after attending Little BIG House events.**

In 2023, 60% of local respondents (who had attended at least one Little BIG House event) agreed that they knew many of their neighbours’ names. In 2024, this increased to 62% of local respondents.
- 04. Respondents feel they can count on their neighbours for help when they need it, at rates well above national comparisons.**

In 2023, less than half of Australians (48%) reported that if they were sick they could count on their neighbours to shop for groceries¹. In our 2024 survey, 60% of local respondents agreed that if they were sick, they could count on people in their community to bring them groceries or essentials. This was comparable to the finding of 59% in 2023.



The Little BIG House helps make the Flour Mill a friendly neighbourhood by actively facilitating opportunities for social connection. Their events and volunteer training has added to my quality of life, mental health and sense of belonging. It’s hard to imagine living anywhere else but wherever I go I know I will be a kinder, warmer and more socially confident person thanks to the investments of the Little BIG team.

Ryan H

Despite these achievements, there was an increase in reported loneliness in the 2024 survey. In 2022, our survey found loneliness in the local community at rates similar to the national comparison (-36% of respondents saying they felt lonely at least one or more days per week). In 2023, loneliness declined by 7% to 29%. However, in 2024, loneliness increased by 10% to 39%.

Loneliness is a complex social phenomenon, with many contributing factors. There may be many reasons why loneliness is increasing, despite social connection remaining strong. In addition, with increased awareness of the Little BIG House, it is possible that more people who are experiencing loneliness are seeking out its events and thus responding to our survey.

This year’s results have pointed to the importance of continuing to stay attuned to what’s changing in the lives of our community and exploring how it can incorporate new partnerships and supports for hosts, to make sure that, together, they can continue to make a difference.

Introduction

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report contains the findings of the third annual community survey commissioned by the Little BIG Foundation (Little BIG) and undertaken by Social Ventures Australia (SVA). This survey is an important tool that the Little BIG House uses to understand change in its community, inform its approach to community programs and events and identify opportunities to increase its impact. It also helps Little BIG to understand if its activities have been successful in helping to reduce loneliness and increase social connection in the community.

Additional information about the Little BIG House and about the survey methodology are contained in the Appendix which can be found at the end of this report.

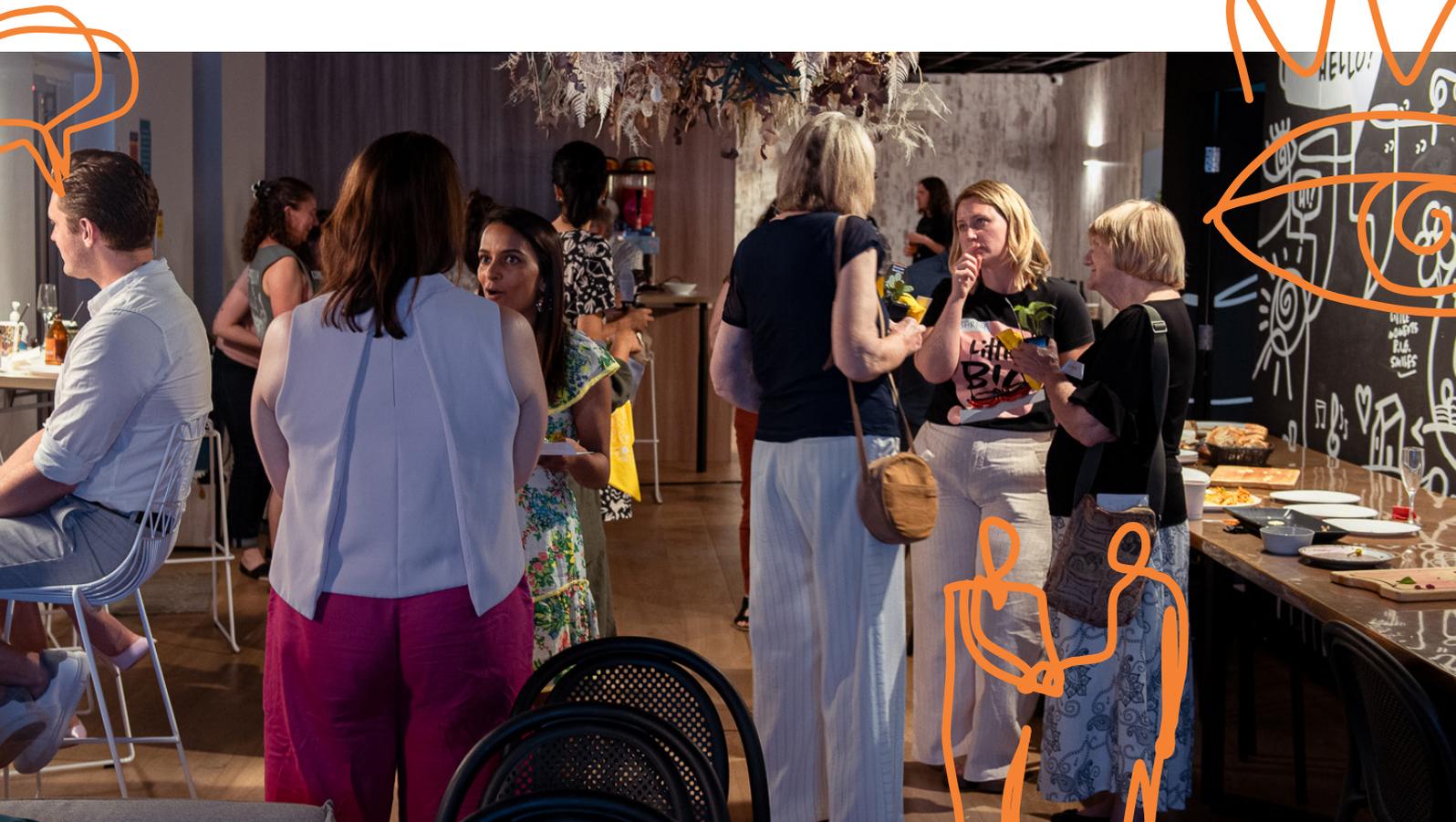
ABOUT SOCIAL CONNECTION AND LONELINESS

Loneliness can be defined as “a subjective unpleasant or distressing feeling of a lack of connection to other people, along with a desire for more, or more satisfying, social relationships”². Loneliness has been linked to a range of poor

mental and physical health outcomes and has been described as one of Australia’s most pressing public health priorities. While social connection is not the only factor which affects loneliness (for instance, someone can be socially connected but still lonely, or socially isolated but not lonely), it is an important contributor, with frequent social interaction associated with a range of positive health outcomes³.

Australia has seen a decline in social contact over the past decades⁴ and Australians are currently experiencing the lowest rates of social connection to their neighbours in recorded history⁵. In 2018, almost half of Australians (47%) reported not having neighbours to call on for help⁶. In 2021, over a third (38%) stated that they didn’t know their neighbours by name⁷. In 2023, less than half of Australians (48%) reported that if they were sick they could count on their neighbours to shop for groceries⁸.

In response to the above trends, Little BIG takes an evidence informed approach to increasing social connection, as a method of addressing loneliness in its community.





77% OF LOCALS

believe they live in a kind and caring community.

Social connection in the Little BIG House community

KEY INSIGHTS:

Several indicators of social connection have remained at the high levels that were seen in 2023, or have even increased since then. However, at the same time, overall levels of social contact have slightly declined and levels of loneliness have increased. The precise reasons for this increased loneliness are unknown and there may be many contributing factors.

PERCEPTIONS OF KINDNESS

In the 2024 survey more than three-quarters (77%) of local respondents agreed or strongly agreed they live in a kind and caring community (the same result as in 2023). A significantly increased proportion of hyperlocal respondents “strongly agreed” that they live in a kind and caring community (44%, as compared to 28% in 2023, and 12% in 2022).

Respondents who agree they live in a kind and caring community

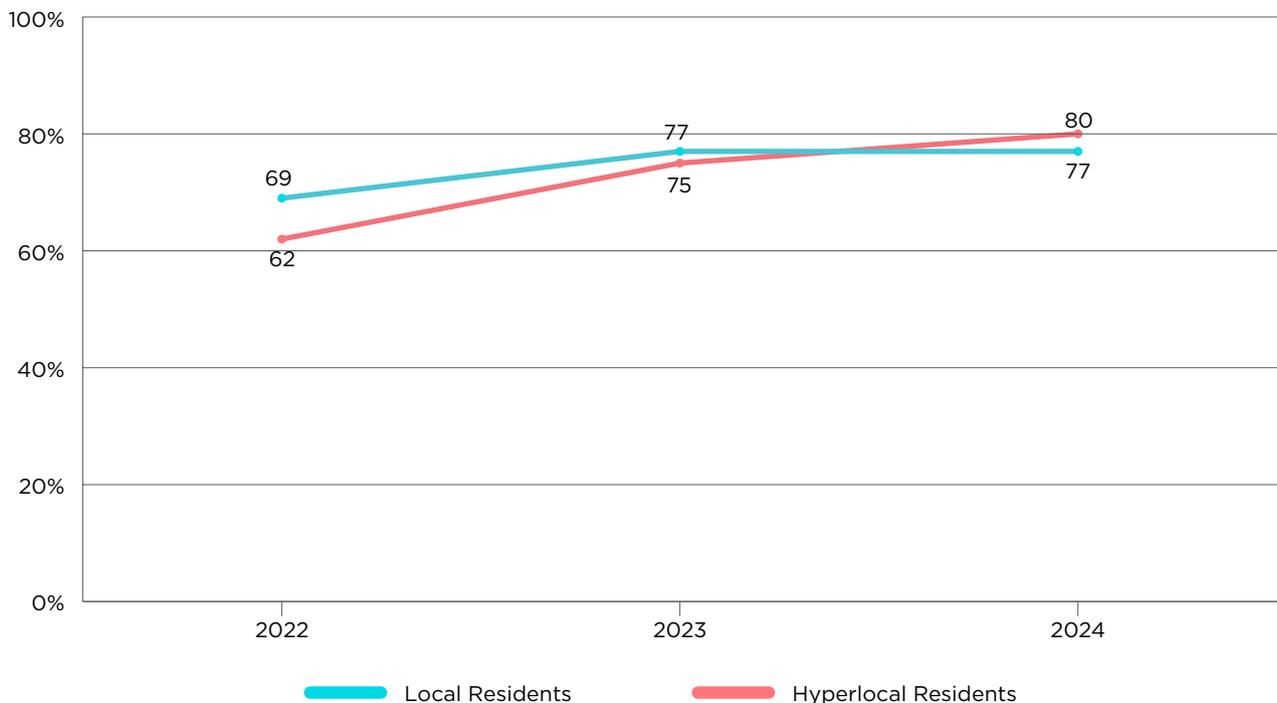


Figure 1: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: “I live in a kind and caring community”? (Excludes non-local respondents. n=222 for 2024, n=184 for 2023, n=189 for 2022)

Witnessing an act of kindness can have a contagious effect, whereby the witness is more likely to exhibit generosity and kindness to someone else⁹. This phenomenon is important for community building and group collaboration against shared challenges. The fact that respondents are reporting increased experiences of acts of kindness is a positive indicator of a sense of community. Some examples described in the survey include:



“I received a box of veggies from ‘Food Not Bombs’ when I was flat broke and unable to afford food during lockdown! Amazing.”



“A neighbour lent me their guitar when I expressed a desire to learn, and then another neighbour offered to give me guitar lessons!”



“In our community, the parents’ group has been incredibly supportive. They organise playdates, which have been great for my child’s social skills and for me to meet other parents. This has really helped me feel less isolated as a new parent. Additionally, the group promotes sharing items like clothes, toys, and baby gear that our kids have outgrown. This has helped me save money and also supports reusing items instead of buying new. Their practical support has made navigating parenthood much easier for me.”



“Once, when I was out walking, I tripped and fell, scraping my knee. A stranger passing by stopped to help me up, offered me a tissue for my knee, and even walked me to a nearby bench to rest. It was a small act of kindness, but it meant a lot and showed me the compassion of strangers in my community.”



“I was given a beautiful fruit and veggies box when I was in a slump. I have had several neighbours offer to cook and share lovely meals with me.”



“When I was in hospital a few months ago, I received beautiful flowers on three occasions... I needed a lift home after a procedure in hospital, a member of our community stepped up with good grace.”



“I have Parkinsons Disease and walk with a stick. I met a lady in the lift for the first time, and she very kindly offered me a walker she was not using. It has really saved my life!”

In 2024, there was also a 6% increase in local respondents saying that they were often or very often a recipient of an act of kindness in the community (increase from 26% in 2023 to 32% in 2024).

Recipient of act of kindness

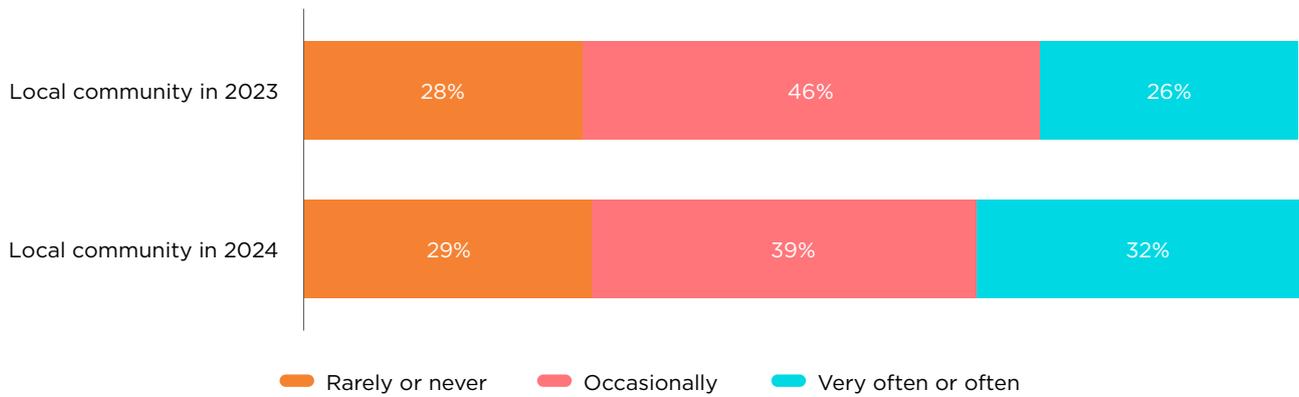


Figure 2: “How often do find yourself as a recipient of an act of kindness in your community?” (Excludes non-local respondents. n=222 for 2024, n=184 for 2023, n=189 for 2022)

In our interviews with local respondents, some shared stories about little acts of kindness or connection that supported them, particularly during difficult times. For example:



“

Personally, I had a tough year last year, as I lost my dad. And then, it was interesting, there was a shift in the people that connected with me because of my experience. So many other people have suffered loss too. And even when it’s not the same thing, it’s a lived experience that we can share...

Suzy H



THERE HAS BEEN A 29% INCREASE

since 2022 in the number of local who interact with five or more people in the community. (This is shown to have a positive impact on community, physical, social, financial and career wellbeing).

COMMUNITY INTERACTIONS

The number of community members that people in the local community interact with has remained stable. These kinds of local interactions can be an important contributor to wellbeing, as shown by a recent US report by Gallup which showed a link between wellbeing outcomes (physical, community, social, career and financial), and regularly greeting six or more neighbours.¹⁰

In our 2024 survey, 56% of local residents reported they regularly interact with five or more people in the community (comparable to 57% of local residents in 2023). This was a significant increase from 28% in 2022.

How many local community members interact with five or more people on a regular basis

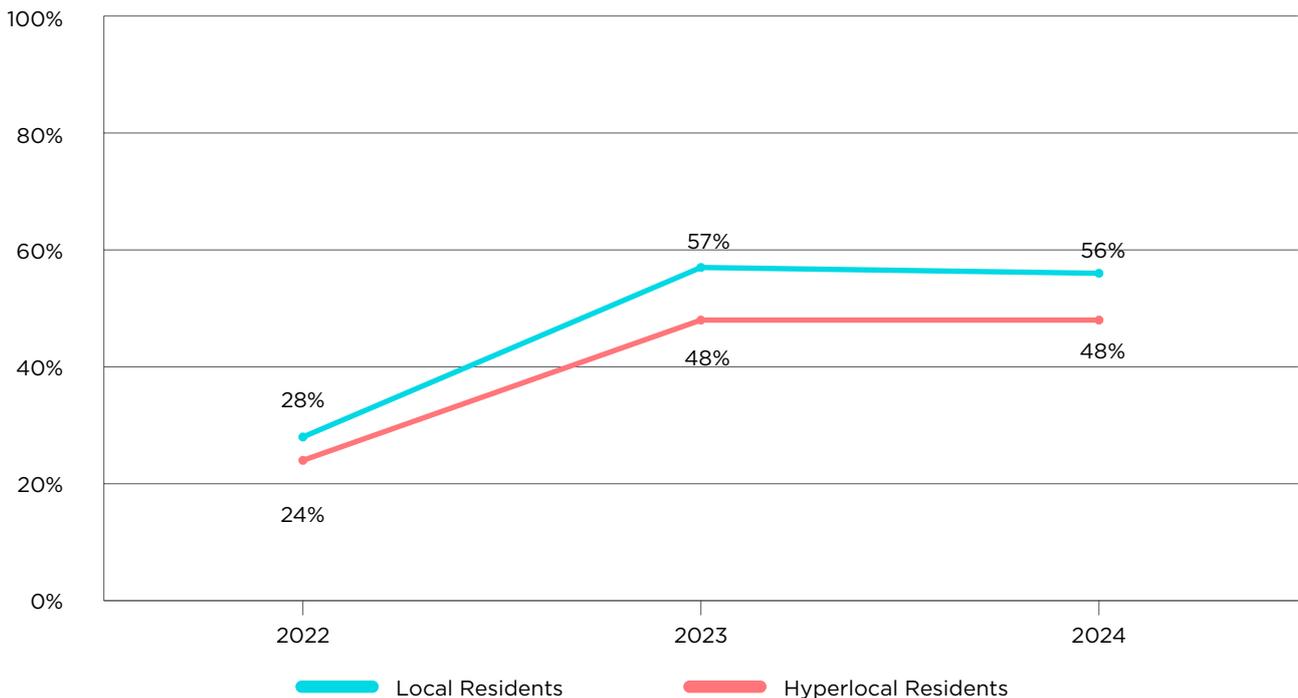


Figure 3: About how many people in the community do you interact with on a regular basis? (Excludes non-local respondents. Only showing percentage of respondents who interact with 5 or more community members regularly. n=222 for 2024, n=176 for 2023, n=189 for 2022)¹¹





The likelihood that a respondent would interact with five or more people in the community increases with age (consistent with the Gallup report findings). In our 2024 survey, 43% of Gen Z local community members said that they interact with five or more community members regularly; this increased to 50% for Millennials. The rate increases steadily to 67% for 79+ year olds.

56% of locals reported they regularly interact with five or more people in the community.

Age of local respondents, compared to how likely they are to interact with five or more community members on a regular basis

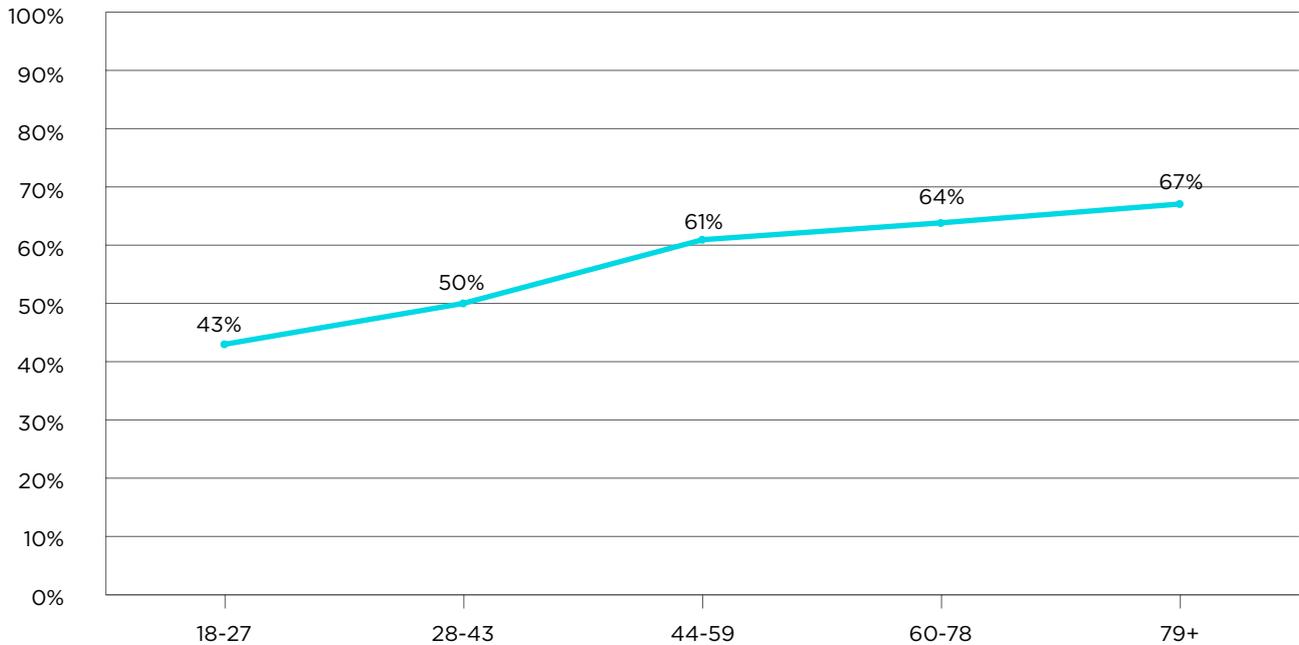


Figure 4: About how many people in the community do you interact with on a regular basis? Which age group do you belong to? (Excludes non-local respondents. Only showing percentage of respondents who interact with five or more community members regularly. n=222 for 2024)

Attendance at Little BIG House events¹² is positively correlated with people’s interactions in their community. Those who attend several events in a year were more likely to agree that after attending Little BIG House programs and events, they found themselves “interacting more frequently with my neighbours and/or community members”.

Number of events respondents attended, compared to the likelihood that respondents agreed they interact more frequently with neighbours after Little BIG House events

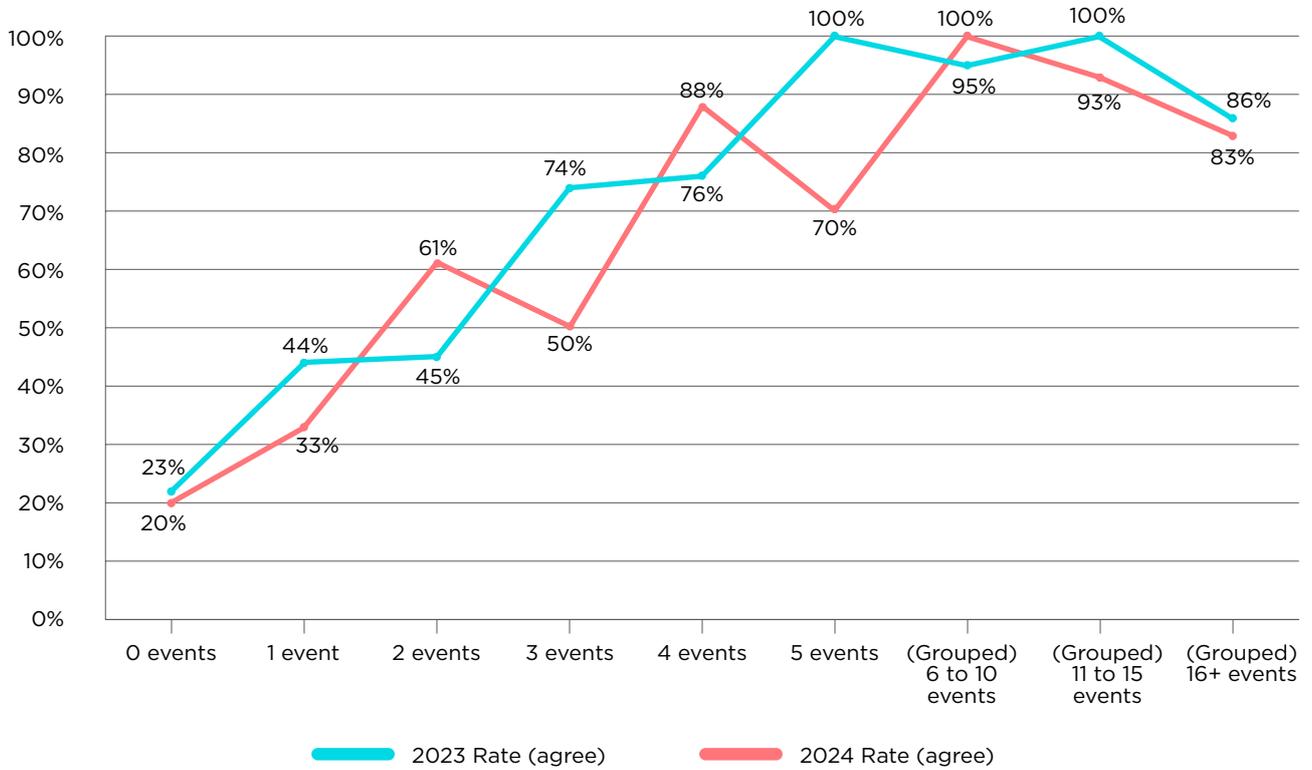


Figure 5: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: “After attending Little BIG House programs and events, I find myself interacting more frequently with my neighbours and/or community members?” (Only showing respondents “agree” or “strongly agree” responses.) In the last 12 months, did you attend or take part in any of the following programs or events at the Little BIG House? (Only showing attendance at Little BIG House events, not placemaking events. n=306 in 2024; n=237 in 2023)

Similar to the 2022 and 2023 surveys, in 2024 we also asked respondents about their happiness with the level of interaction they have in the community. The percentage of local community members who are either somewhat happy or extremely happy with their level of interaction with people in the community declined slightly from 63% to 59%, but was still well above the baseline from the 2022 survey.

Hyperlocal residents' happiness with the level of interaction with others in the community remains steady with some growth (2%) in 2024.

Respondent happiness with level of community interaction



Figure 6: Are you happy with the level of interaction you have with people in your community? (Excludes non-local respondents. n=222 for 2024, n=176 for 2023, n=189 for 2022)¹³



73% OF LOCAL RESIDENTS

reported they had met someone new at a Little BIG Event in the last 12 months.

NEW CONNECTIONS

Of all respondents, 52% reported they had met someone new at the Little BIG House in the last 12 months. This increased to 85% when placemaking events are excluded (such as the Flour Mill Markets, Food Truck Nights or Christmas Tree Sale among others).

There is a positive correlation between attendance of more Little BIG House events and the likelihood that a respondent will have met someone new

through the Little BIG House in the past 12 months. In 2023, if a respondent had attended one Little BIG House event, they were 56% likely to have met someone new; this increased to 67% if they had attended two Little BIG House events. In 2024, if a respondent had attended one Little BIG House event, they were 45% likely to have met someone new; this increased to 76% if they had attended two Little BIG House events.

Likelihood of meeting someone new in the past 12 months via the Little BIG House, compared to number of Little BIG events attended

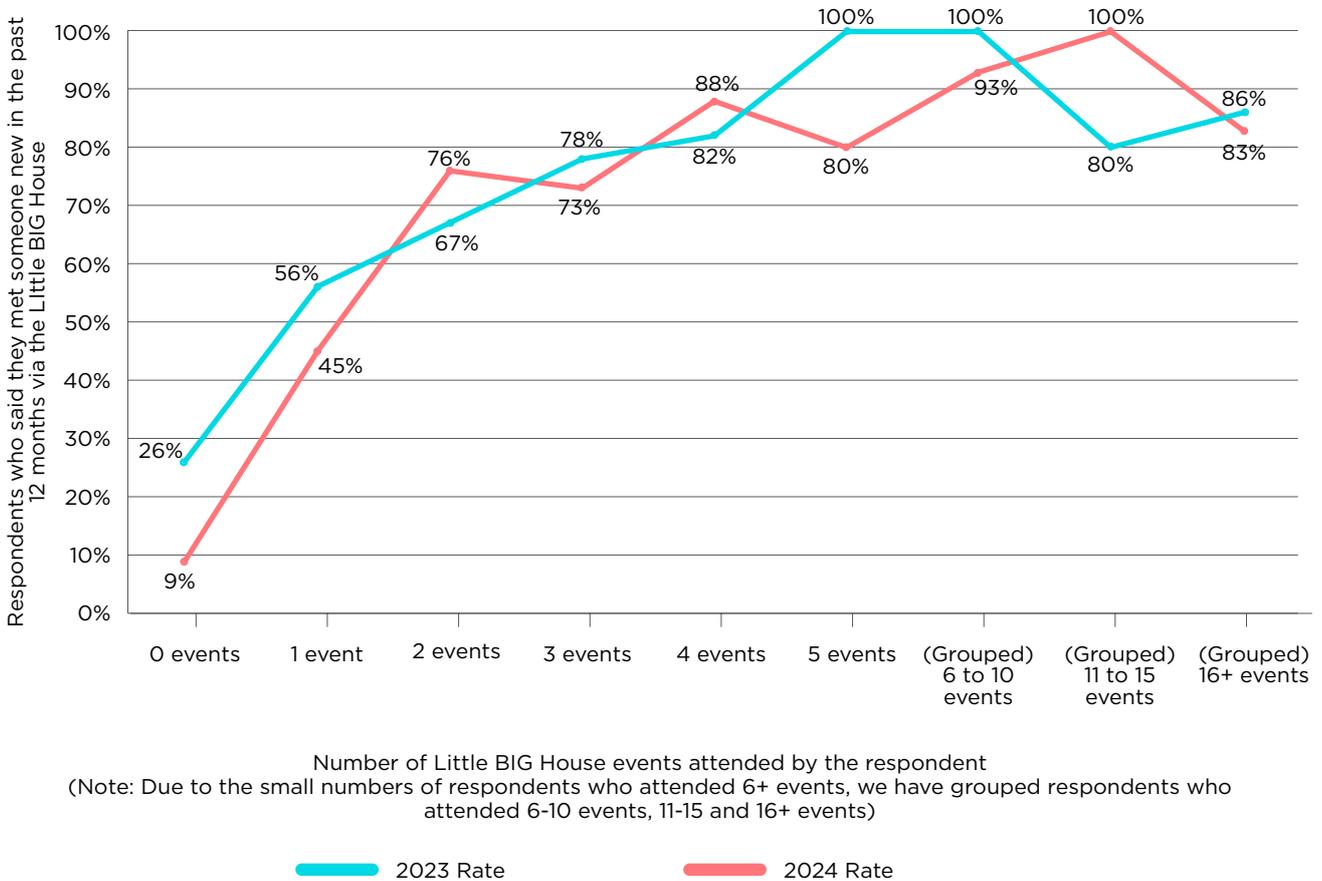


Figure 7: In the last 12 months, have you met anyone new via the Little BIG House or an associated program or event? How many events have you attended in the last 12 months? (Showing respondents who agreed they had met someone new via the Little BIG House, excluding attendance of placemaking events. n=316 in 2024; n=273 in 2023)

There has been a 9% increase in the likelihood of meeting someone new at a Little BIG House event in the past year (for those who attend 2 events).

In an optional follow up question, several respondents shared how they have made new connections — and continued to interact with those persons outside of the Little BIG House. Some comments included:



“I have met so many people through the parents group who I see almost daily either in the park or around the neighbourhood. Some of the people I met have become close friends and we regularly arrange to meet up.”

“I met at least five people through the seniors coffee mornings who became close friends.”



“Yes, have kept in touch with new friends from LBH. We separately go out for local dinners and have been to their homes as well.”

“... There are... lots of people I now say hello to regularly after seeing them at various events.”



Some respondents also shared that although they had met new people, they had not kept in contact:

“Me and my partner talked to another couple during the end of summer BBQ and it seemed like we had a bit in common, but we haven't caught up with them since.”

“We chatted during coffee breaks at coworking. They were lovely but I don't keep in contact outside of coworking.”

“No I haven't kept in touch with them, my friendships only last while at Little BIG House.”



**60% OF PEOPLE IN
THE COMMUNITY**

feel they can rely on their neighbours
to help out when needed.

(Compared to 48% nationally)



NEIGHBOURLY SUPPORT

In the 2024 survey, we also tested agreement with the statement “If I was sick, I could count on people in my community to bring me groceries or essentials”. The majority (60%) of local respondents agreed (similar to 59% of respondents in 2023). Agreement from the hyperlocal community increased from 56% to 60%.

This suggests that the local community continues to feel more support from neighbours than they do in other parts of Australia. In 2023, less than half of Australians (48%) reported that if they were sick they could count on their neighbours to shop for groceries¹⁴.

Respondents who agree they can count on people in community

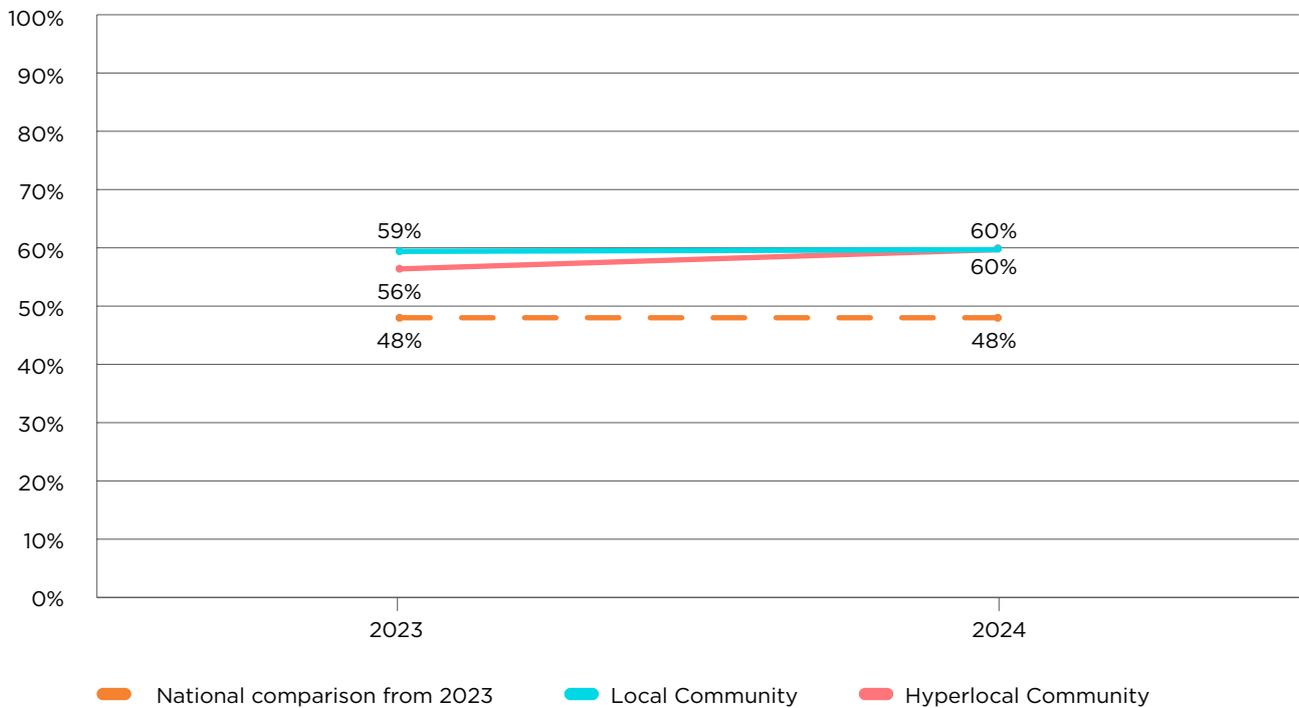


Figure 8: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: “If I was sick, I could count on people in my community to bring me groceries or essentials”? (Excludes non-local respondents. n=222 in 2024, n=184 in 2023)



10-15%
POTENTIAL IMPACT
ON THE LIKELIHOOD
OF KNOWING
NEIGHBOURS'
NAMES.

KNOWING NEIGHBOURS

In the 2023 survey, 66% of local respondents reported knowing many of their neighbours by name (which was above the national average of 62%). In 2024, this number declined by 7% to 59%.

Respondents who agree they know many of their neighbours' names

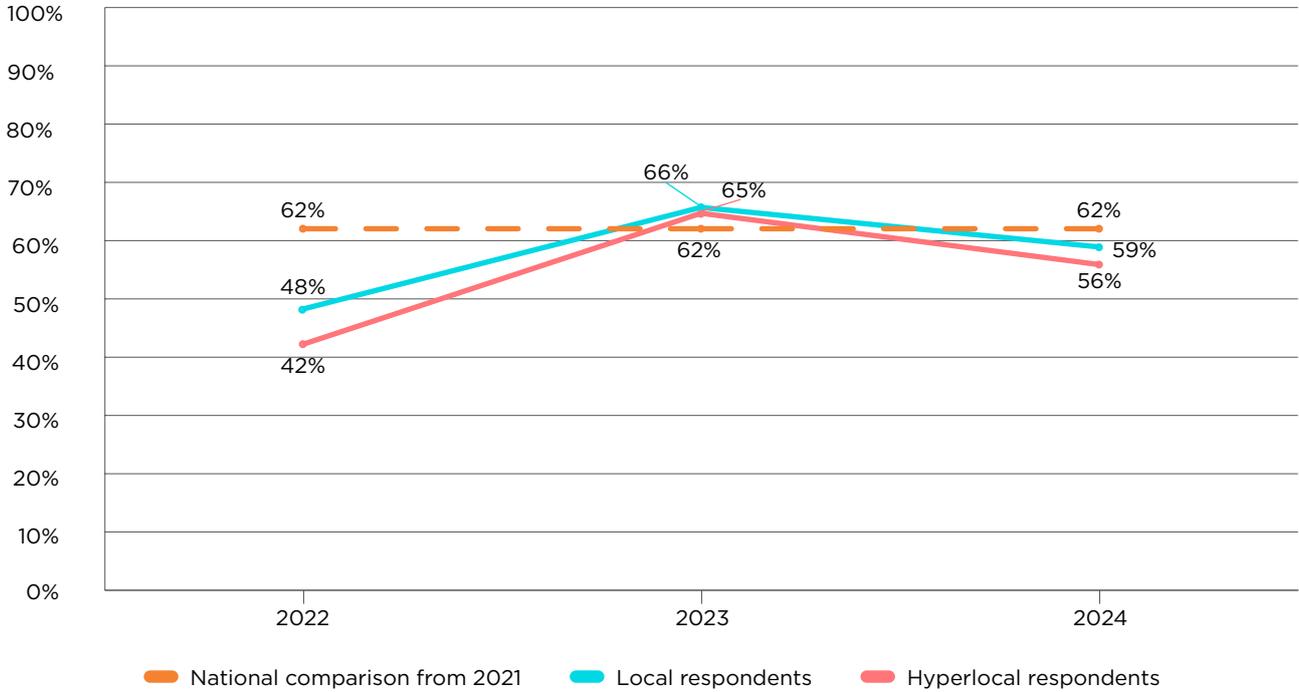


Figure 9: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I know many of my neighbours by name"? (Excludes non-local respondents. n=222 for 2024, n=162 for 2023, n=189 for 2022)¹⁵.

However, focusing on local respondents who had attended at least one Little BIG House event in the past 12 months shows a more positive correlation with knowledge of neighbours' names. In 2023, 60% of local respondents (who had attended at least one Little BIG House event) agreed that they knew many of their neighbours' names. In 2024, this figure increased to 62% of local respondents.

Respondents who know neighbours' names, by attendance at Little BIG House events

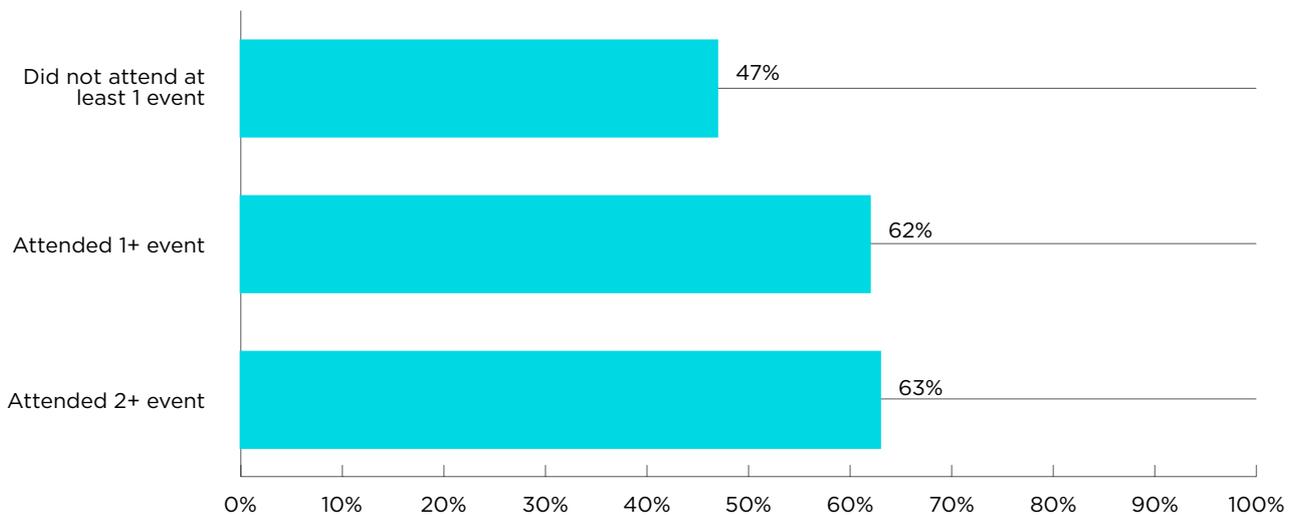


Figure 10: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "I know many of my neighbours by name"? (Excludes non-local respondents. n=167 for 2024, n=137 for 2023)

**RATES OF
SOCIAL CONTACT
REMAIN ABOVE
THE NATIONAL
AVERAGE.**



SOCIAL CONTACT

Social contact has slightly decreased in the local community over the last year. In our 2024 survey, 78% of the local community reported having face-to-face contact with someone outside their home at least once per week; a small decrease from the 81% in 2023.

However, social contact in the local community still trended higher than the available national results for Australia. In 2022, the national result was 46%; while in 2019 (prior to the COVID 19 pandemic), it was 68%.

Percentage of respondents who have face-to-face contact at least once per week (with family/friends not living with them)

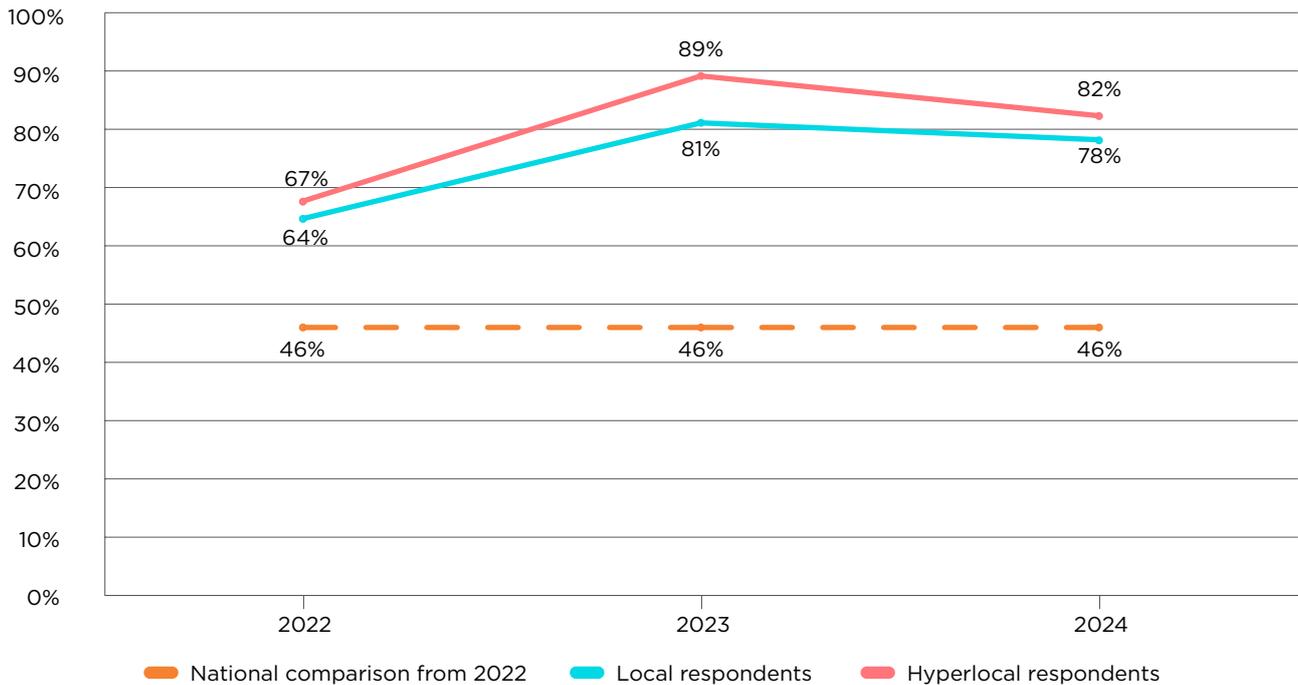


Figure 11: In the last three months, how often did you have face-to-face contact with family or friends who do not live with you? (Excludes non-local respondents. n=216 for 2024, n=171 for 2023, n=185 for 2022)¹⁶

In one interview a respondent shared her observation that it was becoming harder to catch up face-to-face with certain friends due to the increased cost of living:

“

It's so expensive to go out - even just to a cafe. I know some friends of mine, we used to catch up all the time, but even to go and just have a coffee or go to brunch is now hard... now they ask "do you want to come over to my place for a coffee"... So there's a definitive shift that I've noticed just in the socialising, or ways of socialising from people in a very short space of time.

Suzy H

LONELINESS HAS INCREASED

particularly for those
experiencing high levels of
loneliness (3+ days a week).



LONELINESS

A national poll undertaken in August 2022 showed that about 35.6% of Australians felt lonely at least some of the time¹⁷. In 2023, the “State of the Nation” report found that around 32% of Australians were lonely at least some of the time¹⁸. The 2024 data is not yet available.

In 2022, our survey found that loneliness in the local community was similar to the national comparison (both ~36%). In 2023, loneliness declined by 7% (to 29%).

In 2024, 39% of local community respondents said that they were lonely at least some of the time; a 10% increase from the 29% in 2023 (or 2% increase from 2022).

The ~10% increase in loneliness was primarily due to a ~4% increase in local community persons reporting they felt lonely some or a little of the time (1-2 days), and a ~6% increase in those who felt lonely occasionally or a moderate amount of time (~3-4 days).

Percentage of respondents who feel lonely at least some of the time (more than one day per week)

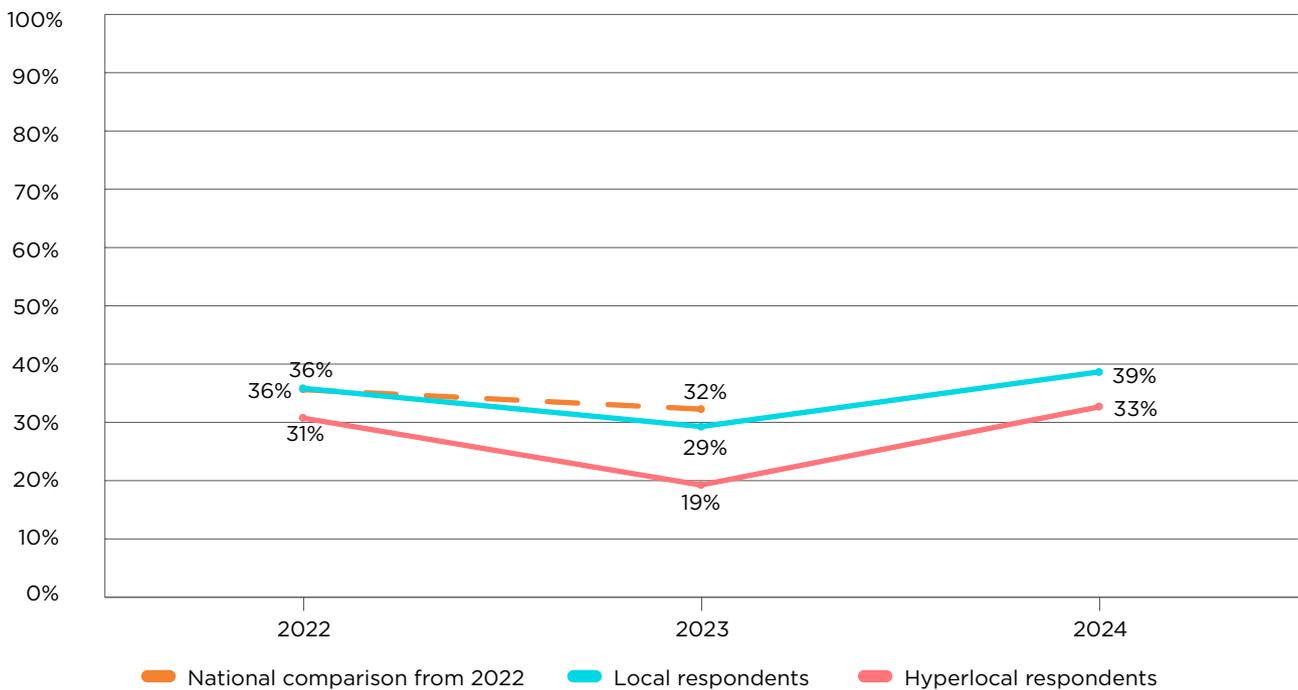


Figure 12: How often do you feel lonely? (Excludes non-local respondents. n=218 for 2024, n=180 for 2023, n=185 for 2022)

Loneliness for the local community over 2022-2024

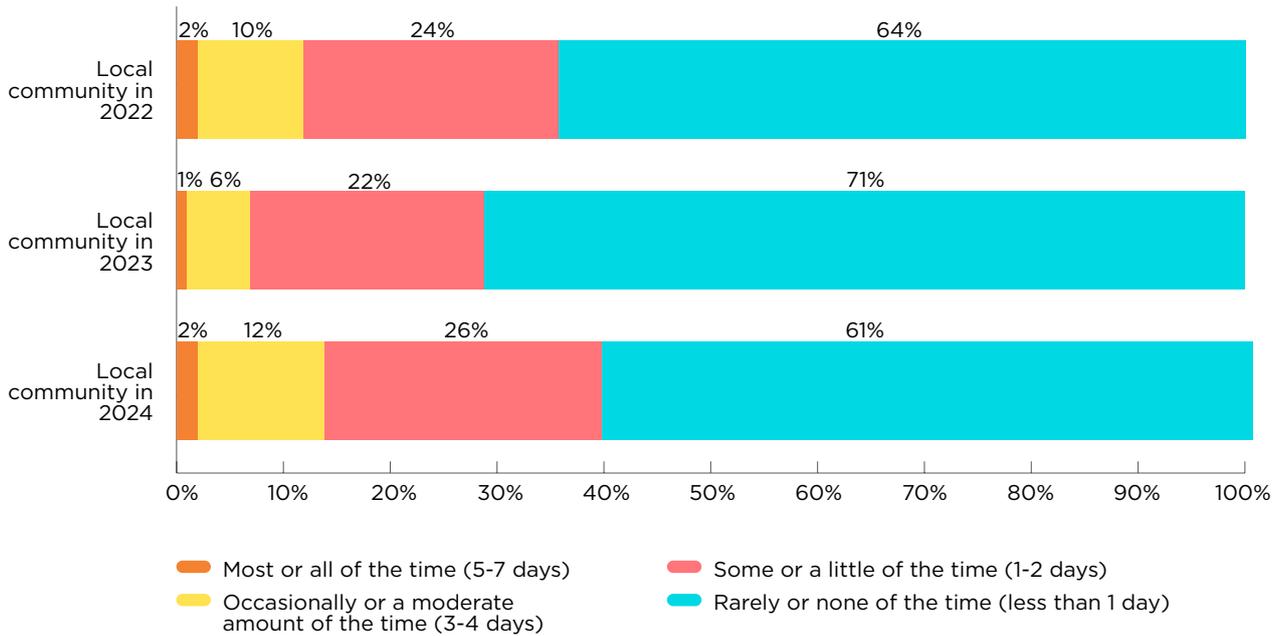


Figure 13: How often do you feel lonely? (Excludes non-local respondents. n = 218 for 2024, n=180 for 2023, n=185 for 2022)

Those who attended a Little BIG House event in the past 12 months reported loneliness at similar rates. For local community members who had not attended a Little BIG House event in the past 12 months, the rate of loneliness was 41%. This remained at 41% if they had attended 2+ events.

Local respondent loneliness, by attendance of events

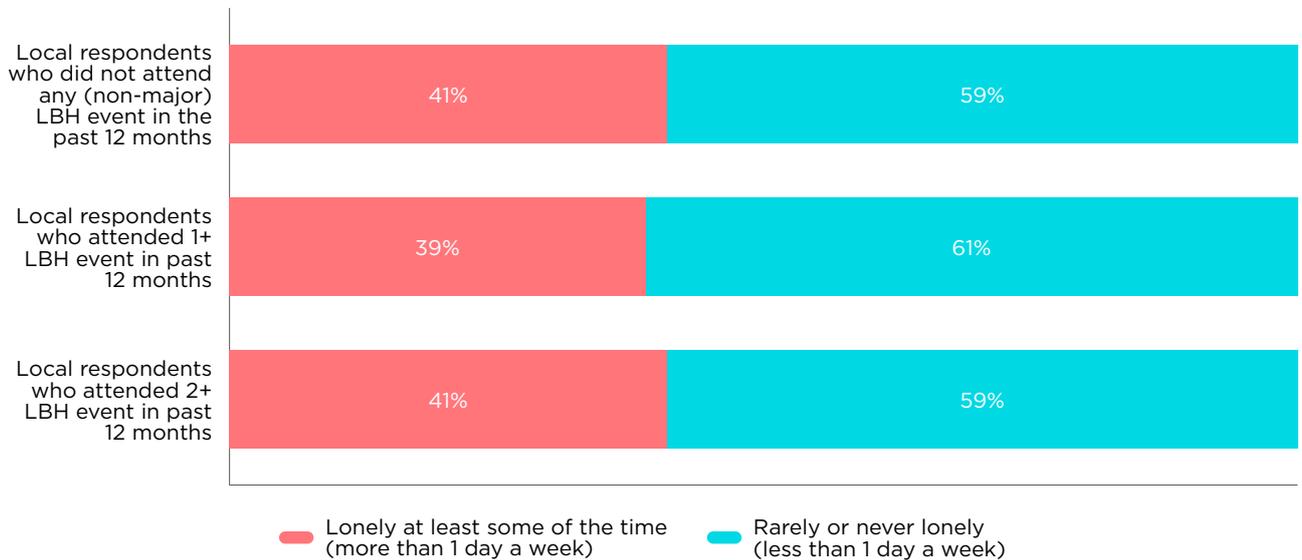


Figure 14: In the last 12 months, did you attend or take part in any of the following programs or events at the Little BIG House? (Excludes non-local respondents. n=218 for 2024)

Loneliness is a complex phenomenon and there are many potential reasons for the increase in loneliness in the 2024 survey results. Unfortunately, there is limited nationwide data from which to understand recent changes in social contact or loneliness across the country, to know whether the experiences in the Little BIG community are the same or different to other parts of Australia. While this report cannot definitively identify the cause of increased reporting of loneliness, some potential reasons have been highlighted through the qualitative aspects of the analysis.

These include:

- **Increasing social and economic pressures:** Anecdotally, residents have mentioned factors such as increased cost of living and housing crisis pressures which have affected their wellbeing and/or their ability to maintain social contact. These factors come on top of polarising social, political and environmental debates which have placed pressure on our social cohesion¹⁹.
- **Seasonal influences:** This year's survey was run at a slightly different time of year (May, heading into Winter, as opposed to September, heading out of Winter). Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) appears to cause depression or lower moods in winter²⁰. This may have also slightly affected the rates at which loneliness was reported, and the frequency at which people are leaving the house to participate in a range of activities outside the home.



The pressure on people is complex: social media, concerns around AI, toxic work culture, cost of living pressures and the spiral effects of those things. It is clear that the other activities encompassing people's lives cause the stress, worry and loneliness they are experiencing right now.

Susan Z
(Improv Host, Little BIG House)



We see a significant "lull" in May & June. It's this quiet period where people haven't yet accepted it's cold and dark outside and are bunkering down at home. Come July, they embrace the winter and come out again, seeking out the cozy atmosphere and the company.

Alex, F
(Local business owner)

- **Increased awareness of Little BIG among people experience loneliness:** Anecdotally, there are some suggestions that as awareness of the Little BIG House has increased, more people who are experiencing loneliness may be seeking out events, and thus responding to the survey. This aligns to Little BIG's increased marketing, partner facilitation and community outreach in 2023, and the fact that, in 2024, the average number of attendees at Little BIG events increased to around 10 (compared to eight attendees in 2023). It is possible that Little BIG's marketing is reaching an expanded audience of those desiring more connection. Hopefully, participation in Little BIG events will help these people feel less lonely over time.

“

At least three people have reached out in as many months and stated they are attending my event because they wanted to build up their social network, looking for connection and energy to match their own and needing a social outlet... People will quickly visit and say hi when they can't come for the whole event and new faces often ask me what else they can attend here to meet more people.

Nathan L
(G-Spot Board Games Host,
Little BIG House)

“

We are seeing higher numbers of people coming to the Safe Space who identify as being in distress. They seek us out for support. But we are also seeing high numbers of neighbours who drop in to say hi or have a cuppa. Those who want to keep working on their connections.

Alan E
(Safe Space, Little BIG House)

“

From my own experience, I think there are more instances of people attending my classes who are specifically trying to combat loneliness and depression. I am aware that there have been referrals from other mental health organisations that are aware of the Little BIG House too. People are coming from different backgrounds now and they aren't always just there for the yoga but for the community. This is especially prevalent in my free classes.

Wei Yee C
(Yoga on Earth, Little BIG House)

While it may not be possible to identify the precise causes of increased loneliness in the Little BIG community, when nation-wide data becomes available later in the year, Little BIG will be able to compare its survey results and assess potential correlations across the country.

In addition, it is worth noting that while attending social events such as those hosted by the Little BIG House can be an important way to reduce loneliness, it can take time for people to build the trust and connection needed for this to occur. For example, one resident shared:

“

Attending an event in person is one thing, but without shared experiences or meaningful conversations, you can still feel lonely and isolated. We have to allow ourselves to be vulnerable so people can get closer. It's difficult to do. We need to feel safe in the space we are in so we would be comfortable to bring our walls down and allow others to share themselves with us too. As an example, I recently became a first time mum. As I navigated this new phase, I showed up to events catered to parents and families. I felt it was a safe space so I opened myself up to the people I met there to share my experience navigating motherhood. The people I met have also been sharing their experiences with me. This has fostered a sense of connection and makes motherhood much less lonely.

Resident



Value of the Little BIG House to the community

KEY INSIGHTS:

The survey results show that residents continue to place a high value on physical community spaces like the Little BIG House. This has continued to be a strong theme in the community surveys since the inception of this report. Many survey respondents and interviewees gave very passionate replies about the value of the Little BIG House and have already felt its impact in their own lives and their relationship to their community.

PHYSICAL COMMUNITY SPACES

Consistent with the 2022 and 2023 surveys, the vast majority of people who responded to the survey felt that it was important to have physical spaces available for community interaction.

Percentage of respondents who agree it is important for them to have physical spaces for community interaction

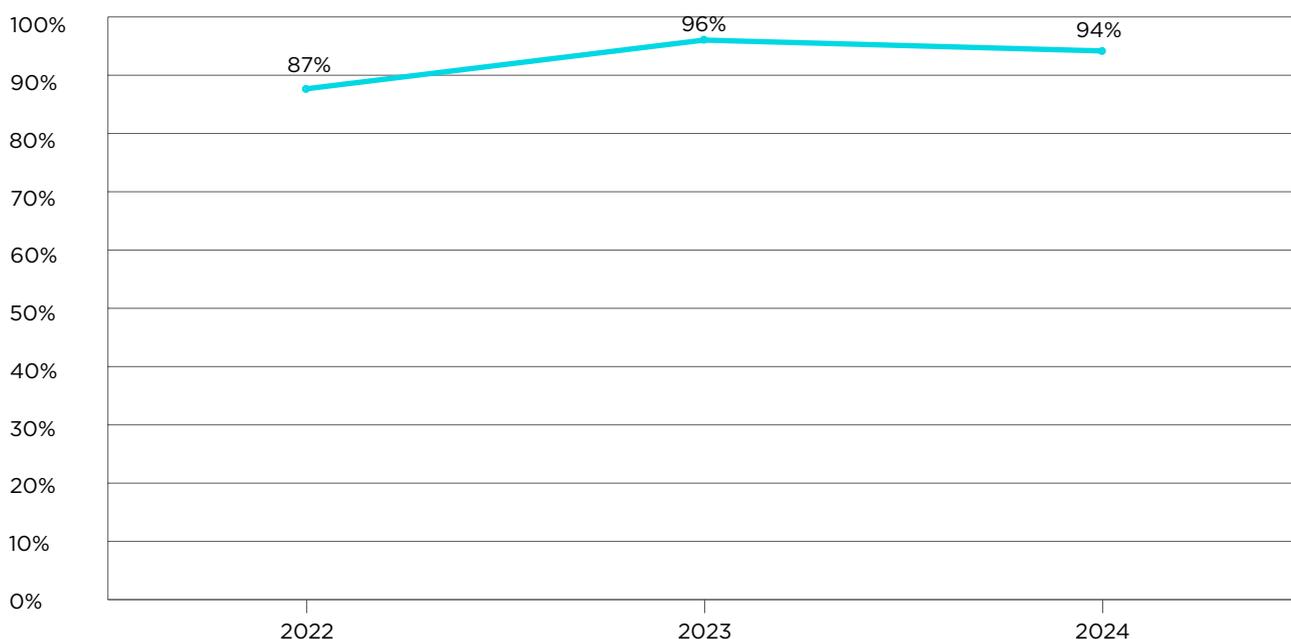


Figure 15: To what extent would you agree with the following statement: “It is important to me to have physical spaces available for community interaction”? (All respondents. n=342 for 2024, n=274 for 2023, n=193 for 2022)

A sizeable proportion of survey respondents felt very strongly about the value of the Little BIG House in their community. Around one in three respondents (31.3%) used the invitation to provide a testimonial to express support for the Little BIG House or its concept. The degree of value that respondents expressed about the Little BIG House appears to be shaped by their current level of involvement and personal circumstances. Those with the time and interest to engage more deeply expressed receiving more benefits.

94% of respondents felt it was important to have physical spaces available for community interaction.

Examples of those who have been actively involved (in events or in hosting) shared the following testimonials:

“

Volunteering at Little BIG House has been an incredibly rewarding experience. The sense of community and support among volunteers and staff is truly inspiring. I've had the opportunity to make a real impact on the lives of others and see the positive change we can create together. Little BIG House's commitment to its mission and the people it serves is truly commendable, and I'm grateful to be a part of such a dedicated and caring organisation.

Volunteer

“

The Little BIG house does such an amazing job in creating a sense of belonging and community within the flour mill complex. People are genuinely happy to live here, kind to their neighbours, have social events and opportunities to engage and interact with each other. There is no pressure to participate but every event brings people closer together and creates happiness and kindness that filters into the everyday behaviour of neighbours towards each other. A huge thank you to everyone involved in making this initiative so successful.

Lisa Z

“

It is harder to make friends as you get older and move around but having the Little BIG as the hub for the community you don't have to go looking for friends, you just have to show up to an event.

Alan E

“

I'm so very grateful for the Little BIG House and the wonderful staff. The use of the beautiful community space gives me the opportunity to connect with and support a wider range of people in a safe and friendly environment.

Katherine A

“

Although we are a short drive away from LBH, the new friendships made here have been amazing for my son and me. He has faced some mental health challenges over the past year and we've found support and understanding at the LBH. I'm so very grateful for the difference it has made to his and my life.

LBH Attendee

“

I moved to the area after a breakup with my long term partner. I was feeling extremely isolated and so looked for a community group. This is when I found Little BIG House. LBH has made me feel connected!!! I feel stimulated and have fun. It has made a huge impact on my life.

LBH Attendee

Other respondents who are familiar with Little BIG House but unable to fully participate expressed an appreciation for the efforts:

“

As a single professional and responsible/doting dog-mum, I typically have limited time and energy left in the day so many of the Little BIG House events don't work for me, but I still appreciate all the efforts of the team to create a heart in the Flour Mill.

Resident

“

It is a wonderful enterprise, very lucky to have it in our area, the facility is superb, the facilitators are highly enthusiastic, friendly and knowledgeable. Working full-time for me it is not easy to find time to attend all the amazing events... Thanks very much for all your hard work!

Susan Z

“

“I don't go to their events at the moment... but all their events increase the sense of community around this place. I think Little BIG House should be applauded for that. They're doing a wonderful job, and the community is much richer for having them here.

Anonymous

Those just discovering Little BIG House expressed curiosity:



“

I've just discovered this within my life and wanted to say thank you for all you do. I can't wait to try and get more involved in the community.

Anonymous

“

I actually never knew it existed until this survey! But now I will endeavour to look into it and the activities.

Anonymous



COMMUNITY HUBS ARE A VALUED AMENITY

In 2024, we included a new question to survey respondents about what on-site amenities they were likely to seek out if they were moving to a new location. 31% of respondents ranked a Little BIG House (or similar programmed community hub) as their top priority; while 69% included it in their top three priorities.

Respondent ranking of amenities

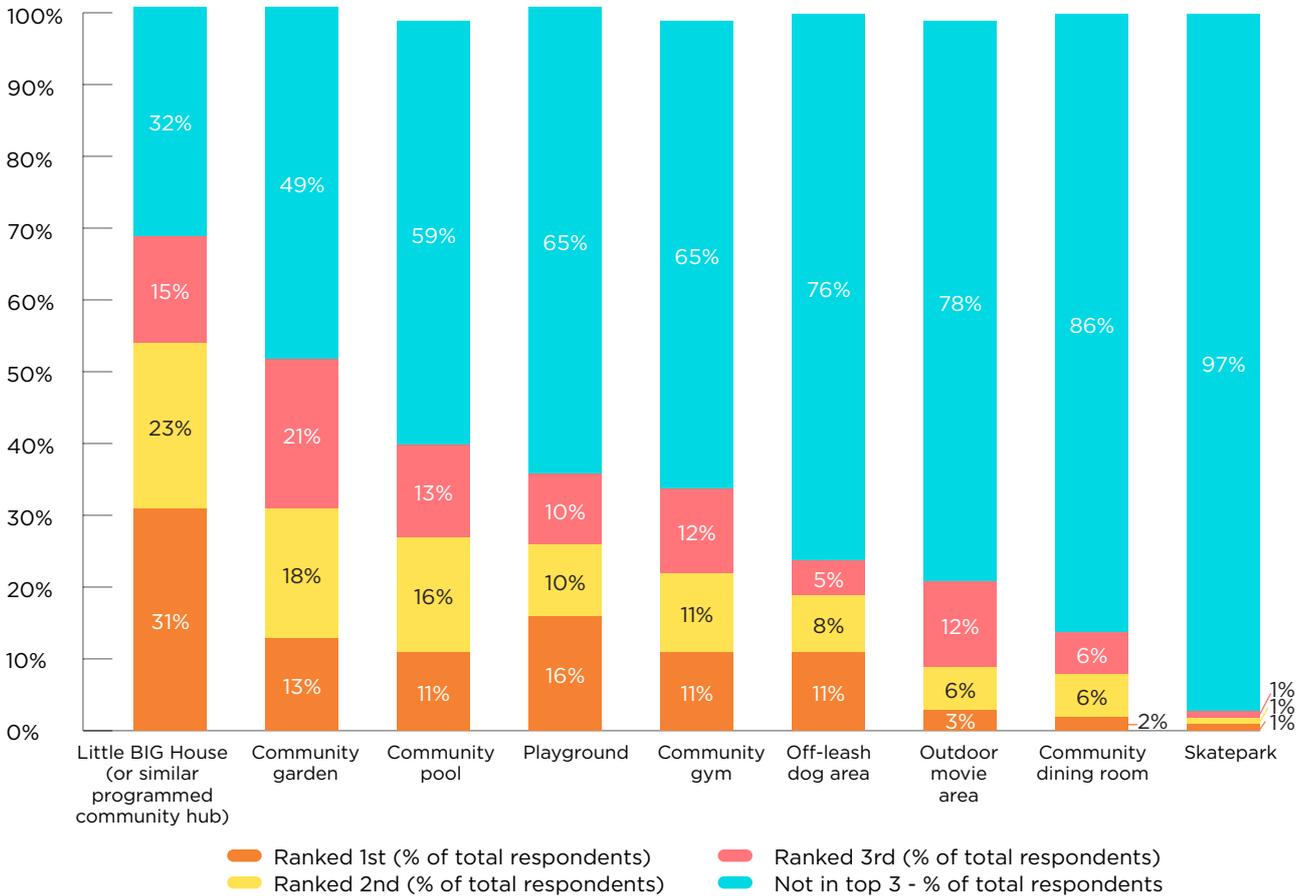


Figure 16: If you were moving to a new community, which on-site amenities would you be most likely to seek out? (Please enter 1 for your most preferred, 2 for your 2nd most preferred, 3 for your 3rd most preferred.) (All respondents. n=342 for 2024).



69% of respondents said the Little BIG House would be a top priority when moving to a new community

THE LITTLE BIG HOUSE CAN SHAPE DECISION-MAKING ABOUT WHERE TO LIVE

In 2024, we included a new question to survey respondents about whether the connections they had made through the Little BIG House had shaped their decision-making about where to live. The closer respondents lived to the Little BIG House, the greater emphasis they were likely to place on these connections. Almost half (47%) of hyperlocal respondents agreed this was one of the reasons influencing their decision-making about where to live.

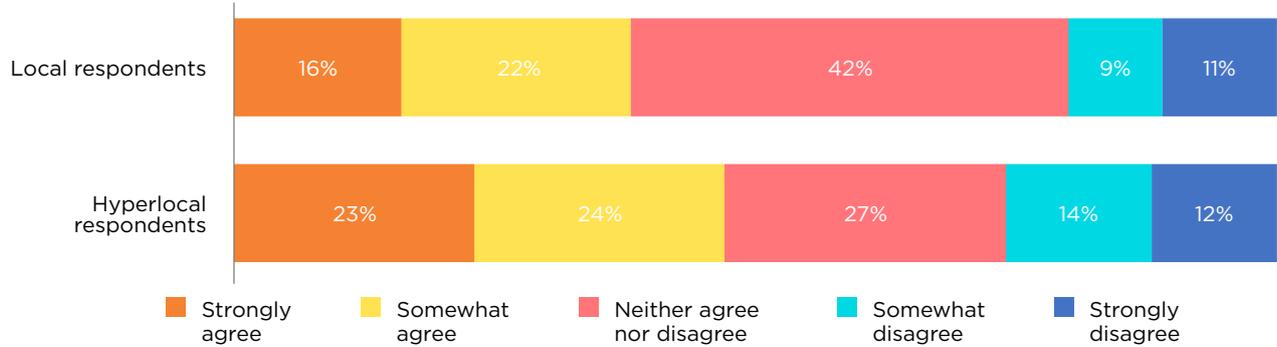


Figure 17: To what extent do you agree with the following statement: “The connections I’ve made through Little BIG are one of the reasons I continue living in this community”? (In 2024, for local respondents n=214, and for hyperlocal respondents n=95.)

In addition, 14% of local respondents used the invitation to provide an optional comment about how their sense of community had influenced their decision to remain in the area. Examples of supportive responses to the optional question: “Please share any anecdotes or experiences related to how your sense of community has influenced your decision to remain in this area” include:

“When I was forced to move it became essential for me to stay close to/in this area because of the community of people I’ve met through the Little BIG House. I think that level of community engagement is quite rare, and I put a lot of value in this when deciding on a new location. I had grown an attachment/fondness for the people in this community, and it contributed greatly to my decision to stay around when other areas would’ve been better investments/cheaper/more spacious etc...”

“We have been adjusting to significant rent rises to stay in the area because we love the community and the events organised by the Little BIG House to foster the sense of community here.”

“When my lease was up in the Flour Mill, my only thought was to find a place within walking distance to the LBH and the Summer Hill community. I traded out amenities, such as central air con, lift access and undercover parking just to stay close to the people and groups I make connections with.”

“We are running short on space in our apartment but we are trying to stretch out how long we can make it work because we are not yet ready to leave the community here and during this period of our life, it’s more important to have that connection than it is [to] have the space at home.”

“My partner’s children live in the eastern suburbs, but we prefer to remain in Summer Hill and drive the children back and forth, because there is a beautiful sense of community here that we don’t feel in the Eastern suburbs.”

In interviews, respondents shared how much they valued Little BIG House, such that they were willing to trade off on other amenities to stay connected to the community:



“

My husband and I have adjusted our budget so we could continue renting here. We're willing to spend more than we had originally planned so we could stay. We could live in a bigger house elsewhere, but it would require more effort to meet friends and participate in activities. By staying here, we're paying more for a smaller space, but everything is more accessible, and there are many activities available for us and our daughter.

Christine R

“

If I have to weigh up being squishy at home versus being in a big house without a community – I'm taking the community... I think it's unusual because most people usually value space. But I also know another mum who is trying to stay within the apartment complex, and another mum trying to desperately stay too.

Resident



“

I really like the neighbourhood and when we were deciding whether to renew our lease or not, my partner said: "I really don't want to move". This is the one place where we really know our neighbours, and a lot of that has to do with how very early on we were able to establish connections.

Myrna D





**92% OF
VOLUNTEERS
AND HOSTS**

believe volunteering has increased
their sense of belonging.

Impact of volunteering

KEY INSIGHTS:

Volunteering continues to provide significant, and sometimes life changing, benefits for volunteers. Like the rest of the community, volunteers are reporting greater levels of loneliness in 2024 than in 2023, although they tend to experience loneliness less frequently than non-volunteers.

VOLUNTEERING BENEFITS

Similarly to the findings in 2023, volunteering has a significantly beneficial impact. Research shows that volunteering can lead to a range of benefits for the volunteer, and that volunteers who give their time to support others tend to experience an increase in positive emotions and decrease in stressful emotions as a result²¹. This is evident in the survey responses of Little BIG volunteers in 2024.

Similar to 2023, a high majority of volunteers agreed that volunteering had increased their sense of belonging in the community (92% in 2024 vs 88% in 2023). 77% of volunteers and hosts formed new connections through volunteering.

When asked to describe the impact that volunteering has had on their life, volunteers spoke of additional benefits such as finding a sense of purpose and fulfillment, and positive influences on their mental health. The experience can be life changing for some volunteers. Some comments from volunteers included:

“It has changed my life, I now feel part of the community not just someone living in this suburb. I rarely walk to the summer hill village without bumping into several people I know along the way.”

“Volunteering can provide a sense of purpose and fulfillment by helping others and contributing to the community. It can also help build new skills, expand social networks, and increase empathy and understanding of others’ needs. Volunteering can lead to personal growth, a broader perspective on life, and a deeper connection to the community.”

“It feels good to give your time to build safe spaces for others”

“It has given me the strong sense of community but also the desire to want others to feel that same warmth. Before volunteering I would never have spoken to a stranger within the neighbourhood but now I have the confidence to initiate conversations with others and try to be advocate of inclusion instead of just being a bystander.”

“Volunteering within the Little BIG House community has given me a new sense of belonging to our area. I’ve since met new parent-friends that have moved into surrounding suburbs and invited them to the Parents Group, for connection and getting to know other parents in the area. It’s not been for everyone and that’s okay but they enjoy knowing there’s an activity for parents every Tuesday morning :)”

“Volunteering has been the “Golden Thread” that has helped me to stay connected, build self-esteem, have a sense of community and not want to unalive myself.”

Volunteers continue to be motivated by the mission of Little BIG, and the opportunity to give back in the place where they live. They also value the support provided by Little BIG for volunteers. When asked why volunteers choose to volunteer with Little BIG House instead of other non-profits, they shared:

“It is the local feeling and the ability to directly see the impact you have. Other non-profits sometimes feel so large its hard to see your contribution. Also Little BIG House gives volunteers the freedom and space to be as involved as they want - no guilt or pressure!”



“It’s on my doorstep and social connection and loneliness, especially in a neighbourhood context, is a personal issue that resonates with me as well as a policy issue I care about professionally. Sarah and Maggie also drive it through encouragement and effort, as opposed to me seeking out volunteering opportunities of my own accord, which I could do but don’t.”

“I love volunteering with Little BIG because this is where I live. It’s lovely being out in the world and seeing familiar smiling faces. The Little BIG offers so much personal enrichment and I really feel very welcomed and am so appreciative of all the personal development opportunities.”



“Yes! The LBH has soul and purpose unlike other venues. The volunteer training is fantastic and the opportunities I’ve been given as a volunteer are life changing.”

Volunteers also offered these testimonials:



I find volunteering at LBH humbling and incredibly rewarding. I am so grateful to support the foundation and feel better connected to the community.

Anonymous





**LIKE EVERYONE,
VOLUNTEERS ARE
EXPERIENCING
LONELINESS**

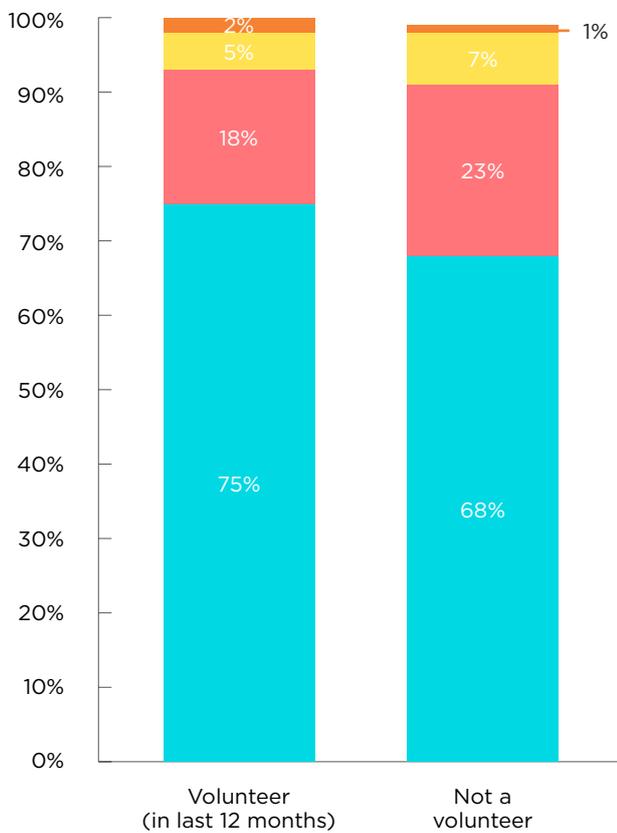
but they tend to experience it less frequently than non-volunteers.



VOLUNTEERS' EXPERIENCES OF LONELINESS

In 2024 (similar to 2023), volunteers were less likely to report experiencing loneliness at the same rates as those who were not volunteers. However, loneliness has increased for the volunteer cohort overall from 2023 to 2024 and is now comparable with the community wide result. In 2023, 25% of volunteers reported that they felt lonely at least some of the time; in 2024 this increased to 42%.

2023: Volunteer status compared with loneliness



2024: Volunteer status compared with loneliness



- Most or all of the time (5-7 days)
- Occasionally or a moderate amount of the time (3-4 days)
- Some or a little of the time (1-2 days)
- Rarely or none of the time (less than 1 day)

Figure 18: How often do you feel lonely? In the last 12 months, have you been a volunteer or event host at the Little BIG House? (n=316 for 2024, n=253 for 2023)



Volunteering for one's own social connection

It is not surprising to see higher numbers of volunteers experiencing loneliness than the wider population, but what is encouraging is the knowledge that volunteering is one of the best antidotes to feelings of loneliness.

Research shows that volunteering creates benefits for volunteers including social, human and psychological capital including personal rewards such as personal enrichment, self-expression, self-image and self-gratification, as well as social rewards like social attraction and group accomplishment²².

Volunteering also provides volunteers with social interaction, a sense of purpose, and creates meaningful social roles and opportunities for social connection²³. Volunteers meeting with and offering support to other people leads to a positive emotional state and replaces stressful emotions, such as anger or loneliness²⁴. This is supported by the finding that people who stopped volunteering during COVID-19 were "more likely to say they felt lonely at least some of the time" than those who continued to volunteer²⁵.

The Little BIG Foundation is grateful and humbled to have these incredible individuals choosing to spend their time helping others, whilst also helping themselves.

Event attendance and preferences

KEY INSIGHTS:

Little BIG has seen a boost in the number of events and attendance, suggesting it is reaching more people than before. It appears to be providing programs and events that align to community interests. There are indications that awareness of Little BIG is also increasing in the community.

INCREASES IN EVENTS AND ATTENDANCE

In 2024, the Little BIG House continued to expand upon its offerings. The following table provides a summary of its internal operations:

	2023 (12 months)	2024 (first six months only)
Total programs	52	43
Individual events	927	658
Private bookings	98	27
Total visits to Little BIG House	45,029	14,400
Little BIG Moments*	23,299,519	17,317,085
Average attendees at events (excluding placemaking events)	8	10.2
Cost of events	56% free, 44% paid	65% free, 35% paid

*Little BIG Moments are the unique face-to-face interaction opportunities that were generated as a result of attendees coming together. It is calculated as the sum of the total attendees at all events over a designated time period.

Similar to 2023, in 2024 the vast majority of respondents (~83%) had attended at least one event at the Little BIG House in the last twelve months. Local respondents were even more likely to have attended a Little BIG House event - about 90% of respondents from the local community had attended at least one.

Relative to 2023, there was a slight increase (by 5%) in the number of respondents who had only attended one event. This could have been driven by the fact that the survey this year reached a larger audience than in 2023.

The vast majority of respondents had attended at least one event at the Little BIG House in the last twelve months.

Attendance of multiple events over 2023-2024

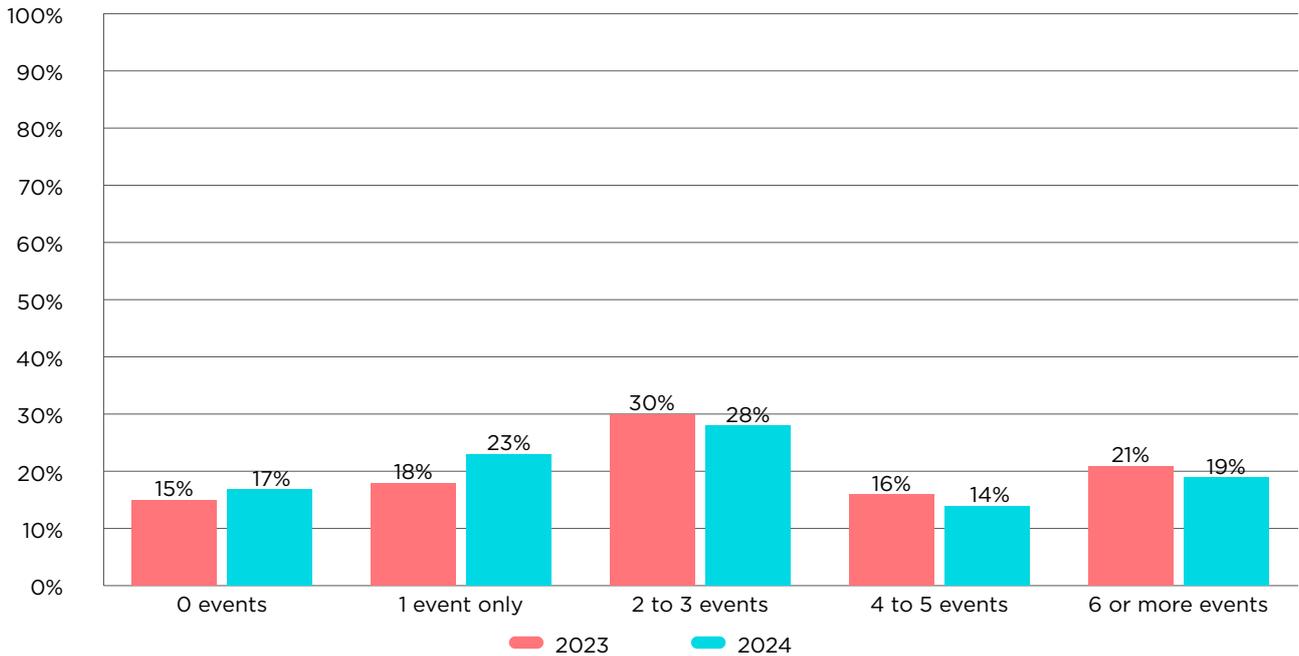


Figure 19: Proportion of respondents who attended multiple events (n=342 in 2024; n=274 in 2023)

Respondents were more likely to have attended free events. The most popular event, by far, are the placemaking events which can accommodate large numbers of people in outdoor spaces (attendees in the hundreds or thousands). The most popular was the Sunday Market, which 57% of respondents had attended. The second most popular event was the Food Festival, which 22% had attended. The memorable nature of this event is worth noting. Due to Council restrictions this event hasn't been held since March 2023, yet it remains highly ranked

in the survey responses. This result is similar to 2022 and 2023.

In contrast to the placemaking events, a Little BIG House event has an average of 10 attendees and a venue maximum of 50 attendees. Of those respondents who had attended any event, one in five (21.5%) had only attended a placemaking event, but the remainder had attended at least one Little BIG House event or program.

Respondent attendance of placemaking events

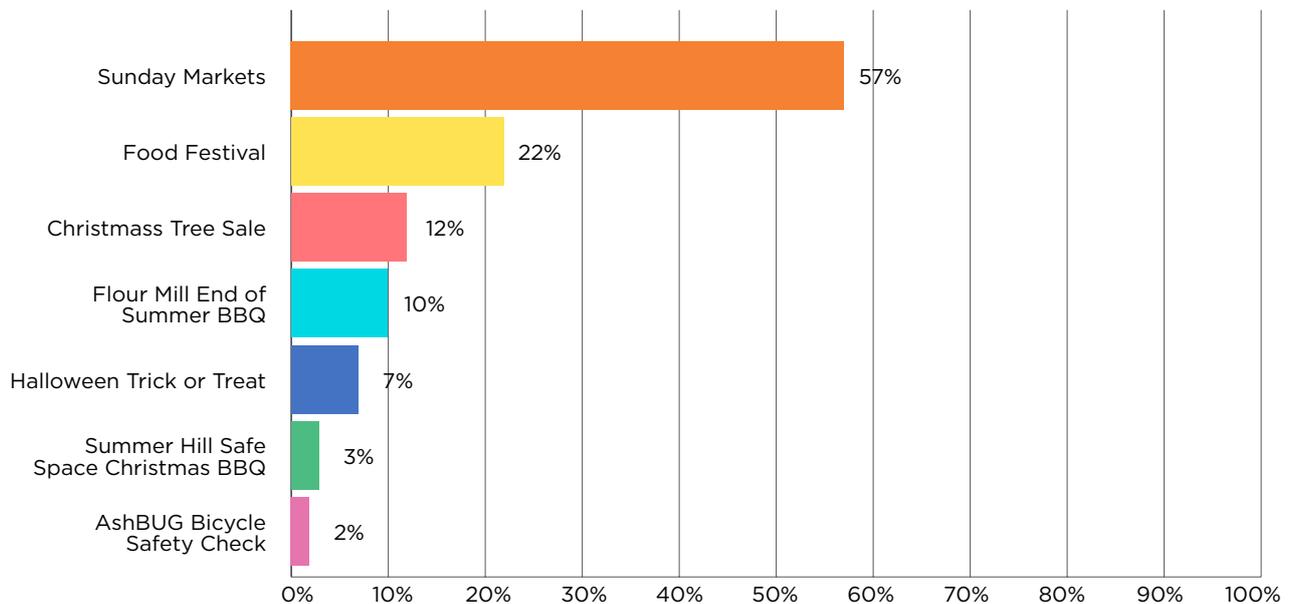


Figure 20: In the last 12 months, did you attend or take part in any of the following placemaking programs or events

Respondent attendance of (most popular) Little BIG House Events

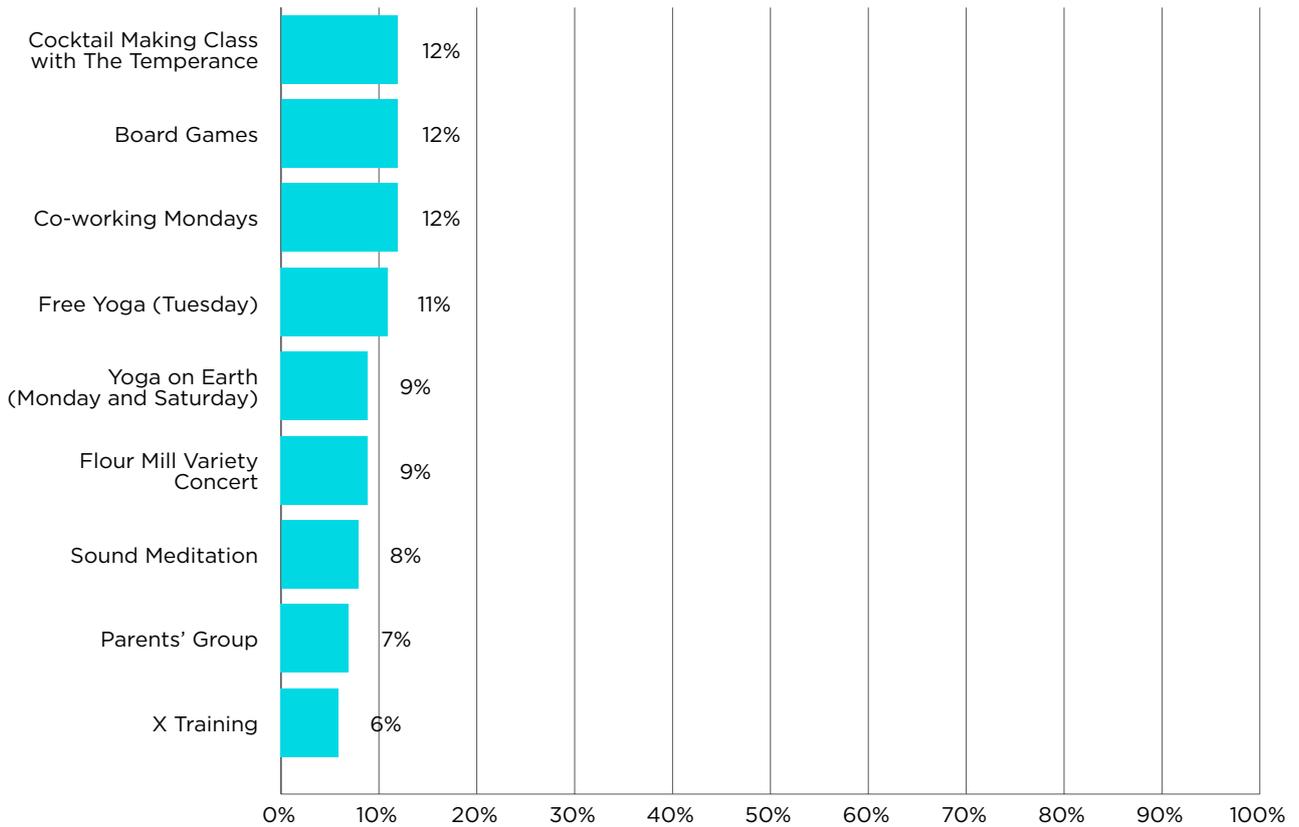


Figure 21: In the last 12 months, did you attend or take part in any of the following programs or events at the Little BIG House?

Some survey respondents also expressed appreciation for the wide range of events:



The concept and range of events and activities that they put together for the community are fantastic.

Anonymous



The wide array of activities and programs at Little BIG house has made a positive impact in my community.

Ruby



The LBH is a fabulous initiative that provides a wide variety of engaging activities to people of different ages and different interests. It serves as a great forum for community interaction and is a valuable resource for people in their local area.

Volunteer



71% OF
RESPONDENTS' EVENT
PREFERENCES ARE
BEING ADDRESSED
AT THE LITTLE BIG
ALREADY.

EVENT PREFERENCES

The survey invited respondents to name the types of activities they are interested in seeing at the Little BIG House. About 71% of respondents described types of activities that Little BIG House is already running, with the most common types of activities mentioned being fitness, creative, music, food and general social activities.

24% of respondents suggested new types of activities (e.g. 11 (or ~5%) of respondents mentioned gardening or plant-watering; eight (or ~4%) mentioned meditation/mindfulness workshops; and six (~3%) mentioned dance activities. About 5% of respondents also explicitly mentioned an interest in parent and family-friendly activities.

Number of mentions (of relevant keywords)

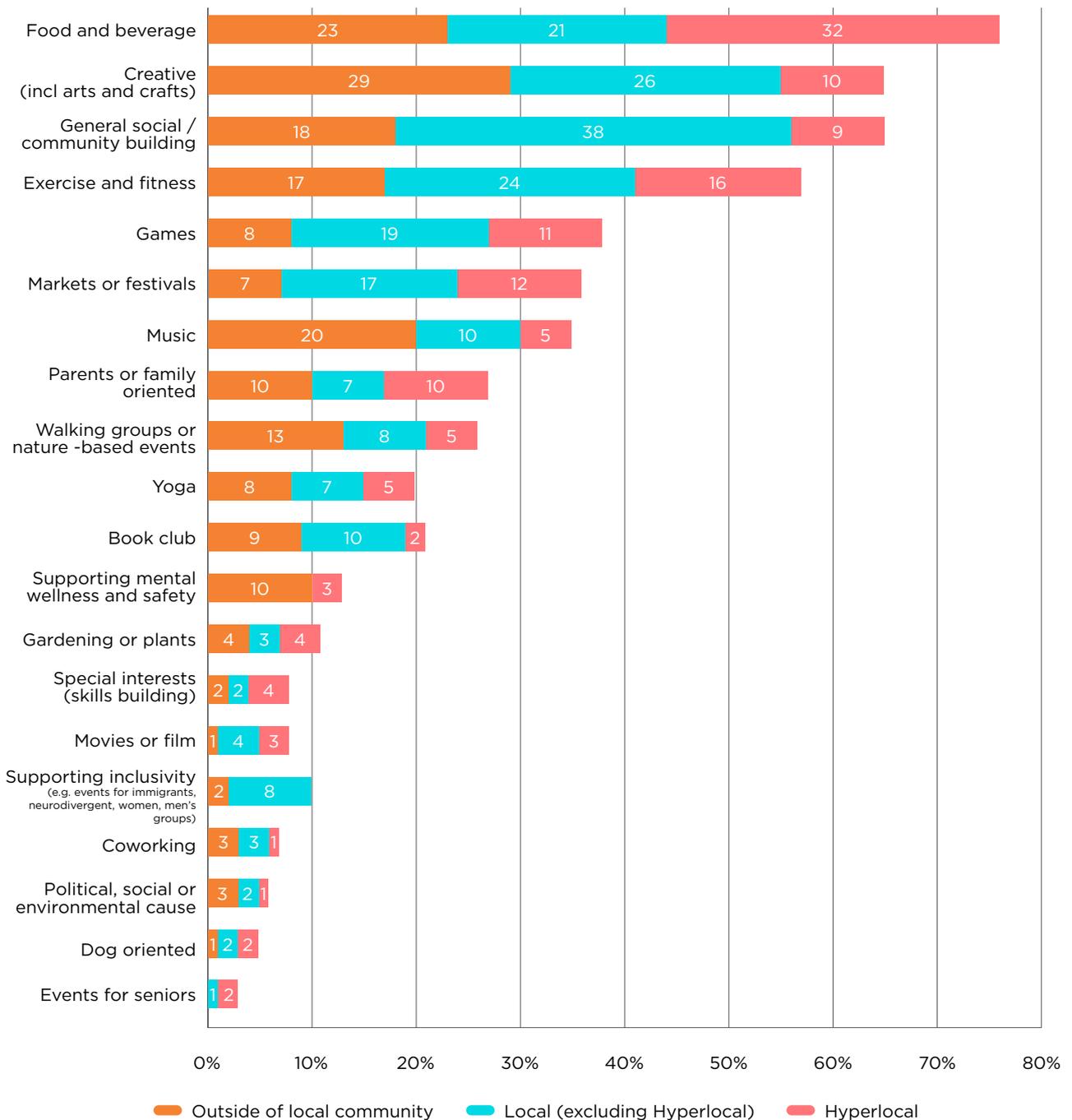


Figure 22: What types of community activities are you most interested in participating in? (Number of mentions is for keywords related to each type of activity. Respondents may have mentioned multiple keywords. n=235)

In 2024 event day and time preferences remained largely unchanged from 2023, with the most popular times being evenings and weekends. The only notable difference was a minor (approximately -2%) reduction in mid-morning to afternoon timeslots and all days shifting towards weekends and evenings.

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Very early (6am-8am)	16%	18%	18%	17%	18%	11%	12%
Early morning (8am-9am)	11%	9%	8%	8%	10%	20%	23%
Mid morning (9am-noon)	17%	11%	13%	13%	13%	44%	47%
During lunch (noon-2pm)	10%	7%	9%	8%	12%	39%	38%
Afternoon (2pm-5pm)	10%	11%	8%	9%	14%	50%	48%
Early evening (5pm-7pm)	40%	34%	35%	36%	42%	44%	38%
Later in the evening (7pm-9pm)	37%	35%	33%	37%	39%	29%	21%

Figure 23: Preferred times to engage (percentage from total community)



INCREASING AWARENESS

As noted in the section on event attendance, there has been an overall increase in the number of events in the first half of 2024. There has also been an increase in the number of respondents to the survey, with fewer survey respondents indicating that they were previously unaware of Little BIG House, as compared to previous years. These results suggest that Little BIG's marketing and outreach efforts over 2023 and 2024 are successfully increasing awareness of its programs.

Communications are an important enabler of Little BIG's reach and impact. Little BIG House currently promotes its activities via a wide variety of sources (e.g. its website, social media, posters, letterbox drops etc). In the 2024 survey, 35% of respondents said that their most preferred method of receiving information was via the monthly email (and this was within the top three options for 61% of all respondents).

How respondents prefer to get their information about Little BIG House

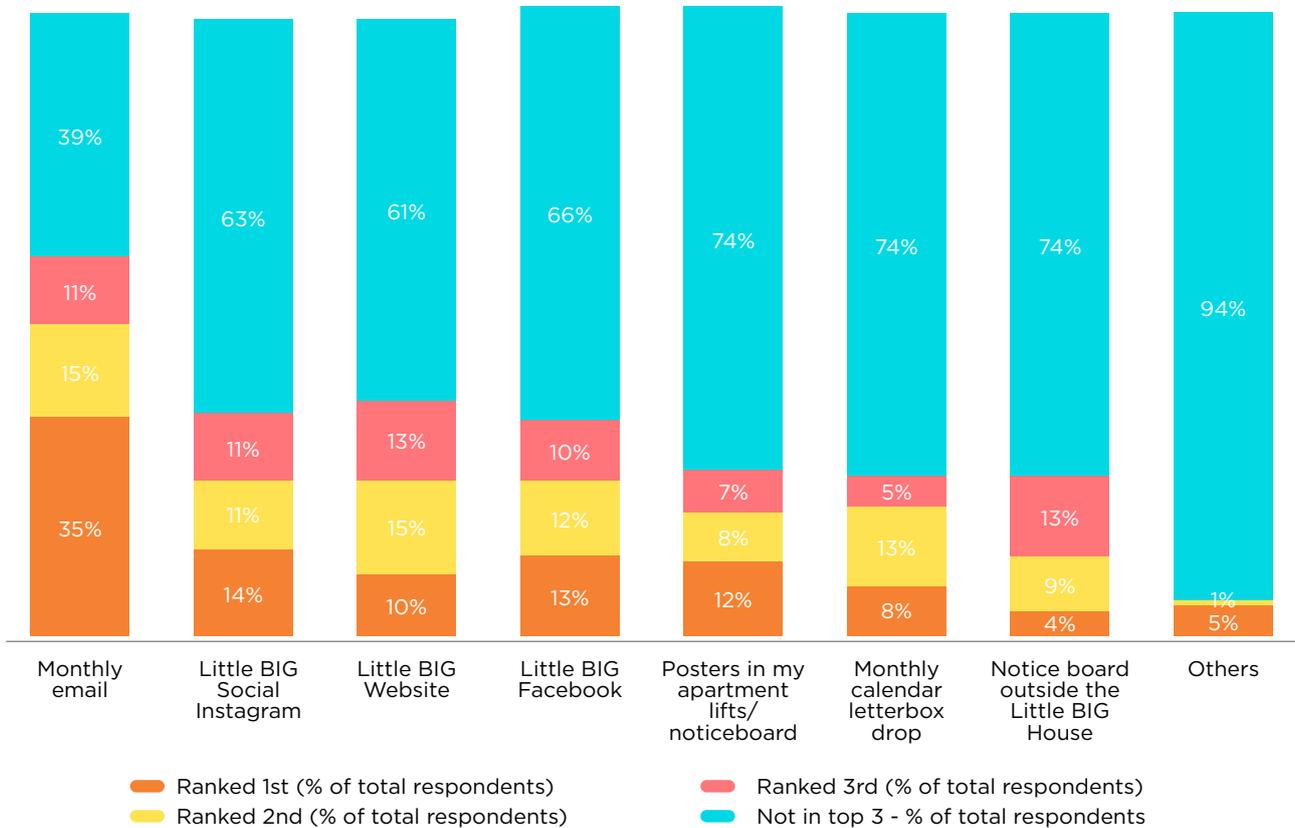


Figure 24: Where do you prefer to get your information about events at the Little BIG House? (Please enter 1 for your most preferred, 2 for your 2nd most preferred, 3 for your 3rd most preferred). (Total number of respondents = 304)

Conclusions

1

LITTLE BIG HOUSE CONTINUES TO BE A HIGHLY VALUED COMMUNITY ASSET

The 2024 survey asked respondents additional questions about how they value the Little BIG House as compared to other community assets. Little BIG House was consistently ranked as one of the most valued community assets, above physical assets such as pools or gyms. In addition, comments raised through both the 2024 survey and interviews continue to show that residents see the Little BIG House as something that makes their community unique and special – for some, it even influences their decision on where to live. This is further supported by secondary research which has shown that community venues which are inviting, and accessible, provide adult learning opportunities and social space can minimise the stigma of loneliness²⁶.

The 2024 results, and secondary research confirms and strengthens the previous findings that people want facilities like the Little BIG House in their community.

2

REDUCING LONELINESS IS COMPLICATED AND NON-LINEAR

Loneliness is a complicated issue and progress may not always be linear. It is important that Little BIG continues to be open to listening, learning from and responding to the experiences of its community. Since the beginning, Little BIG has understood that loneliness is a complex phenomenon with many contributing factors, but that social connection is one important contributor that Little BIG can influence. This year, the results have shown that, despite relative increases or stable results across several indicators of social connection, overall levels of loneliness appear to be on the rise. The report is unable to conclude exactly what is contributing to this increase in loneliness, but it suggests several hypotheses based on insights from the qualitative elements of the research.

Overall, this finding emphasises the importance of Little BIG remaining attuned to the experiences of the local community and the complexities of its environment. In this aim, Little BIG can benefit from its network of volunteers and their deep insights and connections across the community. In addition, there may be ways to tweak the survey questions in future years to help to further understand the factors that are contributing to local experiences of loneliness, so that Little BIG can tailor its programming in response, where possible.

Little BIG can provide an important safe space for people who are experiencing loneliness. It is important that loneliness isn't stigmatised and that people feel encouraged to share feedback about their experiences and what Little BIG can do to support the community.

3

EXPLORE PARTNERSHIPS AND REFERRAL PATHWAYS FOR CHRONIC LONELINESS

The Little BIG House can explore partnerships and referral pathways to complement services that support individuals with chronic and high levels of loneliness (five to seven days a week). The groups experiencing chronic and high loneliness (which represent 7% of the 10% increase seen in the Little BIG Community in 2024) may be experiencing a complex set of problems due to difficult life events such as bereavement or other major life changes. A meta-analysis of loneliness reduction interventions found that the most effective interventions addressed people's negative self-perceptions and include teaching behavioural change techniques (such as cognitive-behavioural therapy)²⁷. It is necessary that loneliness interventions are built into lifestyles (so that once the interventions cease, the improvements do not revert)²⁸. This means interventions (beyond those provided at the Little BIG House) are essential in a community-wide and long-lasting solution.

While Little BIG may not necessarily be able to provide such interventions directly, it can explore partnerships and referral pathways for participants to self-refer. This would allow individuals to receive more support for the behavioural change techniques suited to their experience of loneliness. It is worth noting that it will be critical to design any such pathways in a way sensitive to participants' privacy and desires and the non-clinical nature of the Little BIG House service.

4

EQUIPPING VOLUNTEERS

The Little BIG House can continue to adapt its volunteering training program to address the evolving needs of volunteers themselves and the tools they need to support others.

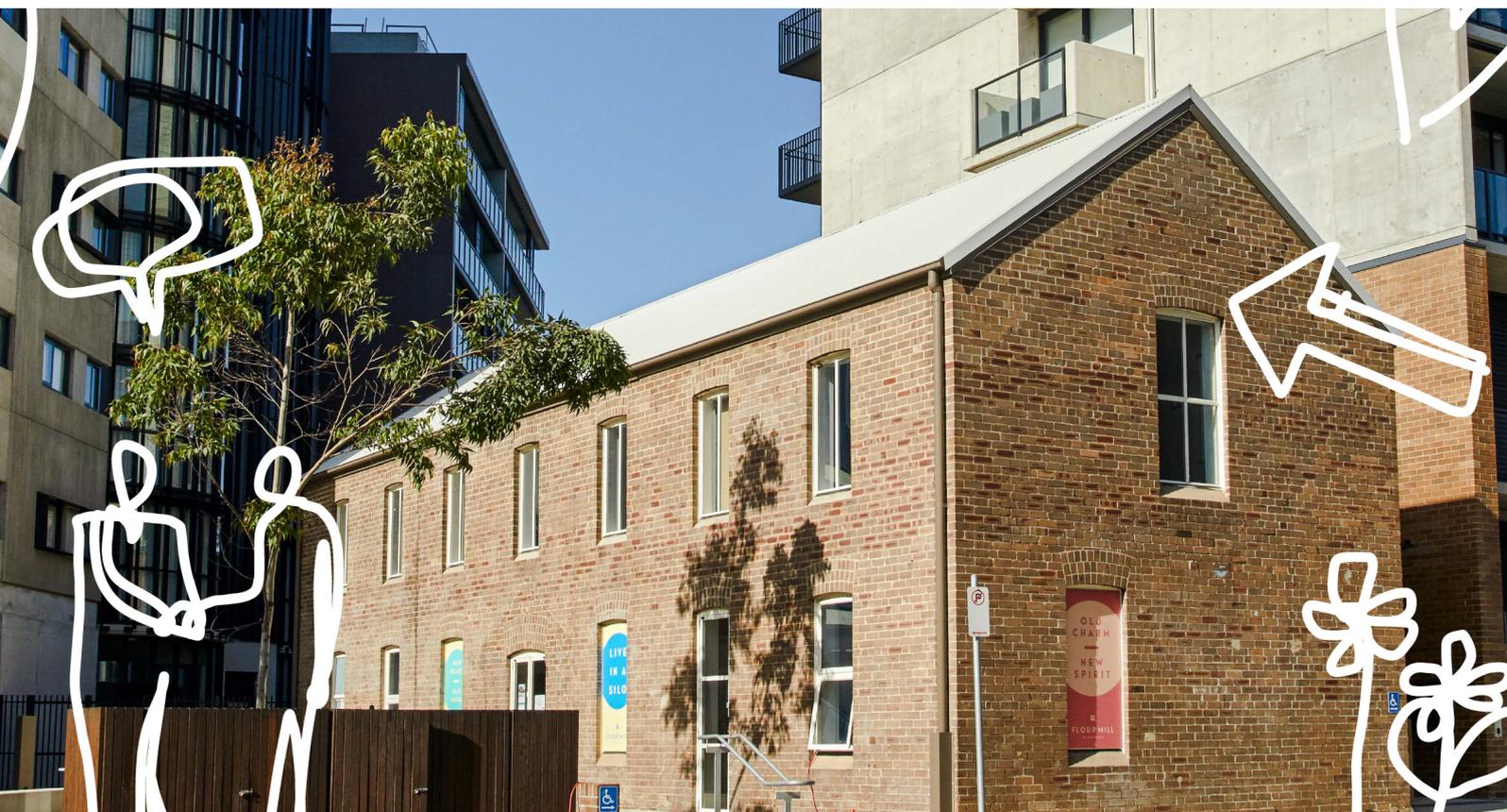
This year's survey results showed that, like other parts of the community, more volunteers are also experiencing loneliness. In response, Little BIG can explore ways that it can help to support volunteers who are experiencing loneliness, both by continuing to provide opportunities for social interaction, as well as providing additional types of support such as education and training, peer support and referrals to other support systems where appropriate.

It will be important for Little BIG to continue to adapt the training and resources that it provides to volunteers, to respond to changing pressures and needs in the community. While volunteer hosts are not responsible for the emotional or mental health of their event attendees, they can play an important role in helping to build awareness and break down barriers to accessing support where required.

In designing strategies to support hosts and volunteers, Little BIG House can draw from the Campaign to End Loneliness, an evidence-based approach to understanding and addressing loneliness²⁹. Some strategies to consider include:

- Promoting confidentiality and trust within groups
- Recognising efforts of attendees who are consciously working to reduce their loneliness
- Managing the initial welcome so that it is a positive and consistent experience, particularly dedicating time and attention to first-time attendees
- Building small talk skills and listening capability of volunteers and hosts
- Encouraging connection extension beyond events
- Ensuring volunteers and hosts are aware of referral pathways

Appendix: Background information and methodology



ABOUT THE LITTLE BIG FOUNDATION

Little BIG Foundation was set up to tackle loneliness in Australia by developing places, programs and events for social connection. With a vision for happier, healthier, and kinder communities across Australia, the Little BIG Foundation operates the Little BIG House, located at 16 Flour Mill Way in Summer Hill NSW. This is a hub which is home to the volunteer and hosting program, it can be used by volunteers to run community events, by the wider community to host private events and provides a casual

space for neighbours to get to know each other.

The Little BIG House first opened in 2021, during a time in which the community was experiencing regular lockdowns and restricted movement as a result of Covid-19. The organisation was able to adapt to the circumstances and run a range of Covid-safe events throughout its first year, and since then continually expand the range and volume of events hosted on site.

In 2024, the Summer Hill Little BIG House consists of a team of approximately 60 hosts and volunteers who contribute to the

program's success in different ways. New in 2024, the volunteer Management Committee provides advisory insights to the staff and Board, assesses and ensures the consistent quality of events and manages projects to improve the facility's impact and community engagement. Hosts and volunteers spend more than 3000 hours, delivering 1000+ community events. Additionally to their time in hosting, volunteers collectively spend almost 2000 hours a year in training to better facilitate connection and improve the experience for the community.

THE LITTLE BIG HOUSE LOCAL COMMUNITY

This is the third survey of the Little BIG House community, which aims to understand loneliness and social connection in the surrounding community. While anyone can access the Little BIG House, for the purposes of this research the Little BIG House community is considered to be the area within a 500-metre radius of the site which we refer to as our 'hyperlocal community'. This includes residents of both the Summer Hill, Lewisham and Dulwich Hill communities and comprises the Flour Mill development, adjacent apartment blocks and single-family houses in the surrounding streets. It is estimated that the area includes around 2000 people.

The Little BIG House is in Sydney's inner west Local Government Area on the border of Summer Hill, Lewisham, and Dulwich Hill. The community features strong transport connections (with light rail and heavy rail stations, numerous buses and good walking and cycling connections). The community features a relatively high proportion of young adults, with the most common age demographic being 25 to 39 year olds³⁰. There are proportionately slightly fewer children and young people under 20 years old, or adults over 55 years old, as compared to other parts of NSW³¹. The area has seen an increase in apartment dwelling in recent years, with multiple new residential and mixed-use developments, including the Flour Mill Development in which the Little BIG House is located. Apartment dwellings now exceed freestanding dwellings in the area (about 62% of dwellings are apartments)³².

Drawing on the lessons learnt from the first Little BIG House in Summer Hill, Little BIG Foundation has expanded to support connection in office workplace communities in Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane and Perth. The program known as 'Good Work', engages landlords, asset owners and investors in a strategy to develop stronger communities within their buildings and reduce the loneliness of employees in the building. This research will continue to inform the Foundation's work into the future at both the Summer Hill site, in the office workplace communities and future locations.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS REPORT

This report details the findings of the third annual community survey commissioned by the Little BIG Foundation (Little BIG) and undertaken by Social Ventures Australia (SVA). This community survey has four areas of focus:

01. To measure and compare changes in social connection in the Little BIG House community over time.
02. To inform the role Little BIG House can play in meeting local community needs, including informing local programming and community events.
03. To identify opportunities to increase the impact for community members over time.
04. To understand the value of the Little BIG House and whether it has an impact on the decision-making of community members to stay in the community.

The survey results are supplemented by desktop research, Little BIG event attendance data and observations from interviews with Little BIG volunteers.

The analysis referenced in this report was conducted by SVA, unless otherwise stated. SVA is Australia's leading social purpose strategy consultancy firm and supports a range of social purpose organisations to develop and implement clearer strategies, find solutions to partner, and collaborate for greater social impact and better measure and evaluate their work. In undertaking research for our clients, we seek to generate actionable insights which provide our clients with the information needed to make sound decisions on the best path forward.

KEY DEFINITIONS

The following terms are used throughout the report to describe the communities who access the Little BIG House. Survey results are filtered in several places in this report based on questions about where the respondent lives.

- **Hyperlocal Community** – This refers to the area immediately surrounding the Little BIG House, which is the Flour Mill development.
- **Local Community** – This refers to the areas within a short walking distance of the Little BIG House and includes the suburbs of Summer Hill, Lewisham & Dulwich Hill.
- **Inner-West Community** – This refers to the broader Inner West region of Sydney, which is broadly defined as the area to the west of the Sydney CBD and before the A3 motorway, although definitions vary.
- **Placemaking events** – This refers to large-scale outdoor events which encourage passive community interaction and the use of public outdoor spaces, often with a commercial component which people can partake in as they desire. The placemaking events for the 2024 report were the: Christmas Tree Sale; Sunday Markets; Food Festival; Flour Mill End of Summer BBQ; Summer Hill Safe Space Christmas BBQ; Halloween Trick or Treat; and the ASHBUG Bicycle Safety Check.
- **Little BIG House events** – Small-scale events held both inside and outside the Little BIG House which focus on bringing people together over shared niche interest areas. For example; Boardgames, X-training, singing circle.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Survey instrument

In 2022, the baseline survey instrument was developed in collaboration between SVA and Little BIG Foundation, using a combination of bespoke questions and questions linked to existing national datasets. The 2024 survey featured many of the same questions from the baseline survey of 2023. In 2023, additional questions were added to understand the impact Little BIG has for volunteers and hosts. In 2024, additional questions were added to understand the impact Little BIG has on the decision-making of community members to stay in the community.

The survey was distributed and promoted by the Little BIG Foundation staff, volunteers and hosts. The survey was promoted to residents living within 500 metres of the Little BIG House, via a number of channels, including emails to Flour Mills residents' distribution lists and Little BIG House distribution lists, flyers dropped in letterboxes, posters located around the Flour Mill development and within the Little BIG House, communications via posts on Little BIG social media sites, and communications via local messaging groups. Direct links were available for those receiving digital promotion.

The survey was actively promoted by Little BIG for a three-and-a-half-week period, from Tues 7 May to Fri 31 May. This was slightly earlier than the time of year in which the 2022 and 2023 survey ran (late July to late August).

Avoiding non-response bias

Effort was taken to avoid potential nonresponse bias, in which results are skewed due to the absence of perspectives of one or more groups. To mitigate against this risk, we sought a minimum sample size of at least 10 per cent of the estimated population (at least 200 responses). We also included basic demographic questions at the start of the survey that allowed us to track the make-up of the sample as results were received. It is worth noting that there is still some risk of non-response bias, particularly as survey participation was on an opt-in basis and may have attracted respondents skewed towards particular views. The results are presented unweighted, however are broken down by different subgroups (including gender, location and other sub-populations) in several sections to allow comparison.

The final survey sample included 385 responses, of which 304 were complete responses and 82 were partial responses. This includes a mixture of residents of the local community as well as people who live in other communities but use the Little BIG House. The sample includes coverage across multiple age groups, living situations and dominant gender groups (gender of respondents is discussed below).

In the sections of this report which describe local community outcomes, the results have been filtered to include only residents of the local community (unless otherwise specified).

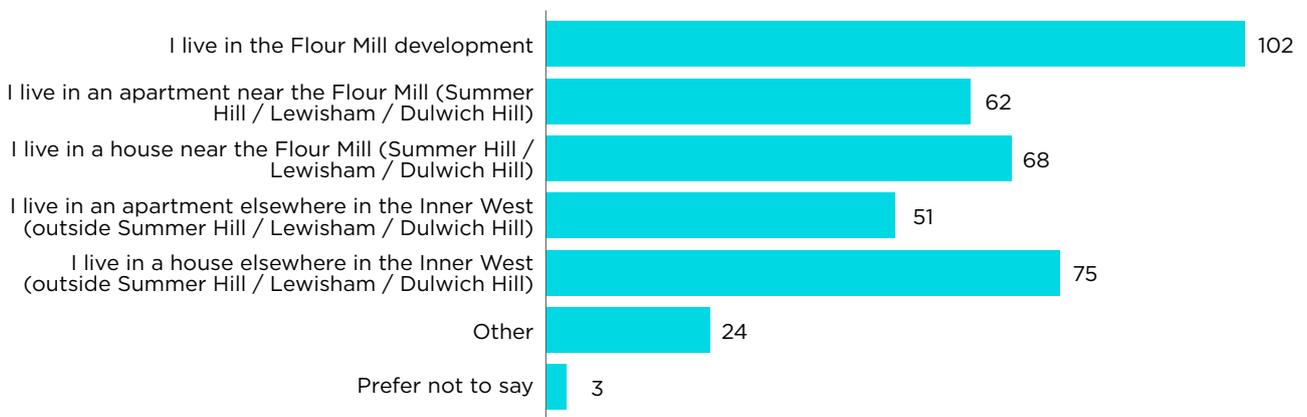


Figure 25: Location of respondents. (n=385)

It is worth noting that the final sample featured substantially more responses from people identifying as female than male, despite attempts to achieve greater balance via targeted promotion. This is consistent with the 2022 experience, and consistent with research which shows that females are typically more likely to complete surveys than males³³. To understand the potential impact, results were analysed using a gender filter and where there are substantial differences between males and females these are noted in the report. (The sample size for other gender responses was too small to enable further analysis). Results have also been broken down by age and location where relevant.

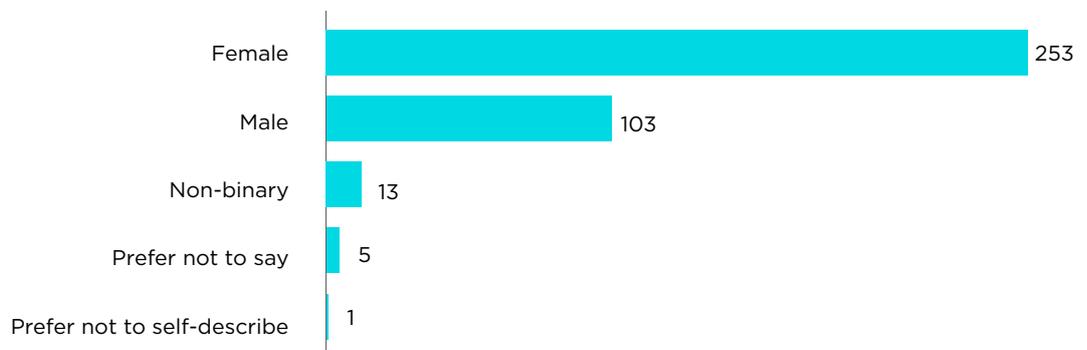


Figure 26: Gender of respondents. (n=375)

Analysis and reporting

This report contains a summary of the most material findings of the survey analysis, with full results included as an appendix. Any identifying information has been removed from the results.

In addition to the survey, five one-on-one qualitative interviews were conducted with Little BIG volunteers and hosts to provide additional depth of insight to the survey results, particularly to the elements around the impact of volunteering. The interview responses are not necessarily representative of all volunteers or members of the community. Excerpts from these interview conversations are included throughout the report.

Limitations of the research

This report should be read in the context of its intended purpose as described above. It has been specifically designed to inform the work of the Little BIG Foundation and the level of rigour applied to the data collection and analysis is proportional to its intended purpose. In particular, the following limitations should be noted:

- While efforts have been made to avoid non-response bias (or to provide transparency where bias may occur) there is still a risk of sampling errors which may cause misleading results.
- This report presents the unweighted results of the survey, with responses filtered by subgroup in some places. It does not contain any advanced statistical analysis or testing.
- The national studies listed for comparison may employ different methodologies to this survey. Caution should be used when drawing conclusions based on these comparisons.
- The conclusions drawn in this report are based on the data available at the time, with consideration given to the limitations described here. Depending on the intended use, further research may be needed to verify the findings contained in this report or to provide additional depth of insight.

Endnotes

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- 11 Note the 2022 and 2023 survey questions were slightly different – the 2022 questions asked about neighbour interactions which could have a narrower interpretation.
- 12 In this report "Little BIG House events" are defined as all those events run by the Little BIG House or its volunteers excluding placemaking events. Placemaking events refer to the large-scale outdoor events which encourage passive community interaction and the use of public outdoor spaces, often with a commercial component which people can partake in as their desire. These excluded events were the: Christmas Tree Sale; Sunday Markets; Food Festival; Flour Mill End of Summer BBQ; Summer Hill Safe Space Christmas BBQ; Halloween Trick or Treat; and the ASHBUG Bicycle Safety Check.
- 13 Note: The survey question was slightly different in 2022 to 2023. The 2022 survey asked about neighbours, which could have a narrower interpretation.
- 14 Ending Loneliness Together (2023). State of the Nation Report - Social Connection in Australia 2023. https://endingloneliness.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/ELT_LNA_Report_Digital.pdf
- 15 Note the national average referenced here is extracted from the Australia Talks Survey, 2021, for relevant results see ABC News article: M Marozzi, "Do you know your neighbours by name" (29 May 2021) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-05-29/older-australians-more-likely-know-their-neighbours-by-name/100156872>
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