



## *How Are We? Survey Results*

### **Westport Community Initiative Well-Being Survey: How Are We? Findings**

Who we are: The Westport Community Initiative (WCI) is a group which formed over three years ago out of concern arising from a number of suicides in the Westport area. We have undertaken several initiatives since, aimed at resourcing people and organisations to be more aware and skilled in dealing with the specific issue of suicide and the general issue of community well-being. Our work has included the publication of a local supports and services directory and a number of training programmes.

The Survey: The Westport Community Initiative has undertaken a wellbeing survey of the Westport Community. The purpose of the survey was to find out, as accurately as we could, how people who live in Westport are doing, how they experience living in Westport.

The survey was undertaken throughout the month of November 2016. In total, 378 members of the Westport community took part, mostly using our online survey. There were 20 people who completed our paper survey which were then entered into our data. Some ages are better represented than others and some age groups had more women than men answered. We were cognisant of this when interpreting the results as, with any survey it does not represent the total population of the town. Further exploration is needed to get the perspectives of those underrepresented. Specifically underrepresented in the survey are girls aged 15 to 18 and both males and females in the 19 to 34 and the over 65 age groups.

Acknowledgments: The WCI would like to thank all the people who took part in the survey for their time and effort. We are also grateful to those who hosted the survey on websites and circulated leaflets. We also greatly appreciate the support of Mayo County Council, the Mayo News, various sports clubs, schools, Westport Leisure Park, the Town Hall and the Library in helping to publicise and circulate the survey.

Findings: The survey covered a range of areas. At this point, we are publicising our main findings and signposts for further action. The results are presented in three sections attached. Section 1 is an overview of findings from the standard measures of wellbeing which we included in the study. Section 2 contains summaries of open ended comments made by respondents to the study. Finally, in Section 3, we present a summary of the main statistical data we collected. Further information and analysis of the survey returns will continue to inform the group and other community stakeholders on how best to respond to community concerns and foster wellbeing for all community members.

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## **Section 1: Personal Wellbeing**

### **Results**

- Of those surveyed, 13.2% reported symptoms of either moderate or moderate /severe depression in the last two weeks. The most recent national statistic on this issue using the same set of questions reported levels of 8% of people reporting these symptoms (Central Statistics Office, 2016). The Healthy Ireland survey conducted in 2015, using a similar set of question reported levels of 9% of respondents indicating some difficulty in this area (Dept of Health, 2016). Our figure may have been slightly higher because the sample is not fully representative. However, the expected level of those reporting possible mental health issues in Ireland has been estimated to vary between 6% and 16% (Van Lente et al.,2012). This would still place the reported levels of difficulty in our sample within the expected range.
- The data indicated that with not being able to talk about your problems, not having a lot of social support and not being involved in the community was associated with lower levels of mental wellbeing.
- The 15-18 and 19-34 age groups reported lower levels of mental wellbeing, although this needs to be looked at further as the numbers of people in this age group were limited compared to other groups.
- The 15-18 and over 65 age groups reported lower rates of disclosing distress, although this needs to be looked at further as the samples of people in these age groups were limited, compared to other groups.
- Women had a higher average score for reporting distress than men.
- People who were not parents also had a higher average score for symptoms of mental distress as opposed to those who were also parents.
- The results indicated that 20.1% of respondents had contacted a support service to receive support in relation to a mental health concern.
- When asked where people would seek support, the most reported answers were GP (76.5%), Counsellor (41.3%) and Psychologist (20.9%).



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### **Actions:**

1. An important finding is that the levels of possible mental health issues reported are within expected levels and would suggest that Westport is not outside the norm on this issue.
2. A second important finding is that there is a link between reporting symptoms of depression, not wanting to talk about it, not feeling supported and not wanting to be involved in the community. Strategies and initiatives that get the message across that “**Its ok not to be ok**” and break down barriers for people to enable them to disclose distress need to be at the fore front in supporting people with this issue.
3. Although limited by the numbers in the sample, the finding that some of the young people (15-18) and those in the oldest (Over 65) age groups were less likely than others to disclose distress should be explored further as there may be a need for a specific project to encourage these age groups to disclose distress.
4. Most people will turn to their GP when in need of formal support services, the circulation and availability of the service directory through GPs is therefore likely to be an effective strategy.



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### **Section 2: What People Said**

The survey asked about people’s personal concerns, their concerns in relation to the wider community and those who are parents were also asked about their concerns in relation to their children.

The top ten concerns identified in each question were as follows:

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Personal</b>	<b>Wider community</b>	<b>Parental concerns for children</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>finances</b>	<b>youth issues</b>	<b>education/school</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>family</b>	<b>alcohol</b>	<b>Health</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>school/college</b>	<b>jobs</b>	<b>Happiness</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>children</b>	<b>drugs</b>	<b>Safety</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>health</b>	<b>traffic</b>	<b>Employment</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>work-related stress</b>	<b>activities</b>	<b>mental health</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>purpose in life</b>	<b>housing/homes</b>	<b>Alcohol</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>relationship issues</b>	<b>local authority services</b>	<b>Drugs</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>getting/keeping a home</b>	<b>facilities</b>	<b>Future</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>getting a job</b>	<b>community</b>	<b>Bullying</b>

Finances and employment related issues feature in all three categories. It is the top personal concern identified. Getting a job and work related stress also feature as one of the top 10 personal concerns. Jobs is the third issue identified in the wider community and it also features as the fifth concern parents have for their children.

Youth and education related issues also rank high. Education/school is identified as the top concern of parents and youth issues are identified as the top concern by all in the wider community. The health (both mental and physical), happiness and safety of children rank highest for parents, but family and children also comes through as being of high importance as a personal concern, although this might not be exclusively about young people. Concerns regarding health are ranked highly both at a personal and parental level but do not feature as a community-wide issue.

Getting and keeping a home features as a personal concern and as a community-wide concern but does not come through as a top concern for parents.

Alcohol and drugs are identified as a community-wide issues and as a concern parents have for their children but the respondents didn’t identify it as a personal issue.



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Local authority services came through strongly as a concern for the wider community, this included concerns regarding facilities, activities, services and traffic.

The issue of “community” was identified as a community-wide issue. This may reflect an expectation that a healthy community has a sense of connectedness, common purpose and mutual dependence and support which could be enhanced in some way. This trend echoes a finding from the statistical data that suggested individuals with more community involvement were more likely to report higher levels of mental wellbeing.

At a personal level the issue of “purpose in life” was identified as one of the top concerns and suggests that within the routine of life people are concerned about this area and see it as something they would like to address.



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### Section 3: Main Statistical Findings

Gender		Top Areas of Importance	
Males	45.2%	Family Relationships	86%
Female	54.5%	Friends	72.7%
Age		Physical/Mental Health	72%
15-18	24.1%	Top Concerns	
19-34	13%	Coping with Stress	27.3%
35-49	32.5%	Body Image	22.4%
50-64	20.6%	Paying for Essentials	21.1%
Over 65	7.4%	Coping with Depression	20.1%
Parent	54%	Who do you turn to?	
Grandparent	10.1%	Friends	76.5%
Sports Spectator	63.5%	Relatives	73.8%
Participate in Sports	47.9%	Siblings	55.8%
Involved in Community	49.5%	Mostly or Very Happy	73.8%
Volunteer in the Community	50.5%	Mostly or Very Positive about the Future	68%
Reported symptoms of at least Moderate Depression in the previous 2 weeks	13.2%	Felt Treated Unfairly	26.2%
Family Gets Along Well:	75.4%	Witnessed Someone else being treated Unfairly	49.5%
Rated Good or Very Good		Rated Satisfied or Very Satisfied	
Public Transport	21.7%	Opportunities for your voice to be heard	38.9%
Health	49.8%	Ability to Access Public or Private Transport to Meet Mobility Needs	39.4%
Education	67%	Range and quality of community services available	44.5%
Arts/Cultural Activities	73.3%	Ability to Access Internet	62.4%
Sports Recreation Facilities	85%	Secondary School Preference	
Facilities for Young Children	69.6%	Co-educational:	76.5%
Facilities for Older People	56.6%	Multi or non-denominational:	65.6%
Facilities for Teenagers	33.9%	Westport should be more open to more ethnic and religious minorities	74.9%
Physical Accessibility of Buildings	40%	Westport is good at including and supporting those experiencing social exclusion	61.1%



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<b>How Safe do you feel?</b>		<b>Total Sample Number: 378</b> <b>Date Of Survey: November 2016</b>
Don't feel safe	2.9%	
Somewhat safe	22.2%	
Safe	37.6%	
Very Safe	37.3%	

## **References**

Central Statistics Office (2016) Irish Health Survey.

<http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-ihh/irishhealthsurvey2015/>

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