

Consultation and Engagement Report: Roscrea Town Centre First Plan

June 2023

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1. Introduction

Roscrea is one of 26 towns across the country that has received funding to develop a Town Centre First (TCF) Plan which aims to map out future development, focus on tackling dereliction and vacant properties, and make the town centre a more attractive place to live, work, socialise and run a business. This initiative aims to help re-imagine and revitalise rural communities as part of the National Town Centre First Policy.

The TCF process is supported by Tipperary County Council (TCC) and the Roscrea Town Team (RTT) which was formed in January 2023. The Town Champion and the Council's Town Regeneration Officer will work closely with the Town Team over the coming months to deliver a new Town Centre First Plan for Roscrea.

KPMG Future Analytics form part of a team of consultants led by O'Mahony Pike (OMP) Architects, commissioned by TCC, to undertake a Town Centre First Plan for Roscrea in collaboration with the Town Team. The plan will guide the regeneration of the town and provide the basis for future funding applications by the Local Authority.

For the plan to best fit the needs of the town and those who live and work in it, it is essential to hear from the people it is designed to help. KPMG Future Analytics are coordinating the stakeholder and engagement process in support of the TCF Plan. This report documents the stakeholder consultation and engagement sessions undertaken as part of preparation of the TCF Plan and presents a summary overview of key points raised.

Initial Consultation

A multi-strand stakeholder engagement and consultation process commenced in March 2023. These sessions were intended to allow the resident and business community of Roscrea an opportunity to propose their ideas for the successful sustainable development of the town and to raise concerns related to the health and functioning of the town centre, that could potentially be addressed through the TCF Plan.

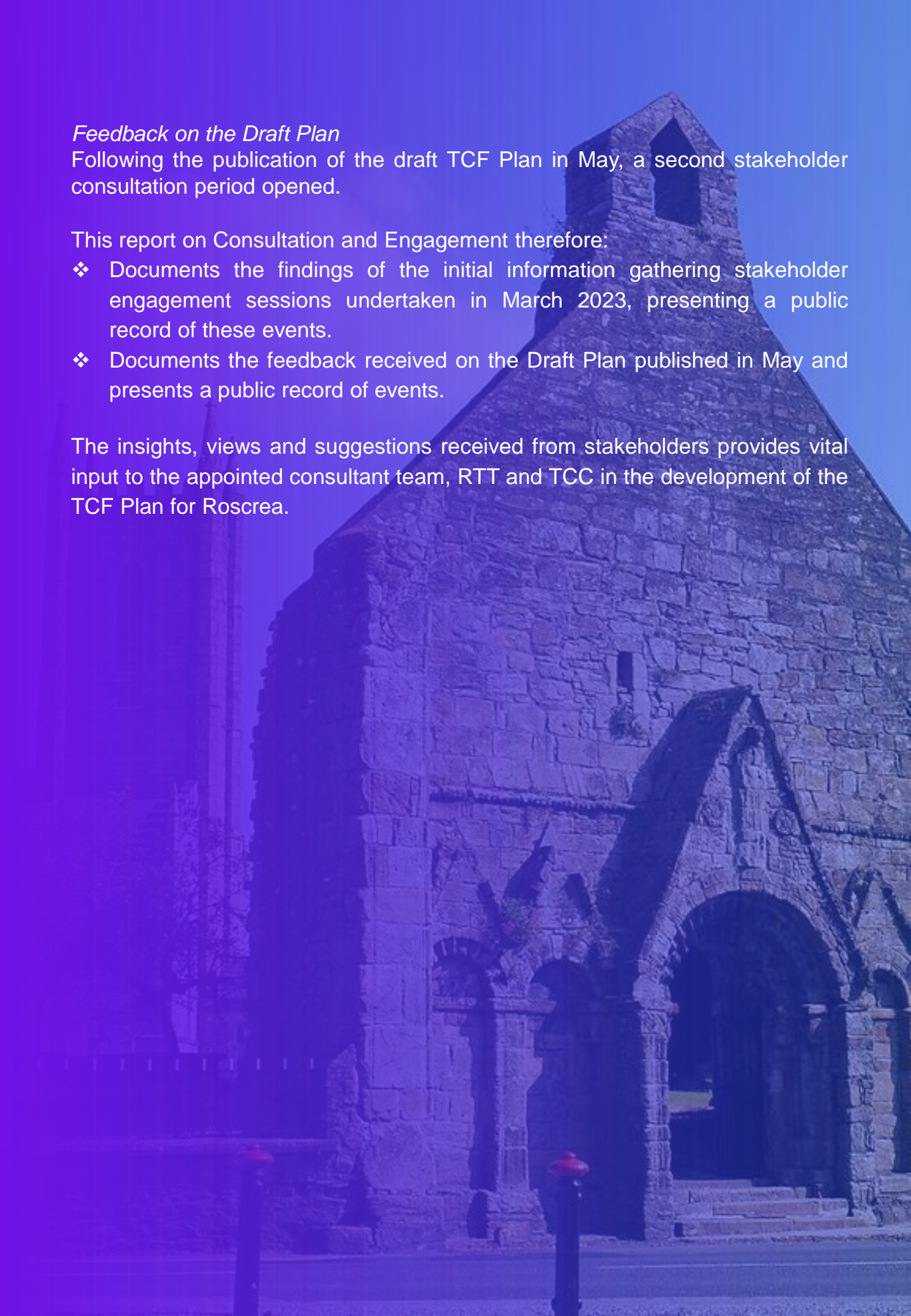
Feedback on the Draft Plan

Following the publication of the draft TCF Plan in May, a second stakeholder consultation period opened.

This report on Consultation and Engagement therefore:

- ❖ Documents the findings of the initial information gathering stakeholder engagement sessions undertaken in March 2023, presenting a public record of these events.
- ❖ Documents the feedback received on the Draft Plan published in May and presents a public record of events.

The insights, views and suggestions received from stakeholders provides vital input to the appointed consultant team, RTT and TCC in the development of the TCF Plan for Roscrea.



2. Overview of Consultation Process

The initial consultation and engagement phase took place over several weeks in March 2023. The engagement methods were selected to encourage a wide participation amongst Roscrea's business and resident communities.

A mix of in-person, virtual events, semi-structured interviews with local retailers, focus group sessions with key groups and online surveys were undertaken during this time. In total, approximately 465 people participated in the consultation process including 335 respondents from the online community survey. It should be noted that some individuals could have attended multiple events and surveys. Therefore, the number of individuals participated in the consultation process could range from 335 to 465. This equals to c.6% to c.9% of the population in Roscrea settlement (5,446 as recorded in 2016), representing a satisfactory engagement rate in this consultation. The stakeholder sessions are listed below. This report groups the findings emerging from similar sessions and organises these under a series of relevant topics / grouped thematic findings.



3. In-Person and Virtual Consultation Events

On the 11th of March 2023, the in-person public consultation phase of the project commenced with meetings taking place with local councillors in the morning and an event in the Black Mills venue on Saturday afternoon.

An online session took place on the 14th of March to accommodate those who could not attend the earlier event. This was followed by a second in-person community workshop on 15th March in the Regional Training Centre.

Information, insight, local knowledge, ideas, and concerns raised during the in-person and virtual consultation sessions have been collated and organised under a series of thematic headings, as set out below.

Structure

Interest and attendance at the consultation sessions was good. A similar approach was undertaken for both the in-person and online sessions with the same presentation setting the scene and a consistent line of questioning for all. The consultations focused on 5 main topics.

Topic 1 ‘What is a Town Centre First Plan’

As an introductory piece – the concept of TCF was introduced, the various components of the Plan highlighted, and an overview of how the consultant team will deliver each component of the Plan. To inspire confidence in the TCF model, a successful and comparable Plan example of Boyle in Co. Roscommon was presented.

Topic 2, 3, and 4 required the attendees to break up into groups or if attendance was lower, an open discussion was held.

Topic 2 ‘What are the town’s strengths?’

To encourage dialogue the following questions were asked. “What do you like about Roscrea?” “What are the main strengths and opportunities?”.

Topic 3 ‘What are Roscrea’s issues?’

To encourage dialogue the following questions were asked. “What do you not like about Roscrea?” “What are its issues/weaknesses?” and “What’s missing that could allow it to develop further?”

Topic 4 ‘What objectives and actions are needed?’

To encourage dialogue the following questions were asked. “what should the objectives be for Roscrea?” “what actions should be used to reach these objectives?” and “How should progress be measured (i.e. KPIs)?

Topic 5 Wrap-up and Key Points

The timeline of the TCF Plan process was presented which begins with the March consultations sessions and concludes with the finalised Plan in June 2023.

Finally, invitations via bar codes were provided to promote and encourage participation in the business and community surveys. Invitation to the participate in the online surveys were also circulated by email to everyone who provided their email address at the in-person events.

COMMON THEMES

Non-Sporting Recreational Activities/Evening Economy

A frequent response from the public consultation is a lack of recreation activities outside of day time hours – a poor evening economy. Consultees, particularly school children highlighted the lack of social and recreational opportunities, with some describing it as a “kill-joy” in the winter evenings. Suggestions to redress this issue include a bowling alley, pool/snooker rooms, a cinema, and places to eat out other than a takeaway. There is a sense that Roscrea “shuts down at 6 o’clock unless you play sport.”

To avail of non-sporting recreational activities, one must travel to a nearby town such as Nenagh. However, this 25-minute drive can take over double the time using the Local Links bus services, making it very inconvenient.

“Aside from the swimming pool, you have to leave Roscrea to host a birthday party” – a 6th class student.

“There’s nowhere to meet up with your friends aside from each other’s house... there’s nowhere to go to hang out” – a TY student.

Primary school children over the age of ten feel that once they’re beyond the age for the youth club, there is little to do in Roscrea outside of sport.

Sports Facilities

Throughout all of the consultation sessions the good work of the sporting communities was emphasised and championed. The sporting facilities at Killavilla United AFC were mentioned to be “fantastic for the town”. Further enhancements to existing facilities, it was suggested, would create a greater community spirit and strengthen the recreational offering of the town.



Images from Public Consultation in the Black Mills Roscrea on the 11/03/2023

Some of the more common suggestions to enhance the town's sporting facilities included the development of an AstroTurf pitch, a running track or an indoor sports hub to facilitate and accommodate all community sports during the winter months.

"There was a need to develop an AstroTurf for the primary school...We have been campaigning for an AstroTurf for years now."

The feedback from Corville National School highlighted the need to develop an athletics grounds for the town. The athletics club have rented facilities off the Corville National School.

Other participants referenced a need to promote higher levels of participation in sports by girls and a greater choice/diversity of options to appeal to girls: *"There's a need for girls and women's teams."*

Community Spirit/Civic Pride

Consultees emphasised a need to bring the community closer together. Collaboration and a shared vision is viewed as essential for positive and sustainable change in Roscrea. There's a need to create a greater sense of community as this would create the necessary catalyst for active community engagement and collaboration to develop the town, moving in the same direction.

"There are many groups working in different direction."

"We all want Roscrea to be the town that it should be but it's the people that can drive this vision."



Image from the 'Town Team Strategy Lecture' in the Regional Training Centre, Roscrea on the 15/03/2023

Community

Facilities/Initiatives

A need to improve community facilities and initiatives was highlighted to create a greater sense of community pride and enhance quality of life for local residents. It was suggested that the community needs to work together to achieve these goals as well as creating an inclusive and welcoming environment. On several occasions Abbey Hall was mentioned as an underutilised asset that could facilitate community functions and initiatives. The Castle was also suggested in this regard. Community activities such as bingo nights, language classes, and art classes were suggested, all of which would also fill the gap in the evening economy. Suggestions to create a more inclusive and welcoming community included the hosting of local festival/events such as a 'culture night' or traditional music concerts/events showcasing different cultures and musical talents of the local population.

Dereliction

Dereliction within the town centre was continually highlighted at every workshop/public consultation event, both online and onsite. Derelict sites have created an "eye-sore" on the Roscrea town centre.

"The tidy towns do great work and have done particularly great work in the past.... The derelict buildings in the town centre take from their good work."

Most notably, the former Grant's Hotel and Sacred Heart Convent were perceived to be "a waste of tremendous potential". Many believe that the former Grant's Hotel should remain a hotel, however, there are concerns about the financial viability and investment, especially considering Racket

Hall Hotel on outskirts of the town centre provides significant competition.

There is a sense that grants available to tackle dereliction could be better promoted and applications encouraged.

Employment

Job creation and the need for high-quality jobs was a frequently raised issue during all consultation events. Concerns highlighted include the perceived lack of inward investment in town, a lack of high paying jobs, and the need for investment in the town to act as a catalyst for job creation and for other businesses to "piggyback on".

"There is a lack of IDA involvement".

"There are little to no high paying jobs in the town, people generally travel for work to good paying jobs and invertedly supporting another economy rather than our own."

Important local employers were noted but an expansion and diversification of the base is needed.

Lots of discussion focused on the possible redevelopment of the former Antigen/ Taro Pharmaceuticals site on Lourdes Road. People also liked the idea of utilising derelict buildings to facilitate an 'innovation hub' to support local businesses and possibly provide a place to host business meetings and attract footfall to Roscrea. One individual mentioned Ennis 2040's forward thinking to incorporate a remote working hub, others thought it sounded like a "fabulous idea."

Furthermore, some highlighted the potential for Roscrea to better promote its rich heritage assets and boost tourism. However, others warned that relying on tourism isn't considered viable as it has proven to be a poor generator of revenue and has little spill-over effects because people don't stay for too long.

“The people visiting the heritage sites generate very little revenue for the town, therefore, there are very few jobs from this sector and the jobs that do come from tourism are low paying.”

Accessibility & Connectivity

In every consultation, concerns relating to accessibility, connectivity and public transport were highlighted.

Pedestrian access

In terms of accessibility, most of the town centre is accessible within a 10 minute walk of the outskirts of the town, however, for the elderly or those with disabilities, Rosemary Street and Castle Street are viewed as particular difficult to navigate.

“The loading bays outside of Shaws have taken priority over the disabled or less abled people.”

More could be done to improve connectivity between housing estates – simple enhancements suggested include better public lighting for safer streets.

Green / blue routes and cycleways

In terms of connectivity, there was discussion on the opportunity for greenways and blue ways to connect the heritage sites within Roscrea with particular emphasis on open up passages around/ through the castle. The potential to connect to the nearby heritage towns such as Birr and Clonmacnoise was also highlighted in terms of *“tourism and leisure synergies”* that could be derived.

“Roscrea can build on its heritage assets and the heritage assets of other towns, to make them interconnected through a cycleway... then Roscrea could serve as a leisure and tourism town”.

Public Transport

The TFI Local Link bus service is the most used public transport service in the town centre. This is used to commute within Roscrea and to nearby towns such as Nenagh. However, to travel to nearby towns can take a much longer route and take almost double the time to get there compared to driving oneself. – so it can have limited appeal if time is an issue. Over 80% of TY students interviewed at Coláiste Phobal Ros Cré use the Local Link regularly.

Rail service for the town is viewed as largely inadequate with a view that *“everyone”* uses the rail services at Ballybrophy train station rather than the Roscrea train station.

Public Amenities

Increasing the choice and quality of public amenities available in the town was a key issue raised at all sessions.

Suggested amenities that would create a sense of community and a safe place to *“hang out”* include a public garden or a square with seating and landscaping.

A skate park or better playground facilities could help fill the need for younger age groups and young families but there appears a further demand for a *“square for people to hang-out”*.

Facilities and services to support public transport and green transport needs to be integrated into any plans for the public realm.

“We need bus shelters and toilet facilities to compliment and support public transport!.. we need EV ports too.”

The need for public maintenance services including increased bins at the end of main street and in the estates was also highlighted by several people.

Public Realm

In terms of public realm, the main issue highlighted is a perceived lack of safety.

Children from Corville National school don't feel like walking/cycling to school is very appealing.

"You have to walk on the grass just to keeping your distance from the cars at the bypass... there's nowhere to put your bike that's safe".

The main suggestions related to the enhancement of paths and the provision of cycle lanes, bike racks and speed bumps or other traffic calming measures, street lighting and widening of spaces for pedestrians and cyclists. The three zebra pedestrian crossings as you enter main street and Castle Street *"have been nothing but a nuisance"* since they were brought in. The suggested solution for this is to spread them out.

There's a feeling that Roscrea and the Castle lack a *"sense of arrival"* there appears a need to address this, and signage was one of the suggestions.

"People come to visit the castle, are right in front of it and still ask, where's the castle?"

4. Focused Sessions

To ensure a widespread and inclusive consultation where the views of all members of the community are heard, local groups including those representing vulnerable groups were offered the opportunity to meet with the consultation team for a focused engagement session.

Local schools were also approached to ensure the voices of young people in the town were heard and their views represented. An informal, conversational approach was adopted for this session.

Councillors from Thurles Municipal District also attended a mini workshop which took place prior to the larger community workshop in the Black Mills.

This section presents an overview of conversations and insights during these focused group sessions.

School Children's feedback

On the 15th of March, the consultation team met with 6th class students and the principal from Corville National School, and Transition year (TY) students from Coláiste Phobal Ros Cré. The meetings with school children followed a more conversational and informal approach whereby topics 2, 3, and 4 from the in person and online sessions were also covered. i.e. Roscrea's strengths, weaknesses, and the objectives and actions needed.

Two major themes emerged during these sessions, as documented below:

(1) Safety and security – a major element of the discussion with both school groups was the issue of safety and security. The students highlighted concerns they feel as pedestrians walking through the town, particularly at night. The concerns related to both anti-social and criminal activities, and to general road safety issues.

On the latter, the main suggestion was to provide paths and cycle lanes, bike racks and speed bumps for cars as the current public realm does not feel accessible or safe.

"You have to walk on the grass just to keeping your distance from the cars at the bypass."

The students felt a stronger Garda presence in Roscrea would help address some of their wider concerns relating to safety and security:

"You don't feel safe walking around at night... we are so reliant on parents for lifts."

"There's nowhere to put your bike that's safe... my bike was robbed from my front garden."

(2) Lack of recreational activities and services: Young people highlighted a real lack of recreational facilities/activities in the town. Aside from sporting facilities/activities there is a lack of recreational activities or places to hang-out. Suggestions to redress this issue include a bowling alley, pool/snooker rooms, a cinema, and places to eat out other than a takeaway. There is a sense that Roscrea *"shuts down at 6 o'clock unless you play sport."*

Primary school children over the age of ten feel that once they're beyond the age for the youth club, there is little to do in Roscrea outside of sport.

The school children feel that the lack of recreational activities/facilities and the inconvenience of travelling to a neighbouring town take from their quality of life.

When asked do they see themselves staying/living in Roscrea in the future, 100% of TY students said "no".

"There's nowhere to meet up with your friends aside from each other's house... there's nowhere to go to hang out"

"Aside from the swimming pool, you have to leave Roscrea to host a birthday party" – a 6th class student.

Autism Awareness Hub

The consultation team met with members of the Autism Awareness Hub on 15th March. There was a very small group and allowed for a more conversational and less structured approach. However, they gave their perspectives on the strengths, weaknesses, and objectives and actions needed.

The Autism Awareness Hub promotes autism awareness, caters for, and lobbies for those with disabilities, specifically autism. This is a voluntary group with around 90 people using their services. There was consensus among the members met with that Roscrea has been “welcoming” to their cause and what they are trying to achieve. However, they highlighted a need for more facilities and improvements to the public realm that would respond to the needs of people with autism and reduce the stigma surrounding autism. It was also suggested that more could be done as a community to enhance education and awareness on autism, especially considering the increase in diagnoses.

In terms of physical solutions, the Autism Awareness Hub suggested increased disabled parking/age friendly parking in designated areas and safer walkways. There is a feeling that the town lacks a safe space such as a playground and a community garden that would be suitable to bring young children with autism to.

In terms of services, the Autism Awareness Hub highlighted a need for a Family Resource Centre which was advocated for in the Roscrea Family Support Needs Analysis.

Also mentioned was a more general need for enhanced street cleaning and waste collection services in the town.

Local Councillors

A unstructured workshop with local Councillors and the TCC Town Regeneration Officer took place on 15th March.

This session highlighted historic, sporting and community strengths. Unique to this session, strengths such as Roscrea’s caring community and the quiet local employers were flagged as a competitive advantage

“St. Anne’s and St. Cronins caters for Roscrea and nearby towns”.

“There are quiet employers that go under the radar.. They should be championed.”

Challenges facing the town, as perceived by councillors are as follows.

- A lack of IDA presence.
- A lack of collaboration and strategic vision amongst local community groups. *“There are many groups working in different directions.”*
- A need for a more active Chamber of Commerce.
- The drugs problem in the town.

This session suggested a need for enterprise incentives, increased educational, training, and upskilling opportunities, a greater garda presence, and a shared and collaborative strategic vision for Roscrea’s businesses, communities, and overall development.



5. Retailer Interviews

The Consultation team conducted semi structured interviews with 10 retailers to provide perspectives on the economic base of the town and the role and function of the town centre.

Retailer Interviews

Retailer interviews were conducted to provide an economic/business/employment perspective of Roscrea. This consisted of 10 semi-structured interviews with local retailers. Retailers were asked three questions, as follows:

- (1) How do they feel their business was doing?
- (2) What are the main challenges or issues they face as a business ?
- (3) What actions do they feel would be useful to solving the challenges / issues highlighted?

Overall, the responses to question 1 painted a relatively poor picture of the health and performance of local retail trade with clear room for greater support.

There is a sense that business is “*doing fine*”, “*it’s enough to get by*” but could be better. However, some retailers gave a more detailed description, describing a more negative perspective:

“If someone offered to buy me out of the lease, I’d do it in a heartbeat.”

“It’s not viable to pass onto my kids. I wouldn’t want it for them either.”

In response to the main challenges or issues they face (question 2), the top 3 most frequently raised issues were:

- Competition from online retailers
- Competition from the neighbouring towns and
- Competition from the large supermarket chains in the town.

Other issues and challenges highlighted during the interviews were:

- A lack of footfall
- Litter along the main street and the lack of collection services
- A lack of parking making accessibility to their shops difficult
- A lack of high paying jobs
- Dereliction and the high vacancy rate
- Road safety and traffic concerns particularly the new pedestrian crossing
- Staffing issues including recruitment and retention

Suggestions / actions to redress some of these problems include (question 3) :

- Increased bins and frequent bin collection services
- Increase parking and enhance accessibility
- Tackle the derelict buildings and high vacancy rate
- Bring industry and investment to the town to address lack of high paying jobs and increase footfall.



6. Online Community Survey

Summary of Results

A total of 25 questions were included as part of the community survey. These questions ranged from profiling-style questions to SWOT-style and open-ended response questions. Each style of questioning focused on particular aspects of Roscrea, its people, businesses, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities to identify key trends and themes to be considered in the TCF Plan. The intention is that the final Plan for the town is representative of the views, values and needs of Roscrea's communities.

A total of 335 valid responses were received via this channel. An overarching coding framework was developed to analyse the qualitative sections of the responses and to provide a structured, thematic analysis of the views expressed in these responses. The information presented in this section is a summary of the 335 answers received. The full survey results are provided in Appendix 1.

Community Survey: Facts & Figures

Respondents Profile



Individuals responded to the community survey.



Of the people surveyed were either employed or self-employed, full time or part time.



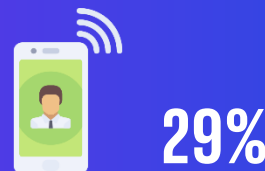
Of the people surveyed were living and/or working in Roscrea. The majority (63%) had lived in Roscrea for more than 20 years.



Of the respondents were working either in Roscrea or elsewhere in County Tipperary.



Of the respondents benefit from some form of working from home arrangements. 12% were working from home at least one day a week and 10% were working from home full time.



Of the respondents would like to work from home more often.



Of the respondents indicated that they would spend more time in the town if there were more small shops, cafes, and restaurants available.

Community Survey: Facts & Figures

Use of Roscrea Town Centre



57% of respondents visit Roscrea town centre daily for 'top-up' grocery shopping, while 66% of the respondents visit weekly for food and grocery shopping.



Other activities people typically visit Roscrea for include walking, sports, gym, shopping, dining, and visiting family and friends.



81% of the respondents travel to and around Roscrea by private car. Another 15% of the respondents' primary travel mode is walking.



59% of the participants would welcome the delivery of public space by taking more space away from cars.



A new footpath or cycleway (47%), address safety concerns (43%), and better crossings at all junctions (37%) are the top factors that would encourage people to walk or cycle more in Roscrea.

Community Survey: Facts & Figures

Perceptions of Roscrea



47%

of respondents believed that a sense of community is Roscrea's greatest asset, followed by culture, heritage and arts (42%) and natural environment and landscape (30%).



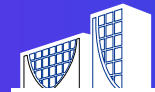
53%

believe the development of the hospitality sector is Roscrea's biggest challenges, followed by town centre vacancy and dereliction (50%), and employment opportunities (46%)



31%

pointed to a lack of options in hospitality services, especially visitor accommodations.



67%

highlighted addressing dereliction and vacancy as one of the top priorities for improving Roscrea town centre.



39%

believed that Roscrea provides good quality of life for people of all age groups, backgrounds and areas. Respondents from the age groups of 25-64 years old mostly disagree with this statement.



64%

agreed with the statement that Roscrea is supportive and inclusive for minority communities.



45%

suggested mental health services as the top priority for investment.



3

Top priority areas to addressing education and employment challenges are supporting children with specialist needs, job-focused training, and greater collaboration between employers and education providers.

Community Survey: Feedback for Town Centre First Plan

The last 3 questions of the community survey were designed to elicit feedback on priorities for the Roscrea Town Centre First Plan. This section thematically presents the results stemming from the following three open questions:



Are there any other important issues or goals that should be given priority in the Roscrea Town Centre First Plan?



Can you think of any actions or objectives that could help achieve these goals?

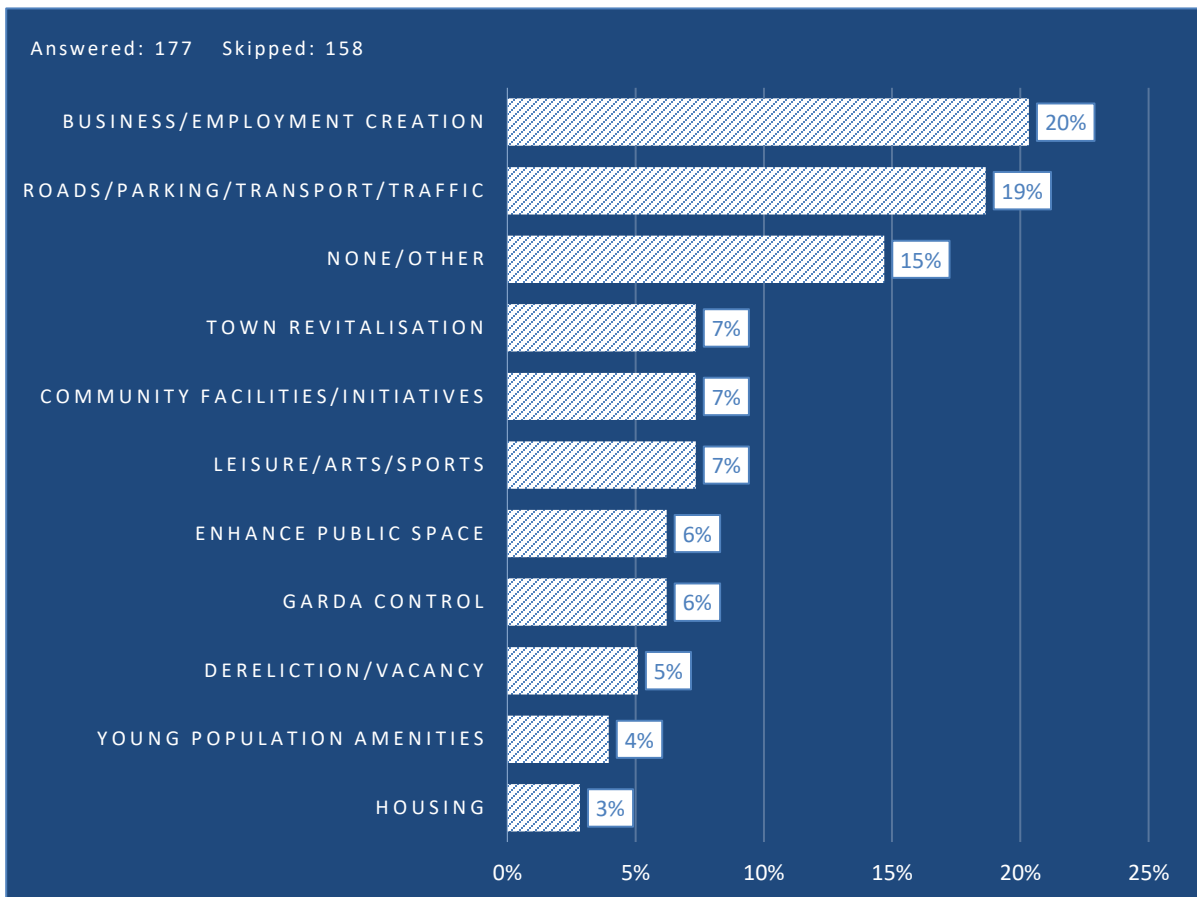


What is your vision for Roscrea moving forward?



Are there any other important issues or goals that should be given priority in the Roscrea Town Centre First Plan?

177 open-ended answers were received for this question with respondents highlighted several issues for consideration. 10 main themes can be concluded from the answers which are shown in the chart below. It is noted that typically each respondent would have highlighted more than one issue in their answers, but only one main issue was chosen as the theme of each answer.



Business/Employment Creation

20% of the respondents agreed that business and employment creation, including attracting business, employment, and investment and supporting start-ups etc., should be given priority in the Roscrea Town Centre First Plan.

Many respondents expressed the urgent need to bring employment back into town:

“Bring employment opportunities back into the town. We need factories etc.”

“To bring large employment or company to the town centre so that bring more opportunities to other business in the town centre.”

Participants also highlighted the importance

of supporting local businesses and start-ups and suggested methods to create more opportunities for small businesses in the town centre.

“Support for small businesses to survive in and around the town centre.”

“Financial and mentoring support for local small start-ups. Many seem to fail early in their evolution.”

Roads/Parking/Transport/ Traffic

19% of the respondents singled out road and transport related issues, such as street lighting, pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, car and bike parking, and availability of public transport, as priority issues for the Roscrea Town Centre First Plan.

Respondents highlighted safety concerns in relation to the pedestrian crossings in the town centre and called for improved infrastructure for people with disabilities.

Responses also reflected the need for improved car parking facilities, management of traffic in town centre, and better public transport.

“Reducing traffic and better traffic calming measures on approach to town from Birr direction.”

“Extra disability parking near Post Office and Chemist.”

People also expressed the need for improved footpath and cycle lanes.

“Walkways, Old Birr railway line cycling path.”

“Extend by-pass footpaths so we can walk cycle or run. Footpath should run the whole length.”

Town Revitalisation

7% of the respondents emphasised the importance of town revitalisation and expected Roscrea Town Centre First Plan to bring the town centre back alive again.

“Rejuvenating the heart of the town centre and addressing the state of some of the shop fronts and buildings.”

“Make the town vibrant again, it was once a busy thriving town, it was always busy with shoppers, people moving from one shop to another.”

“Make the Main Street an inviting and vibrant place that people could use more.”

Community Facilities/Initiatives

Improving community facilities was selected by 7% of respondents as a key priority in the Roscrea Town Centre First Plan. People called for more community spaces and facilities in the town centre that can bring people together, enhance services and networks.

“A sense of direction - people from all sections of the community and all ages need a sense of ownership.”

“Family Resource Centre, community based development workers, engagement between services and communities.”

Respondents also emphasised the due consideration for people with special needs. Age friendly initiatives were also called for.

“Mental Health facilities of which there are none.”

Leisure/Arts/Sports

7% of the respondents drew attention to the need to facilitate participatory arts, sport and physical activity.

“An arts centre or event space with parking - a reason to visit Roscrea.”

“Improve our arts centre Abbey Hall.”

Enhance Public Space / Safety Concerns

Respondents suggested enhancements to public spaces in Roscrea are urgently needed to improve safety and attractiveness of the town centre. In this regard, some also expressed the need for more policing and Garda presence in Roscrea.

“Make dark, secluded areas around town safer to walk through. Enhance public green areas.”

“A visible presence of gardaí on patrol & getting to know people & the town.”

Dereliction/Vacancy

Dereliction and vacancy issues were also highlighted, with 5% of the respondents suggested it as the main priority directly.

“Eliminate vacancy of retail premises on Main Street.”

“A Plan to deal with derelict buildings should be implemented. This requires a two-fold strategy. Firstly the owners, if known, should be compelled to maintain buildings in an acceptable state. Where there is failure in this area, the local authority should have the power to acquire (whether through CPO or other mechanism) the property and invite voluntary bodies or cultural organisations to take possession of the building under a long lease.”

Young Population Amenities

Some respondents drew attention to the lack of amenities for young population specifically and a need to offer more activities for youth and teenagers.

“Facilities for younger people are essential to foster a sense of community and purpose in adolescence, which may mitigate against the update of drug use and petty crime.”

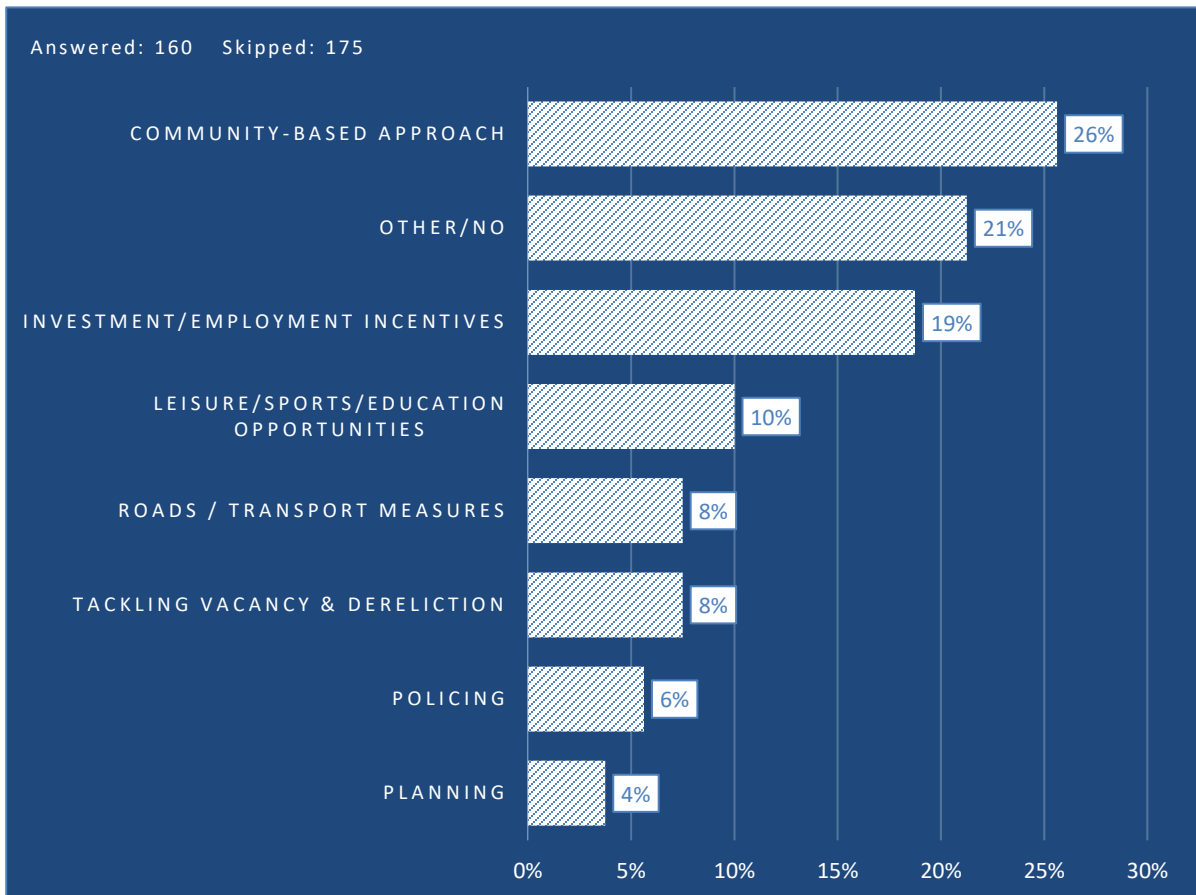
Housing

Housing was raised as an issue by just 3% of respondents - with some suggesting to provide more town centre housing. Housing for immigrants in Roscrea was also highlighted with better solutions required here.



Can you think of any actions or objectives that could help achieve these goals?

160 open-ended answers were received for this question which are grouped under 7 main topics. It is noted that typically each respondent would have stated more than one action in their answers, but only one main action was chosen as the theme of each answer.



Community-based Approach

26% of respondents suggested that Roscrea Town Centre First Plan should be grounded in a community-based delivery approach. More local consultations, a community information point, and public meetings were suggested, as well as the establishment of local committee within the community.

“Roscrea Community info point promoting local events.”

“Community meetings for everyone which can bring up issues.”

“Have a proper representative organisation for the town.”

Investment/Employment Incentives

19% of answers received are related to incentives for investment and employment in Roscrea as people called for measures to attract more businesses and innovation in the town.

“Offering incentives to businesses to open in the town centre. Reduced rent, grants etc. Local work schemes to provide purpose to those who are idle on streets during the day and to integrate those who are new to Ireland.”

“Reduce cost to make it easier for people to start a business and paint the buildings so the town looks good and have more choices involve younger people with good business ideas to help improve the town.”

Leisure/Sports/Education Opportunities

10% of the respondents suggested increasing opportunities to visit the town for leisure activities, exercise, take up sports, and participating in education activities for youth and adults alike to transform Roscrea into a more attractive and lively place to live and visit.

“Clubs and skill based activities where young people can come together and gain skills, express themselves and work towards a goal, e.g. Irish music clubs, orchestra, sports clubs, digital, graphic design and coding workshops to empower young people to feel equipped for the workforce.”

“Funding for education programmes for adults and other job seekers.”

Roads/Transport Measures

8% suggested measures to improve the road and transport infrastructure including pedestrianisation, road lighting and public transport etc.

“Pedestrianisation of Main Street. Improved parking on adjacent streets.”

“A more frequent train service. A hop on, hop off tourist tram/bus to transport visitors to places of interest in the area.”

Tackling Vacancy and Dereliction

In another 8% of the responses, tackling vacancy and dereliction were emphasised as key actions required to improve Roscrea town centre. Among the suggested measures were increased penalties and taxes for owners of derelict buildings and compulsory purchase orders.

“Owners of unoccupied properties should be either fined or have properties reclaimed from them if they fail to maintain or use them.”

“Compulsory purchase orders being used to take ownership of buildings where owners continuously make no effort to improve their appearance / offer incentives to improve the appearance of buildings.”

Policing / Planning

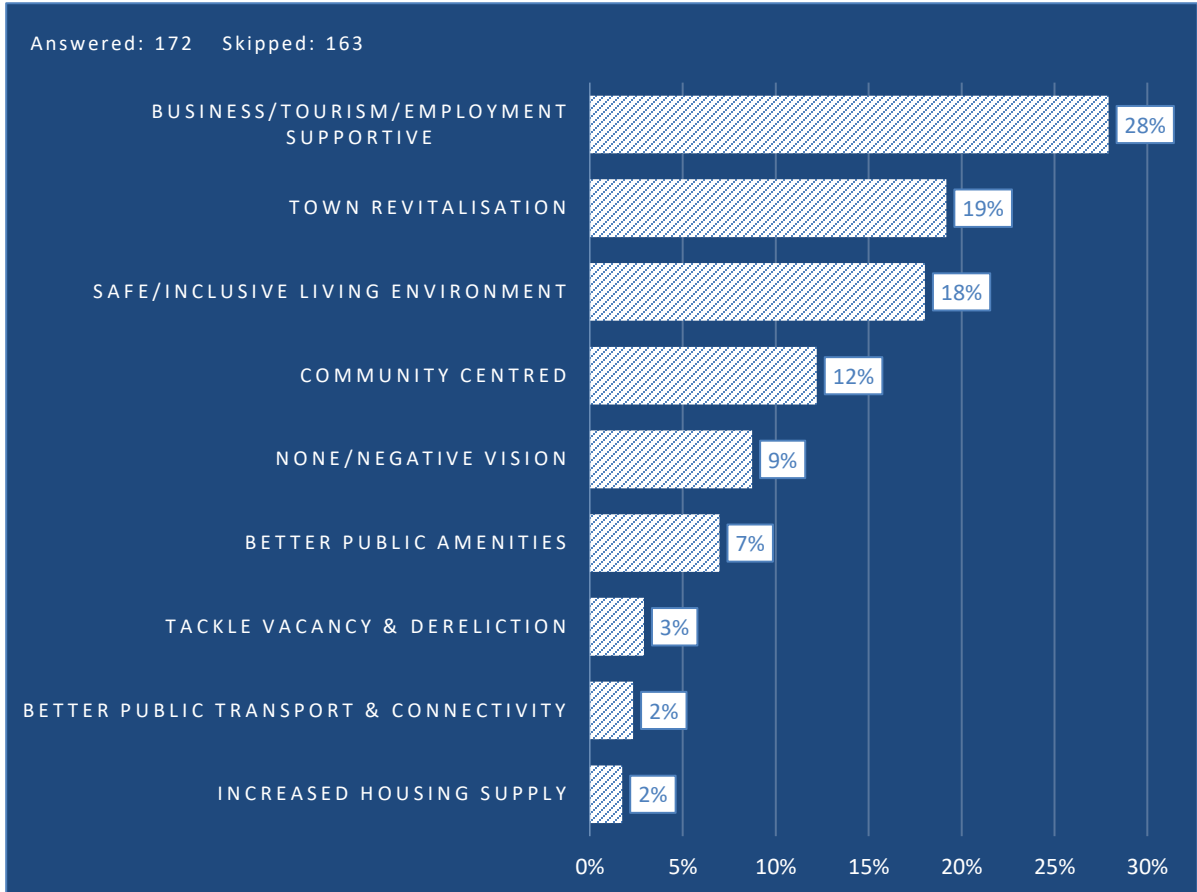
Many participants expressed the need for more policing resources, better public safety measures and an enhanced Garda presence in the town centre.

Data-based planning and proactive planning measures for commercial areas and dereliction were also mentioned.



What is your vision for Roscrea moving forward?

172 open-ended answers were received for this question. Feedback is summarised under 8 key areas. It is noted that typically each respondent would have stated more than one vision in their answers, but only one main vision was chosen as the main theme of each answer.



Business/Tourism/ Employment Supportive

The most common vision to emerge (28% of respondents answer touching on this) is for the town to become a supportive and appealing place for business, employment and tourism. People would like to see Roscrea re-establish itself as a prosperous and lively town with plenty of local employment, lively local business, and a

nice environment capable of attracting tourists.

“Full employment as in 1960s with bustling busy streets, heritage integrated, proper infrastructure, and quality services.”

“Roscrea back to a vibrant town with full education and employment opportunities. Proud to call home again.”

“A busy town with employment opportunities that also has facilities and services that encourage people from other areas to visit.”

Town Revitalisation

19% of the respondents stated their vision for Roscrea as focused on the revitalisation and regeneration of the town centre. Participants expressed their hope for Roscrea to become busy again with a well presented town centre and sense of place for locals and visitors.

“My vision for Roscrea is that it becomes a vibrant place again. A place people are proud to call home and want to grow old in and young people can wander the streets without fear and enjoy age-appropriate amenities in the centre of town.”

“A cleaner, fresher town that takes pride in its appearance and is forward thinking by embracing positive developments that encourages a strong community mindset that works together to provide a positive future for all who live here.”

Safe/Inclusive Living

Environment

It is noted that 18% of the respondents envisaged Roscrea to be a safer place to live in and more inclusive for groups. It is suggested that issues such as drugs, loitering, and immigrants integration can be better dealt with.

“A town where people can live, work and exercise while feeling safe.”

“A friendly and culturally diverse & integrated town with lots to do, e.g. arts & culture, sports etc. and places to meet up and mix.”

Community Centred

12% of the respondents emphasised the need to bring the community closer to ensure that locals are closely involved in the development of the town.

“Maintain community spirit. Support Tidy Towns volunteers who are aging.”

“A multicultural community that grows and strengthens through shared social activities, events and amenities.”

Better Public Amenities

Increasing and improving public amenities in the town was also mentioned by many respondents. Among the needed amenities mentioned were green space, greenway, public space for socialising and recreation, and amenities for young population.

Tackle Vacancy/Dereliction

Many respondents highlighted the high level of vacancy and dereliction in the town centre. It is suggested tackling vacancy and dereliction is key to bringing life back into the town centre and making it an attractive place to be.

Better Public Transport and Connectivity / Increased Housing Supply

Better public transport and connectivity in the region is mentioned by some respondents as central to the vision for a more prosperous and vibrant Roscrea.

Improved housing supply in the town centre is also advocated by a few participants.

7. Online Business Survey

Summary of Results

A total of 25 questions were included as part of the business survey. These questions ranged from profiling-style questions to SWOT-style and open-ended response-style questions. Each style of questioning focused on particular aspects of Roscrea, its people, businesses, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities to identify key trends and themes to be carried forward throughout the life of the project. The findings will inform the outputs of the TCF Plan to ensure it is reflective and representative of the views, values and needs of Roscrea's communities and businesses.

The information presented in this section is a summary of the 43 valid responses received. The full survey results are provided in Appendix 2.

Business Survey: Facts & Figures

Respondents Profile



Business representatives responded to the business survey.



Businesses surveyed have 5 or less employees.



Businesses surveyed are located in Roscrea.



Businesses are operating in retail sector. Followed by 8 businesses in professional, scientific and technical activities.



Businesses surveyed have operated at their current location for over 10 years.



Businesses primarily use retail units. 9 businesses occupy office space.



Businesses believed that “Roscrea business environment can be improved significantly for enterprise growth to be realised”.

Business Survey: Facts & Figures

Perceptions of Roscrea



Accessibility to motorway network and strong growth potential were highlighted as Roscrea's main strengths as a place for doing business.



Workforce availability was selected as one of Roscrea's main constraints for doing business.



Top three priorities to help drive economic development in Roscrea identified by respondents:

- ❖ Promoting a pro-business culture.
- ❖ Working with the IDA to attract Foreign Direct Investment.
- ❖ Providing the necessary infrastructure for businesses to succeed.



3 out of the 4 businesses who were seeking space in Roscrea in the past three years were not able to source it.

Business Survey: Facts & Figures

Perceptions of Roscrea



20 businesses had no intention of scaling up. 5 out of 7 businesses who do intend to scale up are planning for the longer term (more than 3 years).



Only 7 businesses had considered availing of grants to upgrade vacant or derelict buildings in the town centre.



5 out of the 7 businesses who were trying to access grants to upgrade vacant or derelict buildings found the endeavour difficult and unproductive.



21 businesses believed grocery shopping is the main thing that attracts customers to Roscrea town centre.



80% expect trading to worsen or no change over the next two years in Roscrea.

Business Survey: Feedback for Town Centre First Plan

The last 2 questions of the business survey were developed to seek feedback on priority issues for the Roscrea Town Centre First Plan. This section thematically presents the results stemming from the following two open-ended questions:



Are there other important issues or goals that should be given priority in the Roscrea Town Centre First Plan?

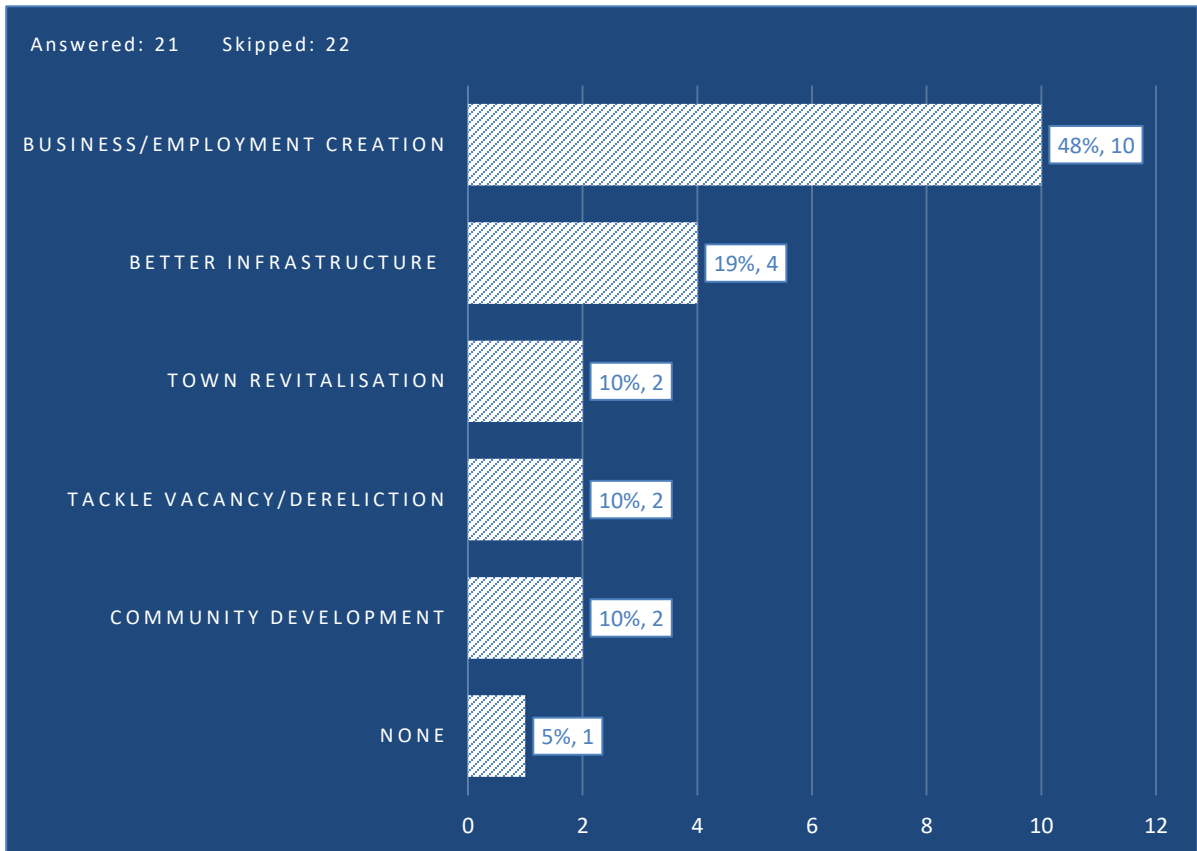


What is your vision for Roscrea moving forward?



Are there other important issues or goals that should be given priority in the Roscrea Town Centre First Plan?

21 open-ended answers were received for this question. Feedback can be summarised under 5 main areas. It is noted that in some cases, respondents stated more than one issue in their answers, but only one main issue was chosen as the main theme of each answer.



Business/Employment Creation

10 businesses (48%) emphasised the need to create business and employment in Roscrea.

“We need more government jobs. Professional people similar to pharmaceutical jobs, engineering offices, law firms, white collar jobs bringing revenue into the town.”

“Job generation. Create prosperity and net disposable incomes.”

Infrastructural enhancements

4 businesses indicated better infrastructure should be the goal to be prioritised.

“Better infrastructure, services, footpaths, accessible parking, reduce camber of main street. Open up Castle grounds, remove derelict buildings.”

Town Revitalisation

2 businesses mentioned the goal should be town revitalisation which requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach.

“Support regeneration of current streets, create attractions, community hubs, community facilities and make sure they are accessible. Look after what we have in the town centre before developing new areas.”

Tackle Vacancy/Dereliction

2 businesses highlighted that dereliction and vacancy should be the main priority for Roscrea Town Centre First Plan with the refurbishment of existing buildings and a focus on encouraging small business to occupy these premises.

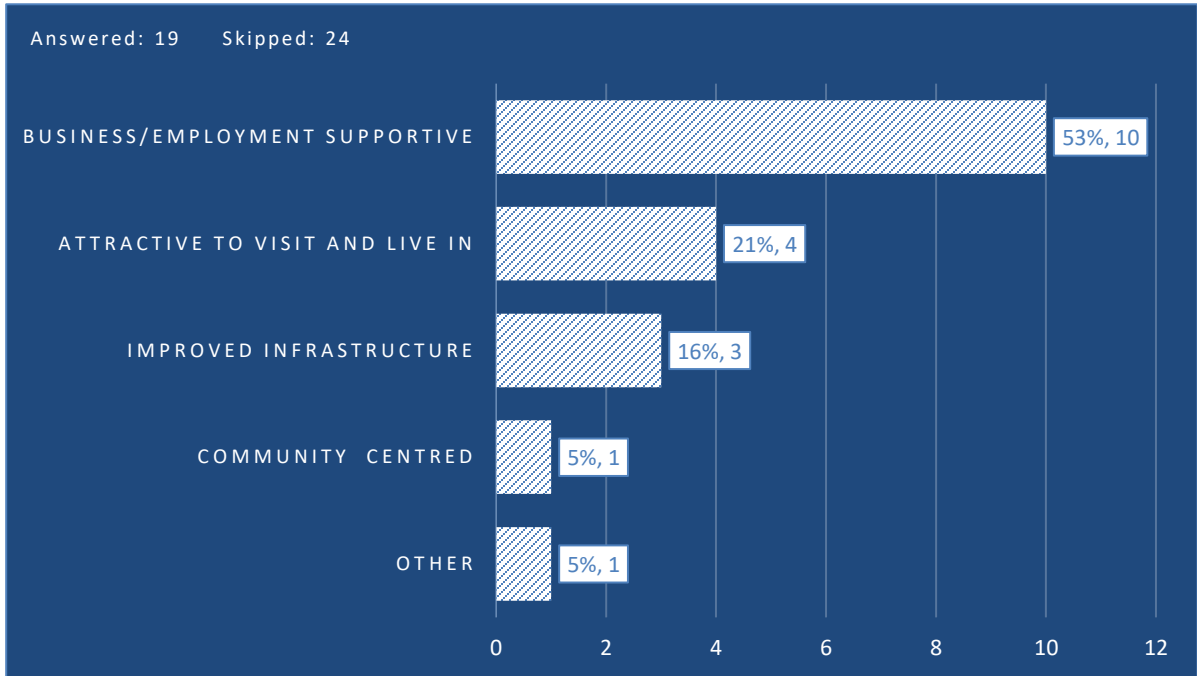
Community Development

2 businesses suggested the need to prioritise community development in the TCF Plan. Connections between community groups and community services and support are mentioned.



What is your vision for Roscrea moving forward?

19 open-ended answers were received for this question - these are summarised under 4 main topics. It is noted that in some cases, respondent stated more than one vision in their answers, but only one main topic was chosen as the main theme of each answer.



Business/Employment Supportive

10 businesses (53%) would like to see Roscrea become a more supportive and attractive environment for businesses, employment and investment.

“Become a more attractive location for business with central location in the country. With Investment, skills uptraining, and a continued welcome for foreign investment.”

Attractive to Visit and Live in

4 businesses indicated their vision for

Roscrea is to become a more attractive place to live and visit with enhanced provision for things like facilities, heritage attractions and shopping.

Improved Infrastructure

3 businesses expressed the need for improved infrastructure in Roscrea including more transport options, railway services, better road and street conditions etc.

Community Centred

One business envisaged Roscrea to have more community spirit and sense of pride.

8. Consultation on the Draft Town Centre First Plan

The views, ideas and issues raised during the initial engagement and consultation phase, as summarised and documented in Section 3-7 of this report, were carefully considered and reflected on by the design team, Tipperary County Council and Roscrea Town Team (RTT).

The emerging plan was updated and refined over the months of April and May. Initiatives and projects featured in the Draft TCF Plan were intended to respond, where relevant and appropriate, to the suggestions, ideas and concerns raised during the early consultation sessions.

On **May 17th** the draft TCF Plan was made publicly available on the Roscrea TCF plan webpage, hosted on Tipperary County Council website.

- **Public submissions** were invited on the Draft Plan via phone, email or post up to May 28th.
- The draft Plan was also presented to the public at two events on:
24th of May, 2pm-3.30pm at The Black Mills.
24th of May, 6.30pm-8pm at The Black Mills.

A summary overview of key points raised during the May 24th events and by public submission is provided in this section.

Town Hall Feedback

There were two public sessions on the 24th May. In the afternoon session there were approximately 16 people in attendance. The group was split into 3 separate groups and were each given a map of the 10 priority projects of the Draft Plan as a reference. This session highlighted strong interest particularly in the proposed projects for Castle Street, Main Street and Rosemary Square, as documented below.

Castle Street

Concerns were raised on the potential impact on local business as a result of the pedestrianisation proposals for Castle Street and the reduced level of parking and accessibility this might bring about. There was a concern that access to vital services on the street, such as the GP and pharmacy, might be limited as a result of the proposals.

Issues around accessibility and parking for vulnerable groups including older people and people with disabilities and parents with young children using prams or buggies, were also discussed. On the latter, there was a request that the design team consider suitable building materials for paving the street and to refrain from using cobble paving.

There was also apprehension on the functionality of the proposed open spaces and the risk that they might become a location for anti-social behaviour.

The groups welcomed the idea of outdoor dining spaces for restaurants and cafes and it was acknowledged that this type of activity would bring vibrancy and footfall to the area. However, some concerns were raised as to the practicality of this owing to the Irish weather.

Main Street

One of the biggest discussions centered around the issue of vacancy and dereliction of premises on Main Street.

The established and proposed parking model was also debated in detail. The current perpendicular parking model on Main Street was highlighted as a safety risk. The proposals to adopt a parallel parking model received a mixed response, with some in favour and of the view that this would make the street safer and others displeased with losing more parking spots.

Some attendees supported the idea of providing a staff car park for all of the shops and restaurants on the Main Street, which would open up more spots for the residents and visitors. It was suggested that support would increase for the parking measures set out in the draft Plan if secure, off-street parking was designated for business owners and workers.

Rosemary Square

Overall, the proposals to restore the civic presence of Rosemary Square appeared to be well received. There was some notable reservations around parking and space for trucks to manoeuvre. The vacancy in the area was also noted and the reduction in footfall levels that has arisen as a result of this.

General Comments from the Public Workshops

In general, aside from the concerns raised in relation to car parking and pedestrian proposals, the public appeared to be largely comfortable with the ten priority projects as laid out in the Draft Plan. Other points raised during the workshops are summarised below:

- A concern that the artistic and heritage assets of Roscrea were not fully captured in the draft proposals.
- A discussion on the value of Roscrea as one of the oldest towns in Ireland and a related suggestion for more focused and prominent marketing and promotion of the town as a visitor destination.
- General support for utilising the grounds of Roscrea Castle for public events.



Image from the evening public workshop in the Black Mills, Roscrea on the 24/05/2023

General Comments from the Public Workshops

- Public realm enhancements such as the addition of picnic benches, planting and landscaping would be largely welcomed, though there was some concern that public spaces could become a location for anti-social behaviour.
- The sequencing of proposals was discussed with a suggestion that laneways proposals should occur before Main Street upgrades.
- Comments received on general accessibility to the town centre, the loss of public bus services and the lack of appropriate drop-bus stop locations was noted.
- The need for a town centre hotel.
- A requirement for better public lighting and CCTV to address safety concerns.
- Support for greater educational and training and remote working facilities.

Public Submissions

The draft TCF plan was launched on May 17th on the Roscrea TCF webpage:

<https://www.tipperarycoco.ie/roscreatowncentrefirstplan>

The public was invited to make submissions on the Draft Plan via phone, email or post. An overview of key messages received by public submission is provided below.

The vast majority of public submissions focused on the proposals for the partial pedestrianisation of Castle Street. There is a broad concern among local traders that the proposals will adversely affect accessibility to their businesses. The impact on business logistics and deliveries, general customer accessibility, passing trade, and the convenient collection of goods by customers including for medicines and healthcare related goods, was questioned. There is a risk, it was felt, that the proposals could undermine the functionality and viability of businesses in the area.

The impact on accessibility and ease of movement for the old, sick, disabled and people with limited mobility is a particular concern. A general need to maintain convenient and safe access to essential local services such as the Post Office, Bank, GPs and Pharmacies in the town by all members of the community, was called for.

The submissions highlighted a widely held view that Roscrea Castle Complex and Damer House are majorly underutilised assets for which a targeted marketing campaign is needed to increase visitor numbers.

Some held the view that there has been a lack of support for the town centre in recent years, with a focus on development outside the town core which has had adverse consequences for businesses on Castle Street and Main Street.

Broad support is notable for the Smart Hub (REACH) and Smart Village proposal which one person noted is a major opportunity for *“creating sustainable all year around employment which would be a catalyst for increased footfall, requirement of local services and then the increased need for retail, social and hospitality services in the town”*.

Public realm enhancements including footpath maintenance, upgrade and widening, planting and landscaping measures, improvement to public lighting, installation of more seating areas and picnic areas to rest and socialise, were generally welcomed.

Other suggestions and comments received by public submission related to:

- The need to improve signage to key amenity facilities and services.
- The potential of developing a tourist trail to key attractions around the town.
- The requirement for greater marketing of and improved accessibility to Roscrea Castle and Damer House including an extension of opening hours and the introduction of public events and tourism.
- The possibility of holding a weekly market potentially on Castle grounds or a street market on Castle Street.
- The idea of a dedicated car park for staff of town centre businesses to free up spaces for customer parking.

Further, focused engagement with business owners on Castle Street was requested.

Wider Stakeholder Consultation

In addition to the public engagement activities, the TCF design team consulted with the following agencies:

- An Garda Siochana – Roscrea Garda Station
- Office of Public Works (OPW)
- IDA
- Irish Rail
- North Tipperary Development Company (NTDC)

8. Next Steps

Following on from the public consultation period, the TCF Plan will be refined and updated. The Plan will then form part of the forthcoming Roscrea Local Area Plan (LAP).

The TCF Plan includes an implementation plan which sets out the intended steps to drive forward the TCF projects in Roscrea.

On behalf of the design team, KPMG Future Analytics sincerely thanks all members of the public, local businesses, groups and Councillors for their valuable contributions.

The image is a composite of two forest photographs. The top half shows a sunlit forest path with a blue overlay. The bottom half shows a close-up of a tree trunk and a mossy log on a leaf-covered forest floor. A blue decorative shape is at the bottom.

Appendix 1: Online Community Survey Results

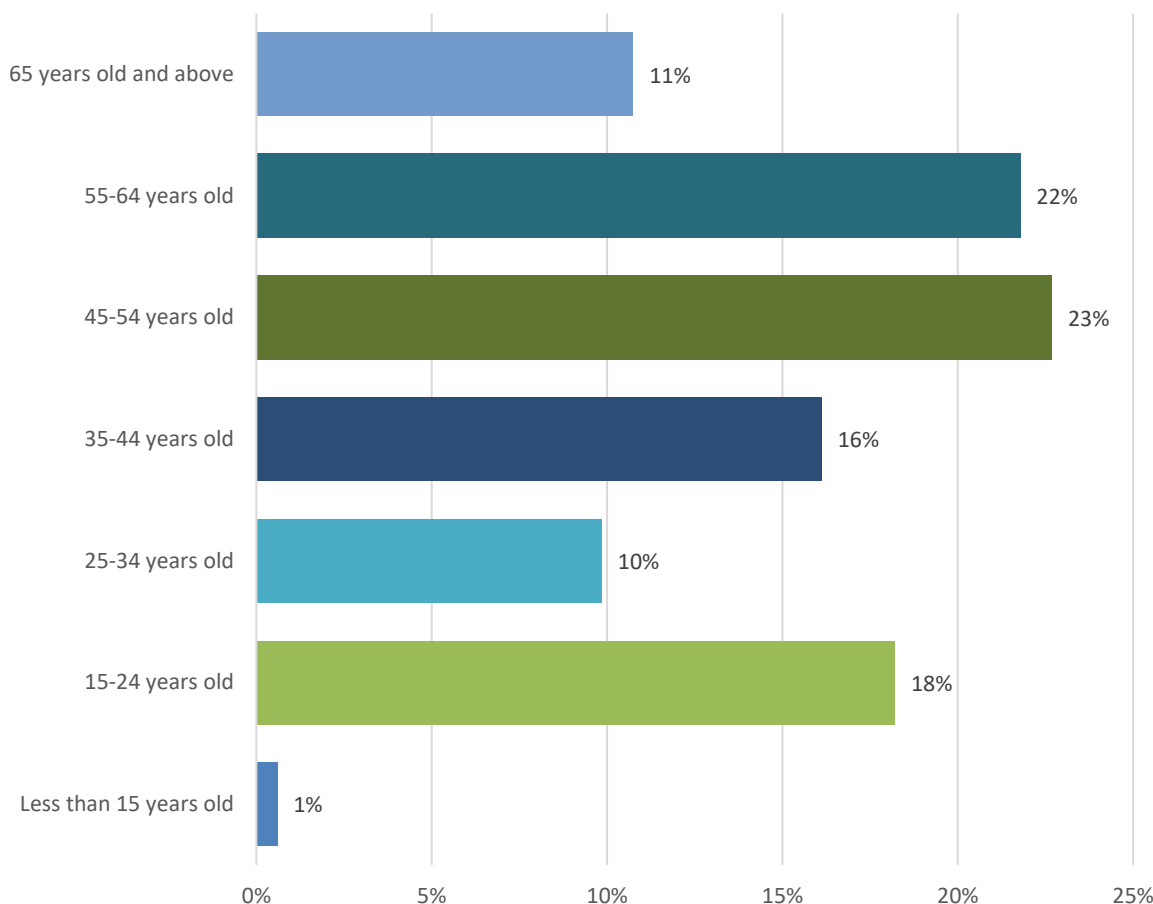
Community Survey Result

This section details the feedback received via the online community survey. The information presented in this section is a summary of the answers received from 335 respondents. Questions 1 to 8 allow us to ascertain the demographics involved in the survey, while questions 9 and 10 relate to town amenities.

Q1: How old are you?

Answered: 335

Skipped: 0



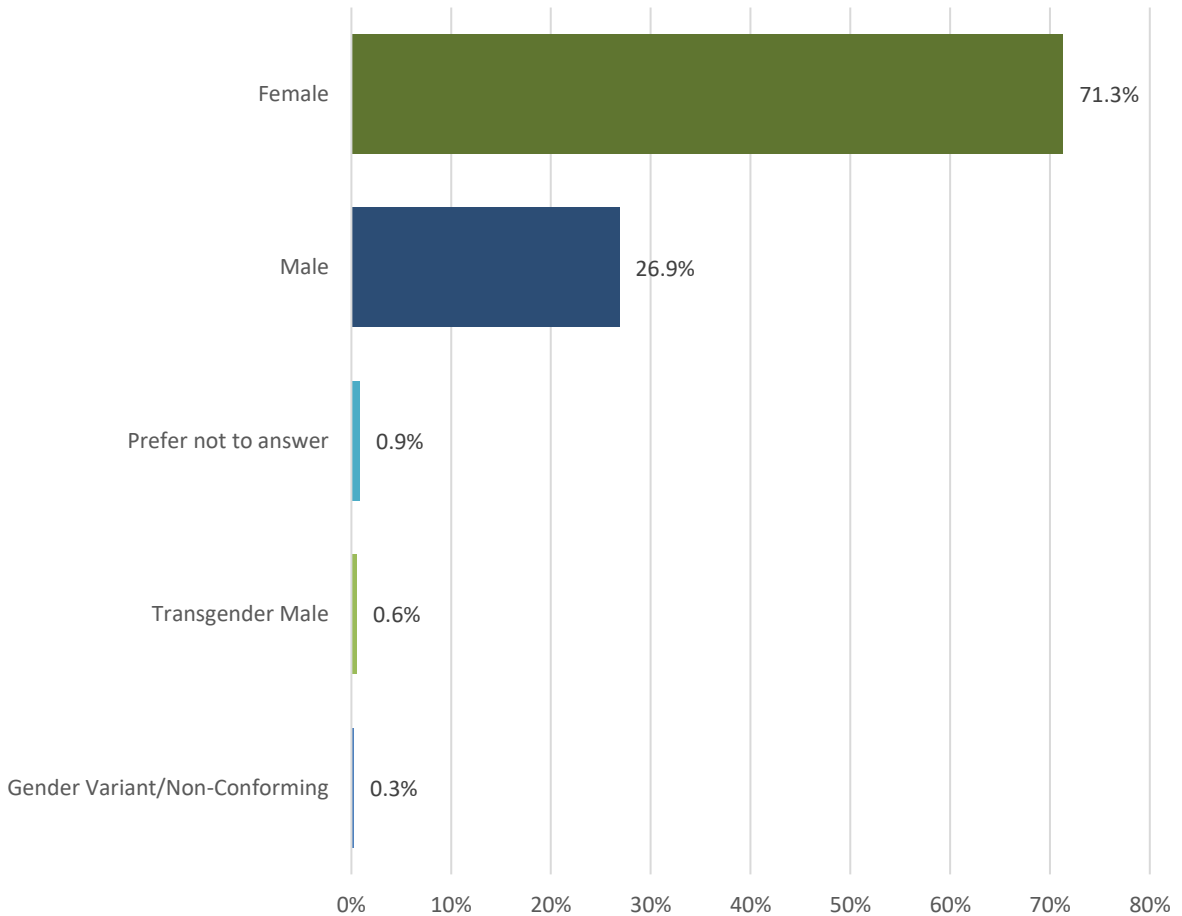
A total of 335 people participated in the community survey. As the demographics presented in the chart above show, participants within the age group of 45-54 years old made up 23% of the answers, followed by the age groups of 55-64 years old (22%), 15-24 years old (18%), and 35-44 years old (16%). The participants also include 11% of elder population aged 65 years and above. As a result, it is considered that the responses gathered by the survey present a comprehensive, well representative overview of the views of the Roscrea community.

23% of people surveyed were aged 45-54 years old, followed by the age groups of 55-64 years old (22%), 15-24 years old (18%), and 35-44 years old (16%).

Q2: How would you describe your gender?

Answered: 335

Skipped: 0

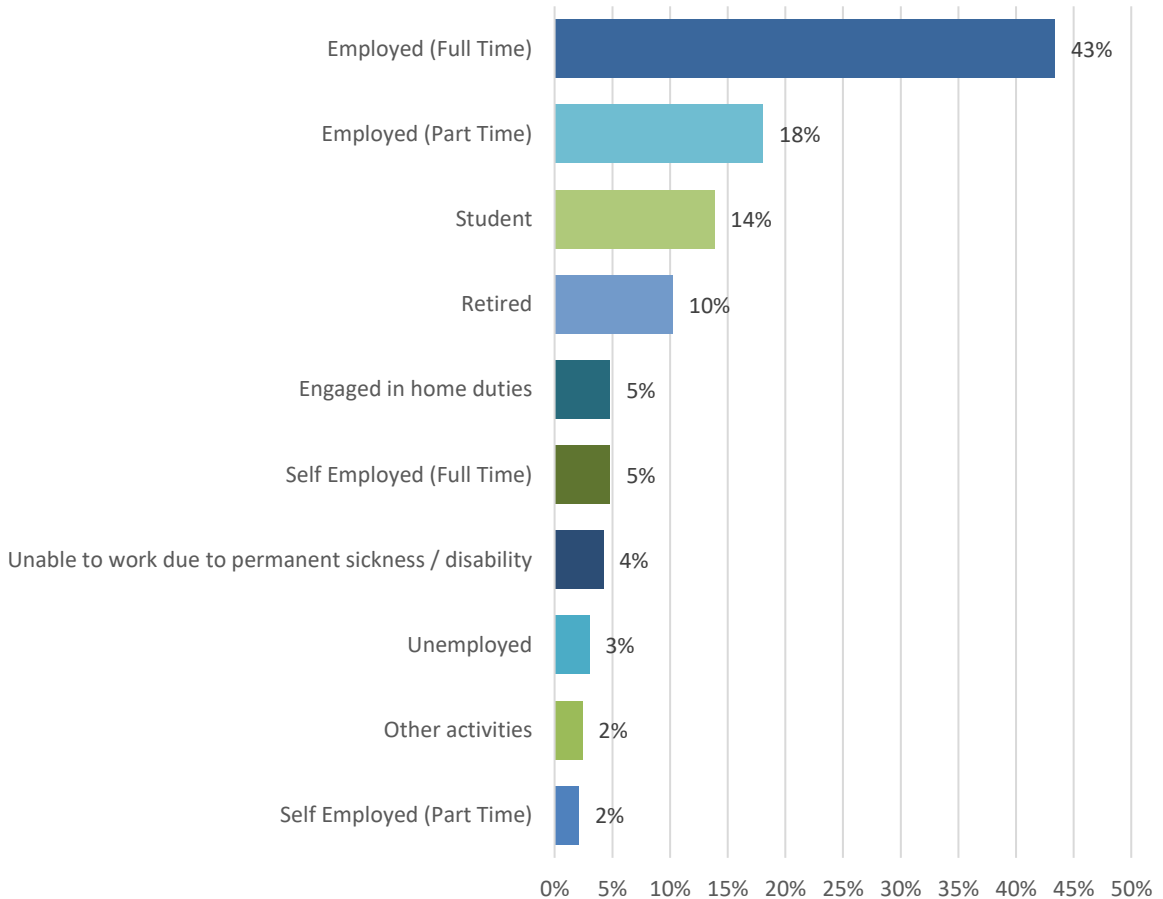


Participants of the survey were predominantly female (71.3%) while male respondents made up 26.9%. The survey also includes 0.6% of the participants identified themselves as transgender male with 0.3% identified as 'Gender Variant/Non-Confirming'.

Predominant female participants (71.3%) with 26.9% male respondents.

Q3: How would you describe your present principal status?

Answered: 332 Skipped: 3



68% of people surveyed were either employed or self-employed, full time or part time, with 43% of the respondents were employed full time. Additionally, 2% of the participants were engaged in other activities, such as carers and voluntary works.

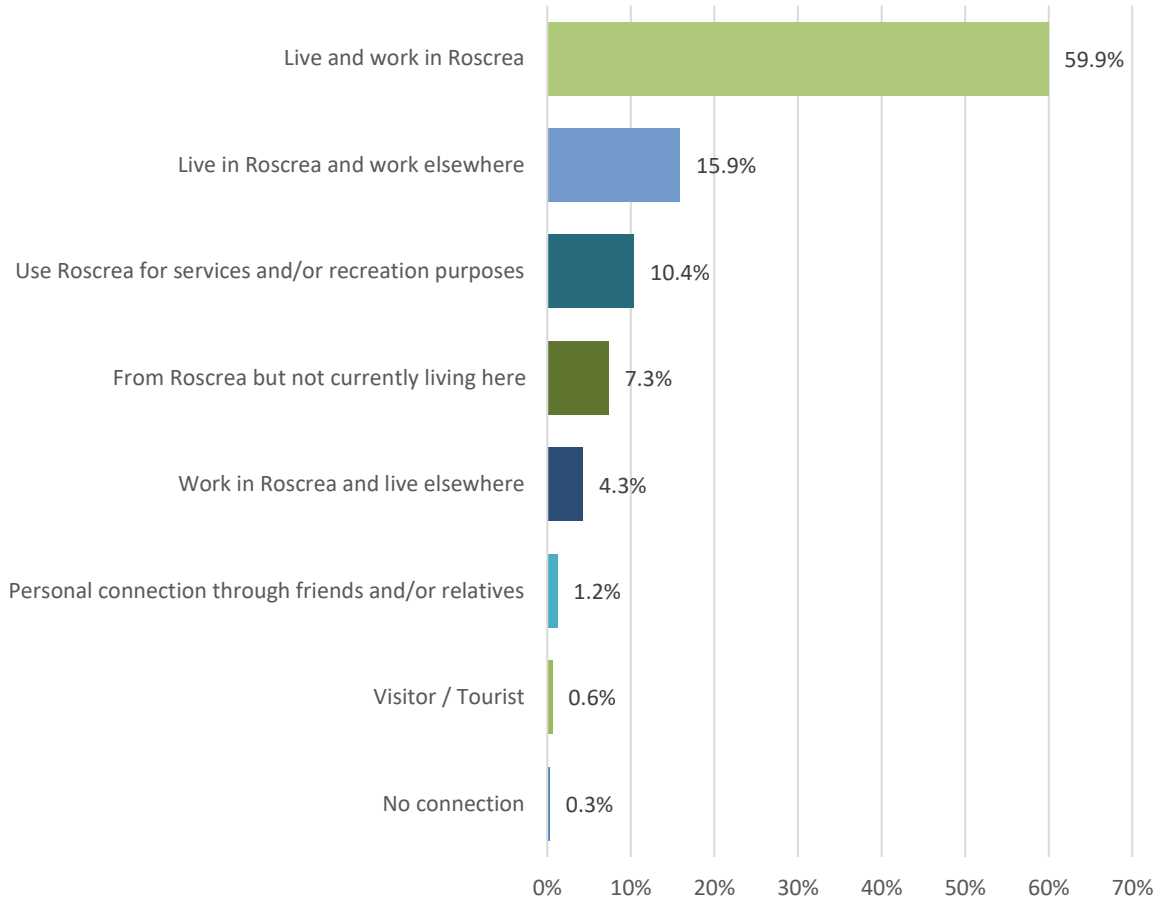
10% of the respondents were retired while students made up 14% of the survey participants. Only 3% of the respondents were unemployed, 4% were unable to work due to permanent sickness or disability, and 5% were engaged in home duties.

68% of the people surveyed were either employed or self-employed, full time or part time.

Q4: How would you describe your main connection to Roscrea?

Answered: 327

Skipped: 8



More than half of the people surveyed (59.9%) live and work in Roscrea. 15.9% of the participants live in Roscrea and work elsewhere while 4.3% of the respondents work in Roscrea and live elsewhere. Another 7.3% of the respondents were from Roscrea but not currently living there.

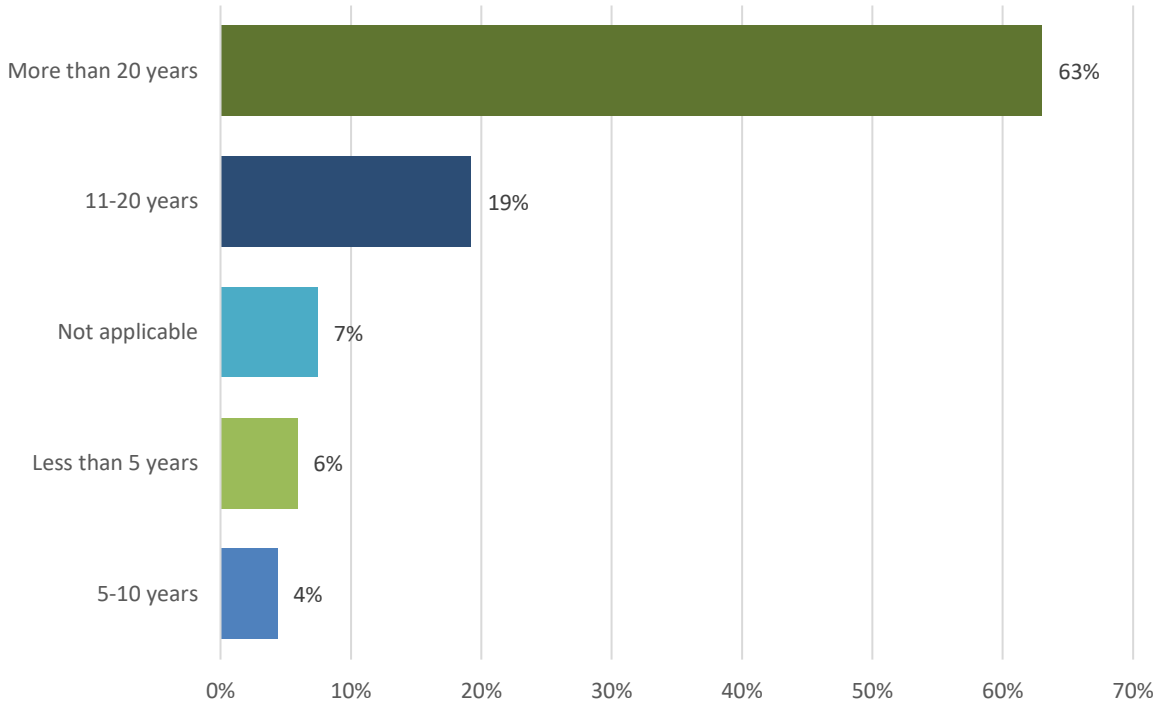
Just 10.4% of the participants only use Roscrea for services and/or recreation purposes and 1.2% of the respondents know this town through personal connections such as friends or relatives.

80.1% of the people surveyed were living and/or working in Roscrea.

Q5: How long have you lived or worked in Roscrea?

Answered: 322

Skipped: 13



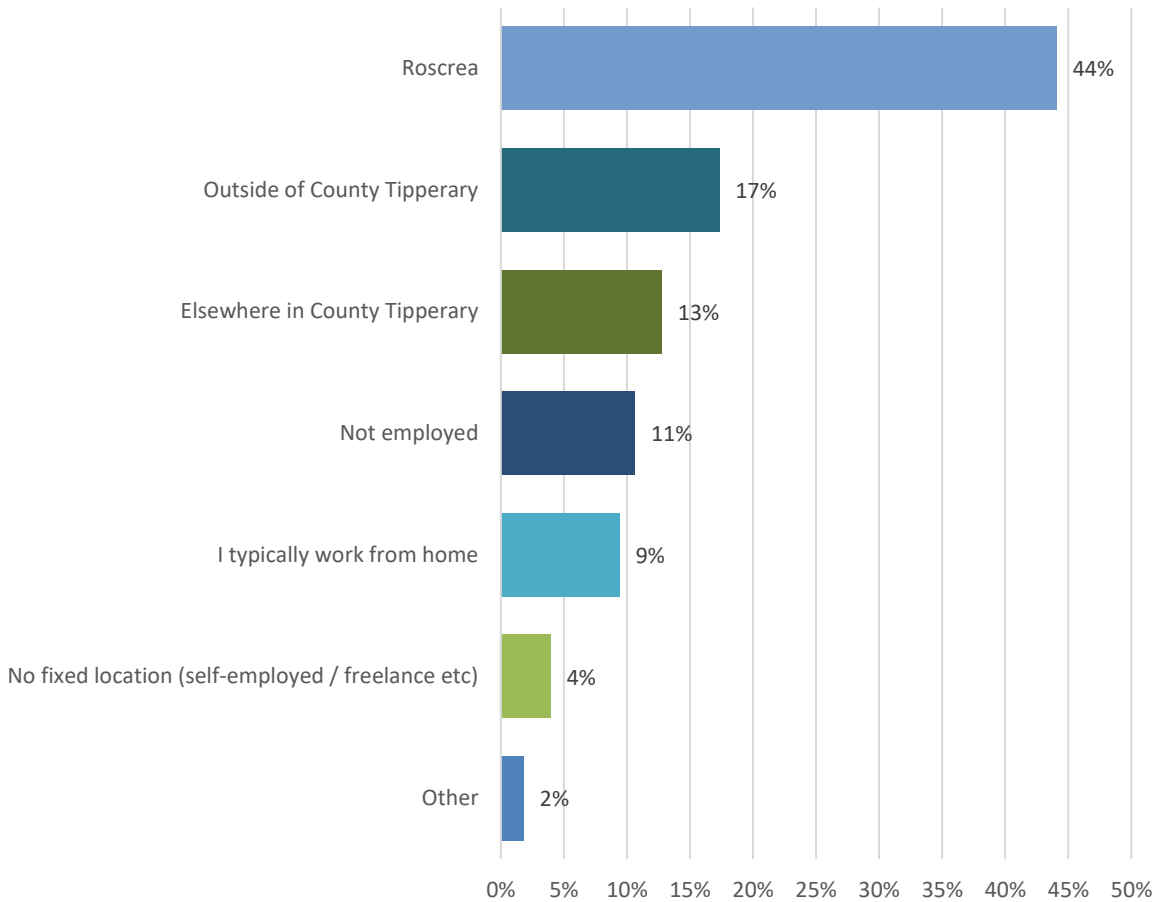
The majority (63%) of people surveyed had lived in Roscrea for more than 20 years, while 19% of the participants had been residents for between 11 and 20 years. About 4% had lived in Roscrea between 5-10 years and 6% for less than 5 years

The majority (63%) of people surveyed had lived in Roscrea for more than 20 years.

Q6: If employed, where is your usual place of work?

Answered: 329

Skipped: 6



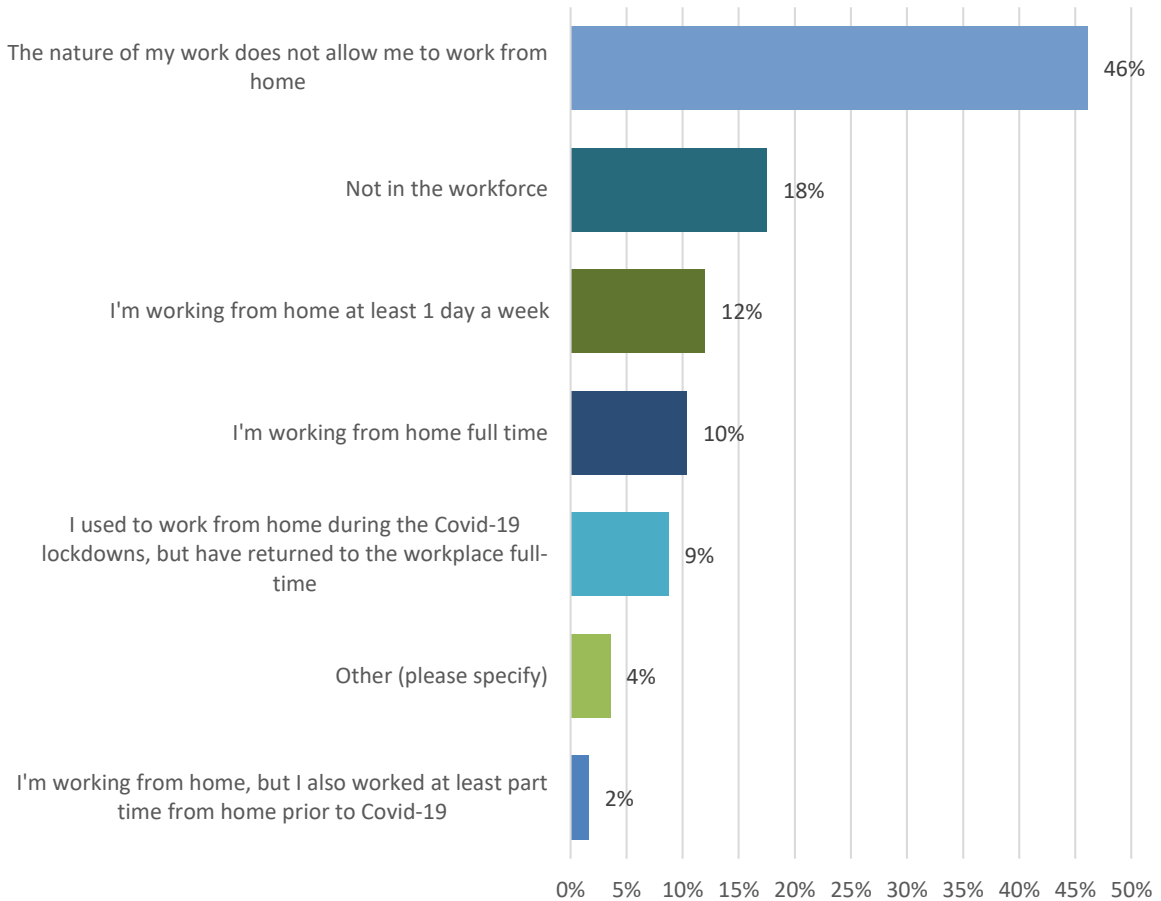
44% of the respondents were working in Roscrea while 13% worked elsewhere in County Tipperary. 17% of the respondents were working outside County Tipperary and about 9% typically work from home.

The majority (57%) of the respondents were either working in Roscrea or elsewhere in County Tipperary.

Q7: If you are in the workforce, how have your work practices changed after the Covid-19 pandemic?

Answered: 308

Skipped: 27



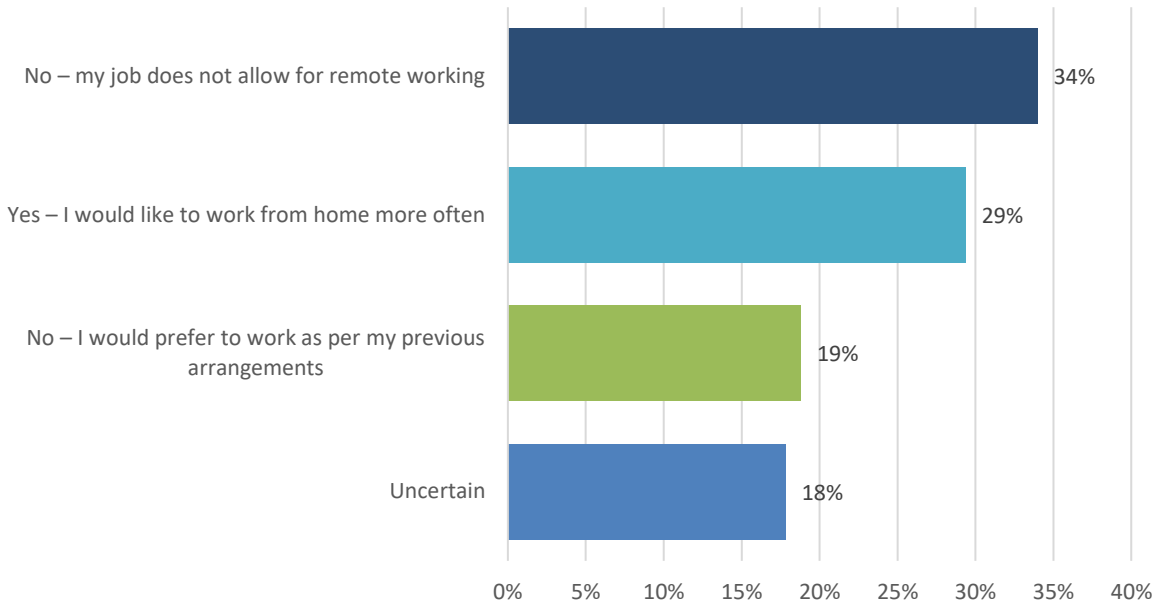
46% of the people surveyed indicated that the nature of their work does not allow them to work from home, while 9% stated that they used to work from home during the Covid-19 lockdowns, but had returned to the workplace full-time since then.

Just 24% of the respondents benefit from some form of working from home arrangements with 12% indicated that they were working from home at least one day a week and 10% were working from home full time. 2% of respondents used to work from home at least part time before the Covid-19 pandemic and continued to do so in its aftermath.

55% of the people surveyed do not work from home, while 24% benefit from some form of working from home arrangements.

Q8: Into the future, would you be interested in working from home on a more regular basis (with your employer's agreement)?

Answered: 303 Skipped: 32

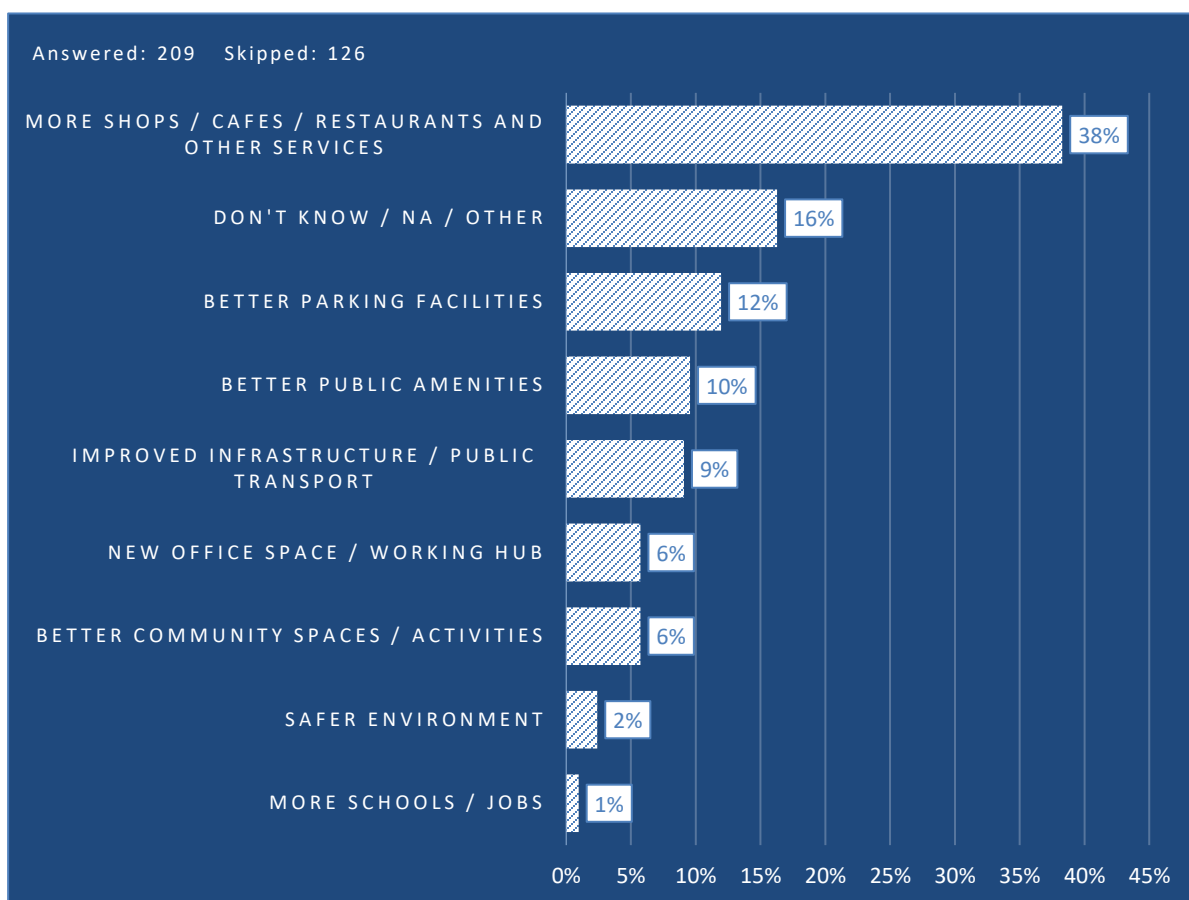


Just 29% of the respondents would like to work from home more often. 34% of the participants stated that they are not interested in working from home due to the nature of their jobs does not allow for remote working

18% of the participants expressed no interest in working from home while 18% were uncertain about their preferences.

29% of the people surveyed would like to work from home more often.

Q9: What might encourage you to use the town more as part of your working week?



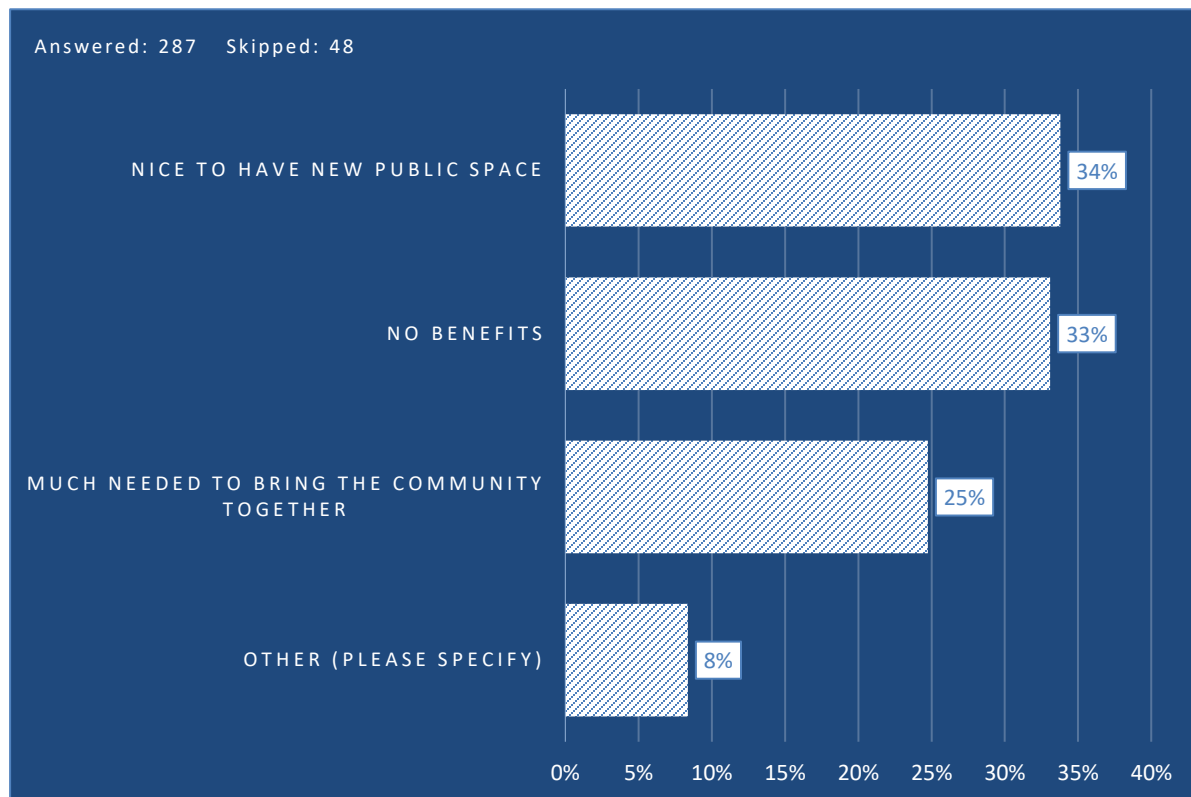
209 open-ended answers were received for Question 9 and can be summarised within the themes presented above. 38% of the respondents would spend more time in the town if there were more shops, restaurants and services available. 12% of the answers highlighted the demand for better parking facilities in the town centre.

10% of the participants pointed to the lack of public amenities in Roscrea, including outdoor space, recreation area, and public Wi-Fi.

Another 9% of the responses suggested improvements to transport infrastructure would encourage more visits to Roscrea. More public transport, pedestrianisation of the main street, and more walking and cycling paths are among the top suggestions to address this issue.

38% of the respondents would spend more time in the town if there were more shops, restaurants and services available.

Q10: How beneficial for community life do you think it would be to take more space away from cars to turn it public spaces?



Opinions on Question 10 are diverse with 34% of the respondents suggesting it would be nice to have new public space and another 33% of the participants expecting no benefits of such proposal. 25% of the responses stated it is much needed to bring the community together.

“I don't believe removing car parking would be beneficial and public spaces are only of use with amenities nearby. At the moment on main street. There is public space but I feel it is only been used for loitering and possibly encouraging anti social behaviour.”

“Nice to have new public spaces but not at expense of car parking. Make use of unused areas instead.”

The feedback shows that new public spaces would be generally welcomed. However, there are concerns related to the implications for parking space in the town. Delivery of public space would be most welcomed where it enhances and repurposes existing space.

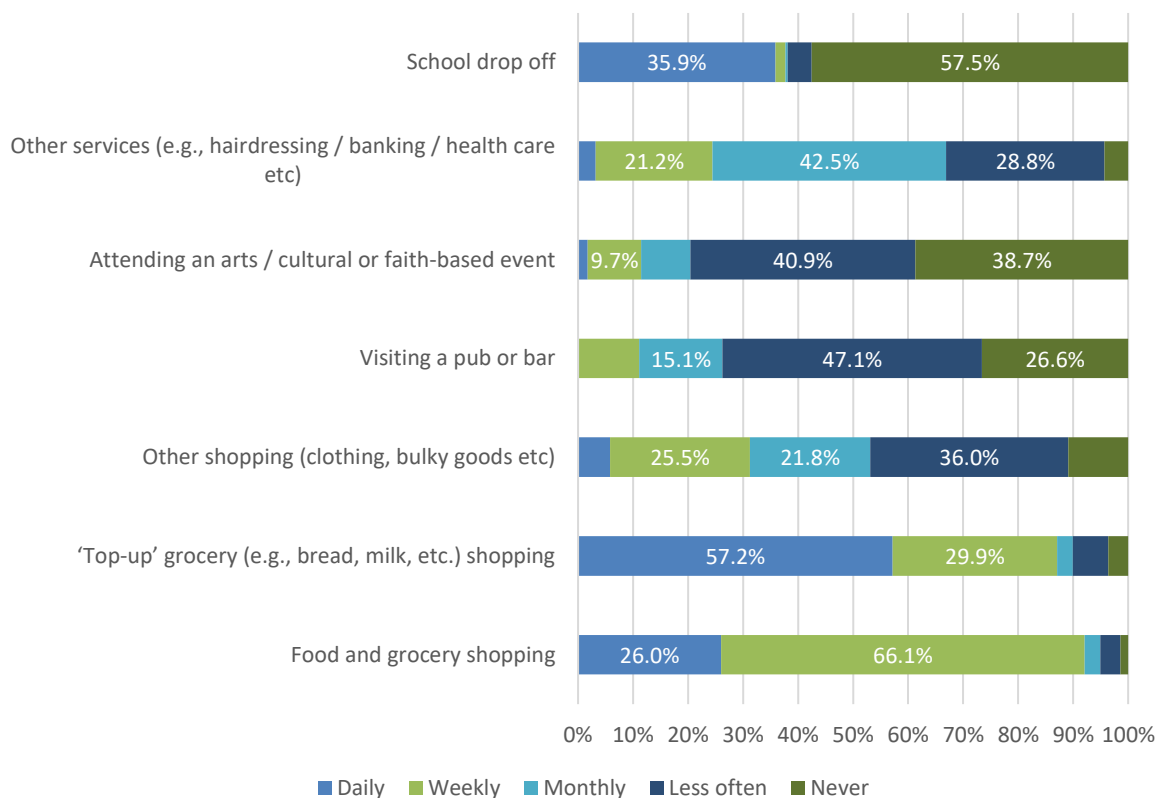
59% welcome the delivery of new public space, while others noted that reusing existing space and safeguarding the public space should be addressed .

Community Survey Insights:

Understanding use of Roscrea Town

Q11: How often do you typically visit Roscrea town centre for the following activities or services?

Answered: 285 Skipped: 50



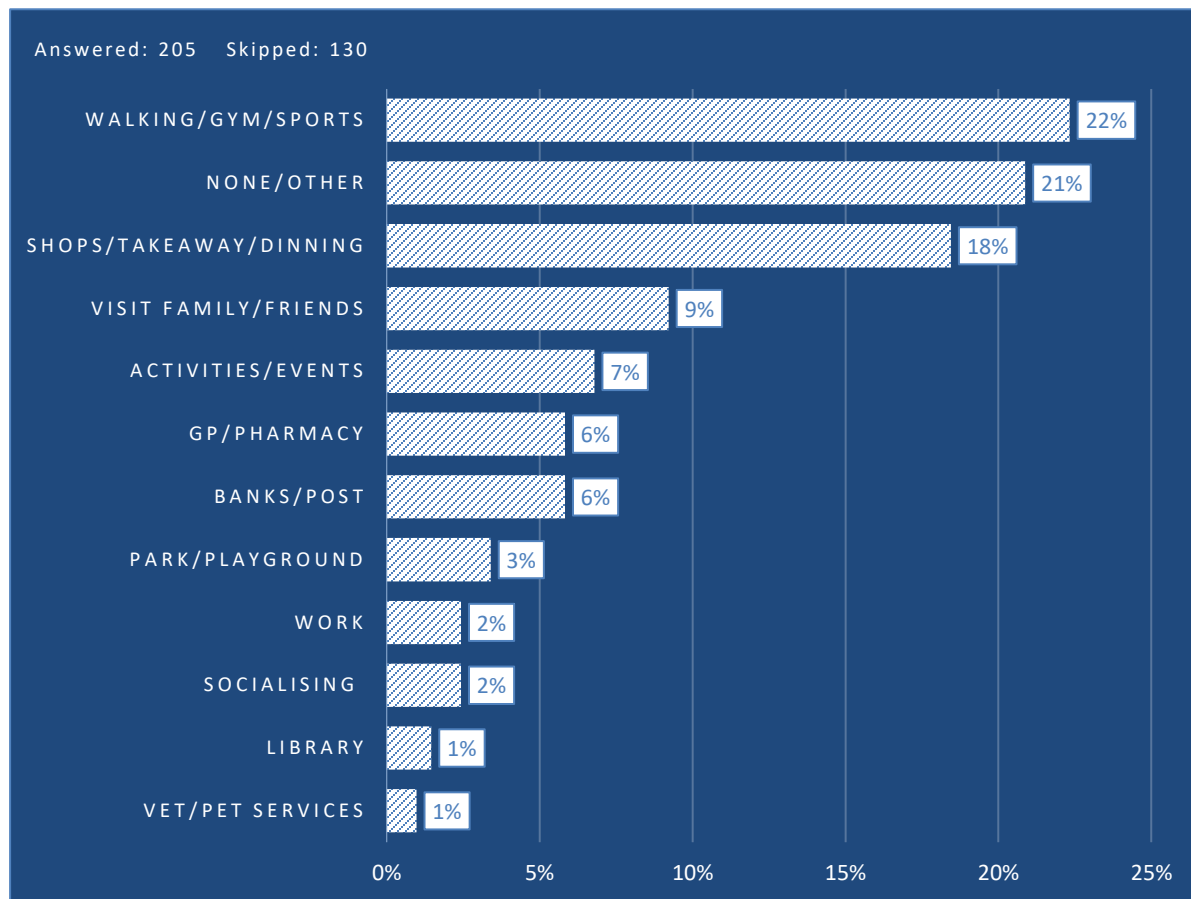
Responses indicated that Roscrea town centre is most frequently used for 'Top-up' grocery shopping with 57.2% of the participants stated they would visit Roscrea daily for the purpose. Food and grocery shopping is less frequent with 66.1% of the respondents visit Roscrea weekly. School drop off is another reason for visits with 35.9% of the respondents would visit daily. It is also noted that 57.5% of the participants never came to Roscrea for school drop off.

For other services (such as hairdressing / banking / health care etc.), 42.5% of the respondents would come into town monthly and another 28.8% of the participants would be less often.

Only 26.3% of the participants come to the town centre to visit a pub or a bar monthly or more, with the rest majority less often or never. Attending arts, cultural, or faith-based events is the least selected reason to visit Roscrea with 40.9% of the respondents chose less often and another 38.7% never attended these events in Roscrea.

57.2% of the respondents visit Roscrea daily for 'Top-up' grocery shopping, while 79.6% of the respondents attend arts, cultural, or faith-based events in Roscrea less often or never.

Q12: Aside from the activities and services listed in the previous question, what other activities / services do you typically visit Roscrea town centre for, and how often?



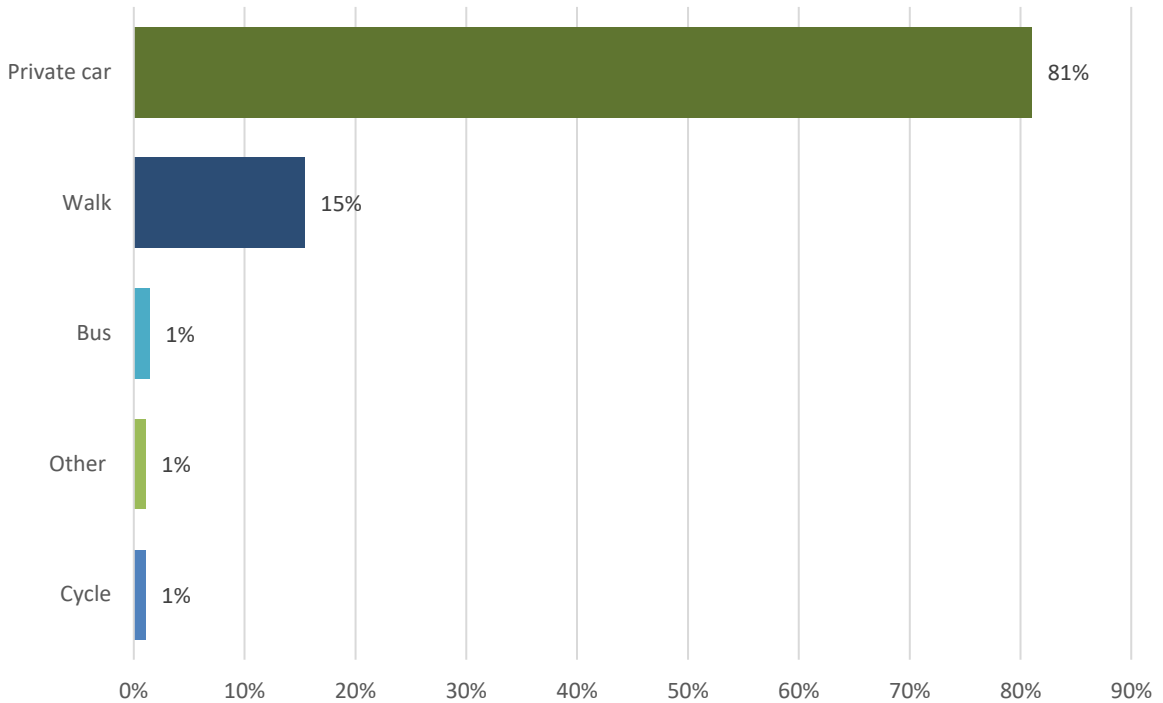
22% of the respondents visit the town centre for sport activities, such as swimming and tennis, to attend the local gym, or for walking. 18% of the participants often visit Roscrea town centre for services such as shopping and dining. Other notable mentions include visiting family and friends (9%), attending activities or events (7%), visits to the pharmacy and GP (6%), and using the local banking and post services (6%).

22% of the respondents visit Roscrea town centre for sports activities, such as swimming and tennis, to attend the local gym, or for walking.

Q13: What is your primary mode of travel to and around Roscrea?

Answered: 279

Skipped: 56

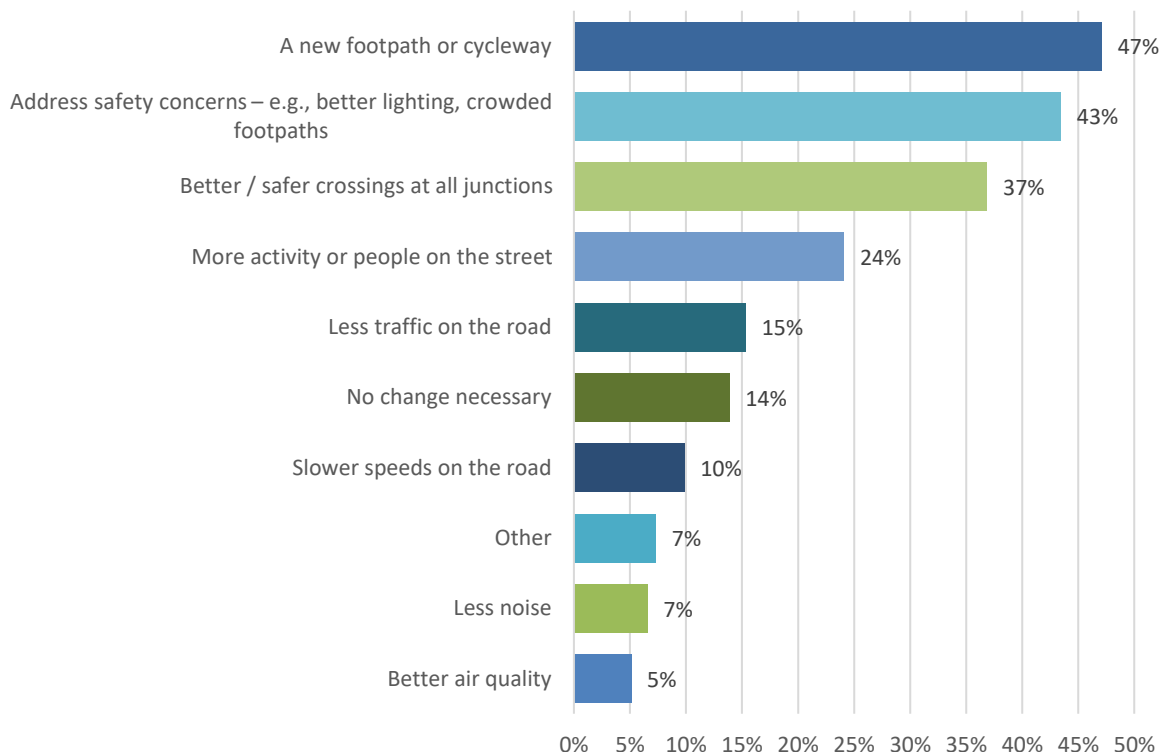


Vast majority (81%) of the respondents travel to and around Roscrea by private car with another 15% would normally walk. Only 1% of the respondents stated their primary mode of travel is bus or cycle.

81% of the respondents travel to and around Roscrea by private car.

Q14: What would encourage you to cycle or walk more into and within the town? Please choose no more than the three most relevant options from the below.

Answered: 274 Skipped: 61



A new footpath or cycleway in Roscrea is the top feedback in the survey with 47% of the people surveyed think it would encourage people to walk or cycle into the town. 43% of the respondents would like to see safety concerns being addressed, such as crowded footpaths and the need for better lighting. Many responses highlighted safety concerns while walking due to loitering and anti-social behaviour:

“Lack of Garda presence . Of late groups of males despite not doing anything untoward that I know of is I too for females no matter what nationality.”

“As a female I feel intimidated walking down the street in Roscrea, lot of men in groups hanging around the streets watching as I pass. Puts me off walking around the town.”

Better or safer crossings at all junctions and more activity and people on the street would persuade 37% and 24% of the participants respectively to walk or cycle more. Less traffic on the road (15%), slower speed (10%), less noise (7%) as well as better air quality (5%) were also mentioned as factors that would encourage walking and cycling.

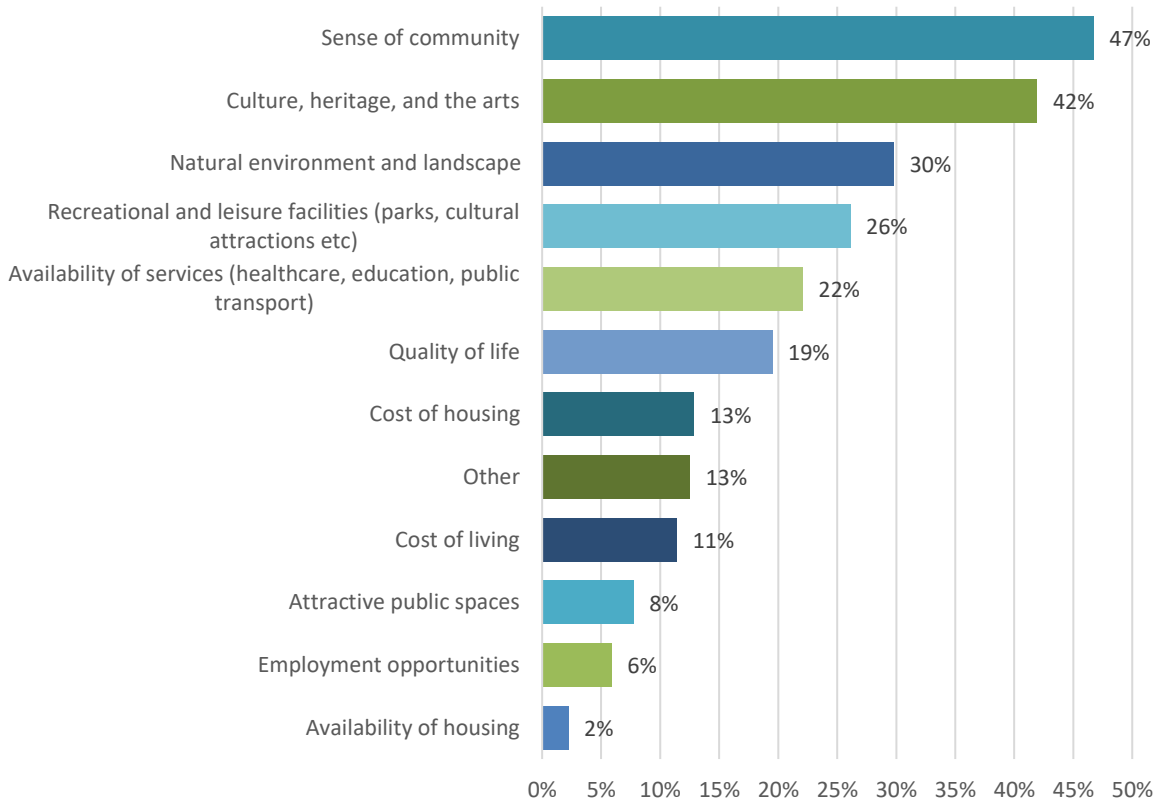
47% of the people surveyed think a new footpath or cycleway would encourage people to walk or cycle into the town. 43% of the respondents would like to see the safety concerns addressed.

Online Community Survey Insights:

Understanding perceptions of Roscrea Town

Q15: What are Roscrea’s greatest assets? Please choose the three you feel are most significant from the following options.

Answered: 272 Skipped: 63



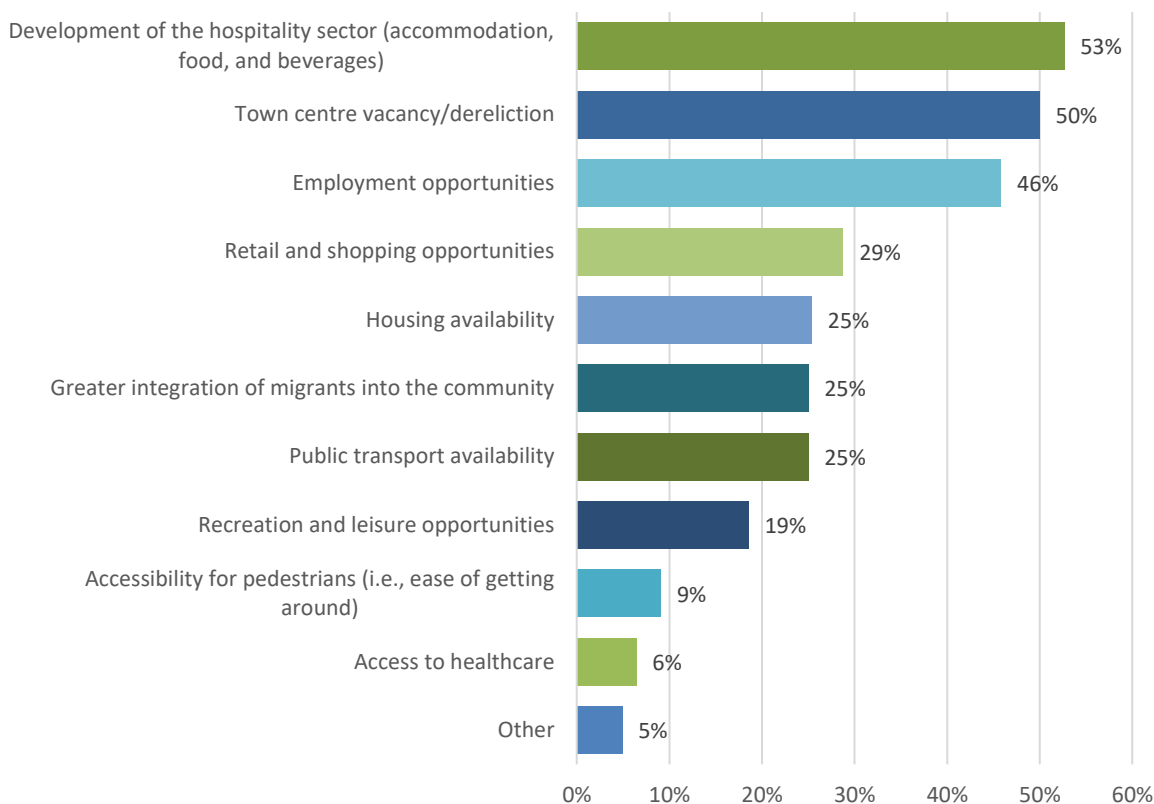
47% of the respondents believed that the sense of community was Roscrea’s greatest asset, followed by culture, heritage and arts (42%) and natural environment and landscape (30%).

Recreational and leisure facilities such as parks and cultural attractions (26%), availability of services (22%), and quality of life (19%) were also picked up by participants as the assets of Roscrea. Notably, only 2% of the respondents selected availability of housing which indicated the possible housing issue in Roscrea.

47% of the respondents believed that the sense of community was Roscrea’s greatest asset.

Q16: What are the three biggest challenges, issues, or concerns for the future development of Roscrea? Please choose the three you feel are most significant from the following options.

Answered: 264 Skipped: 71



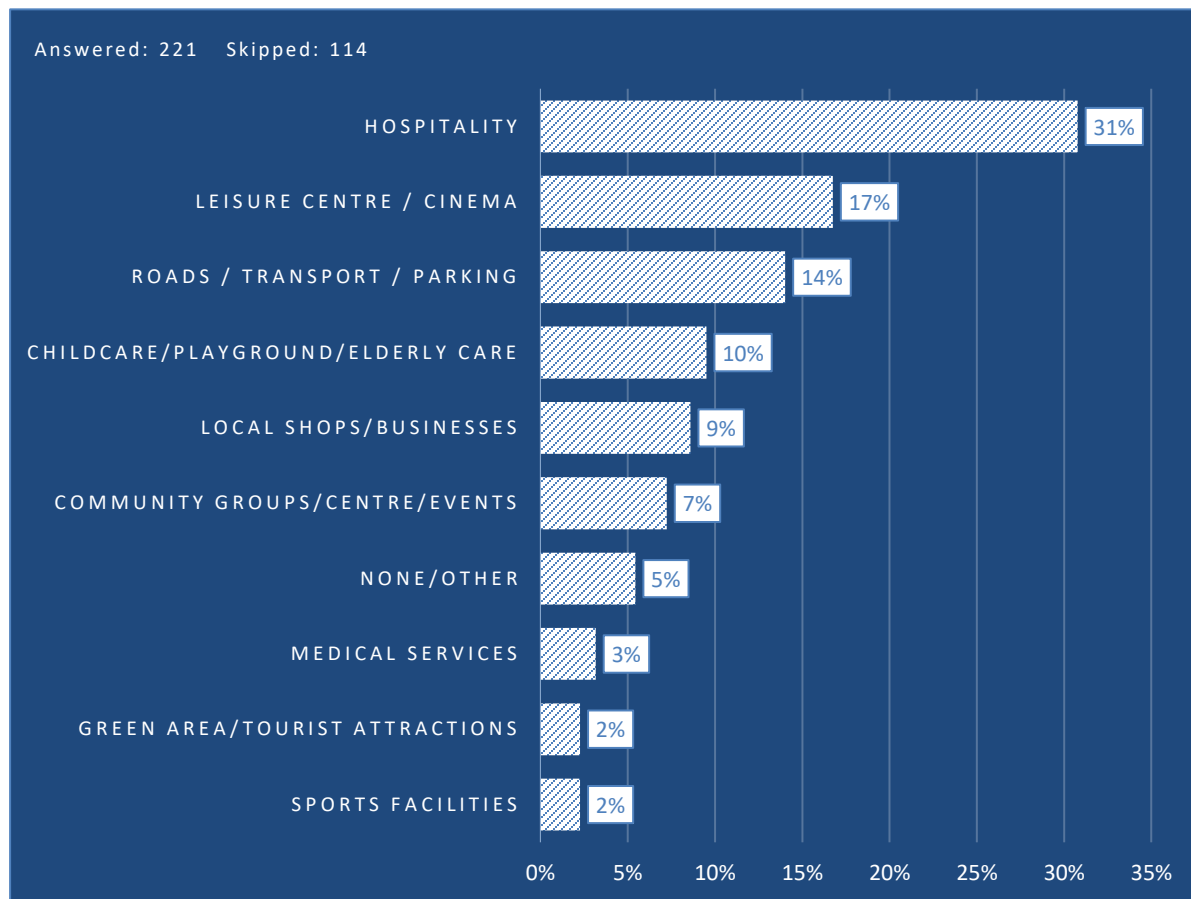
Development of the hospitality sector (53%), town centre vacancy and dereliction (50%), and employment opportunities (46%) are listed as the three top challenges for the future development of Roscrea.

25% of the respondents suggested the integration of migrants is a big challenge for Roscrea with many called for balanced approach for refugees and immigrants for better community integration.

Accessibility for pedestrians (9%) and access to healthcare (6%) are the least selected answers, indicating relatively better provision.

Development of the hospitality sector (53%), town centre vacancy and dereliction (50%), and employment opportunities (46%) are the three top challenges for the future development of Roscrea.

Q17: Are there any services, activities, or facilities currently not available in Roscrea that you feel are needed?



31% of the participants indicated that more hospitality services are needed in Roscrea, with many answers called for new hotels, restaurants, cafes, and pubs in the town centre. 17% of the respondents felt there is a need for leisure centres in Roscrea including bowling centre and cinema. Need for improved public transport and taxi services, better road conditions, and better car parking solutions were also highlighted by the participants with answers counted 14%.

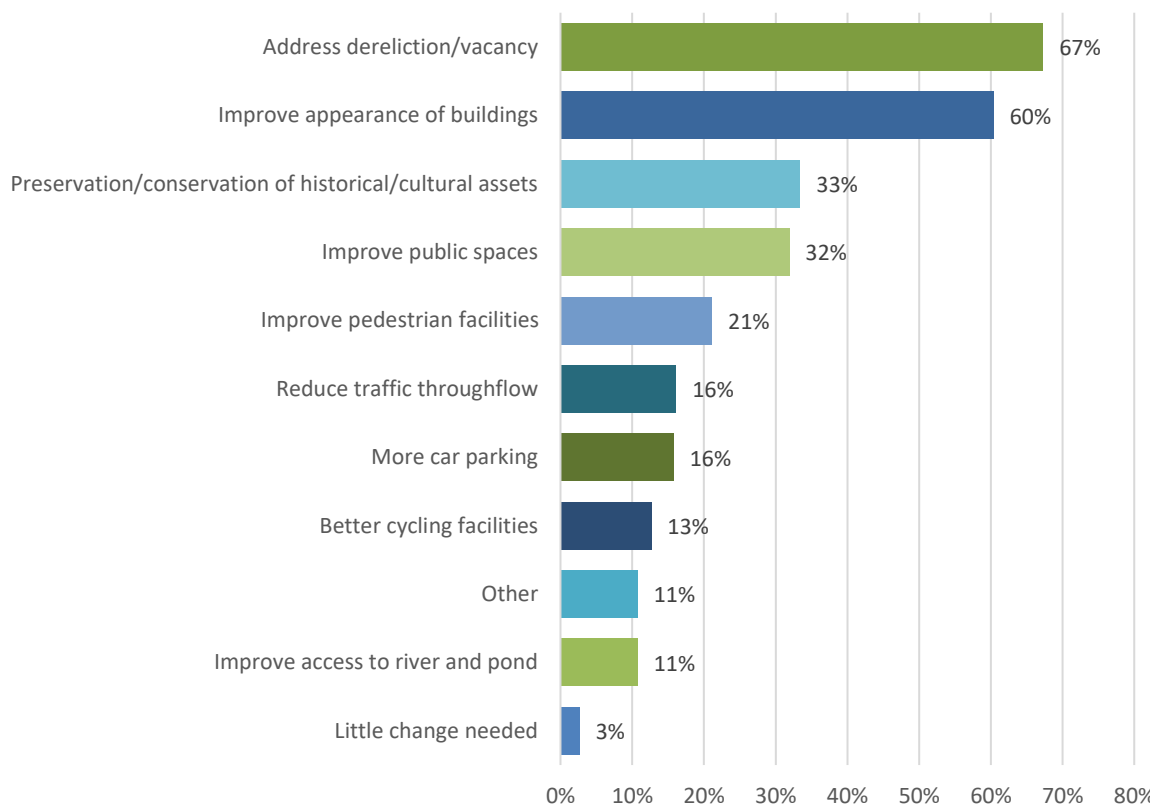
It is noted that 10% of the responses advocated for facilities and space for young population and the elderly, as many indicated there is currently a lack of activity options for youth in Roscrea. The need for more shop varieties were also highlighted, as were requirements for more community facilities including a new community centre.

31% of the participants indicated that more hospitality services are needed in Roscrea, with many answers calling for new hotels, restaurants, cafes, and pubs in the town centre.

Q18: What would be the top 3 priorities to improve Roscrea town centre? Please choose up to 3 options from the below.

Answered: 260

Skipped: 75



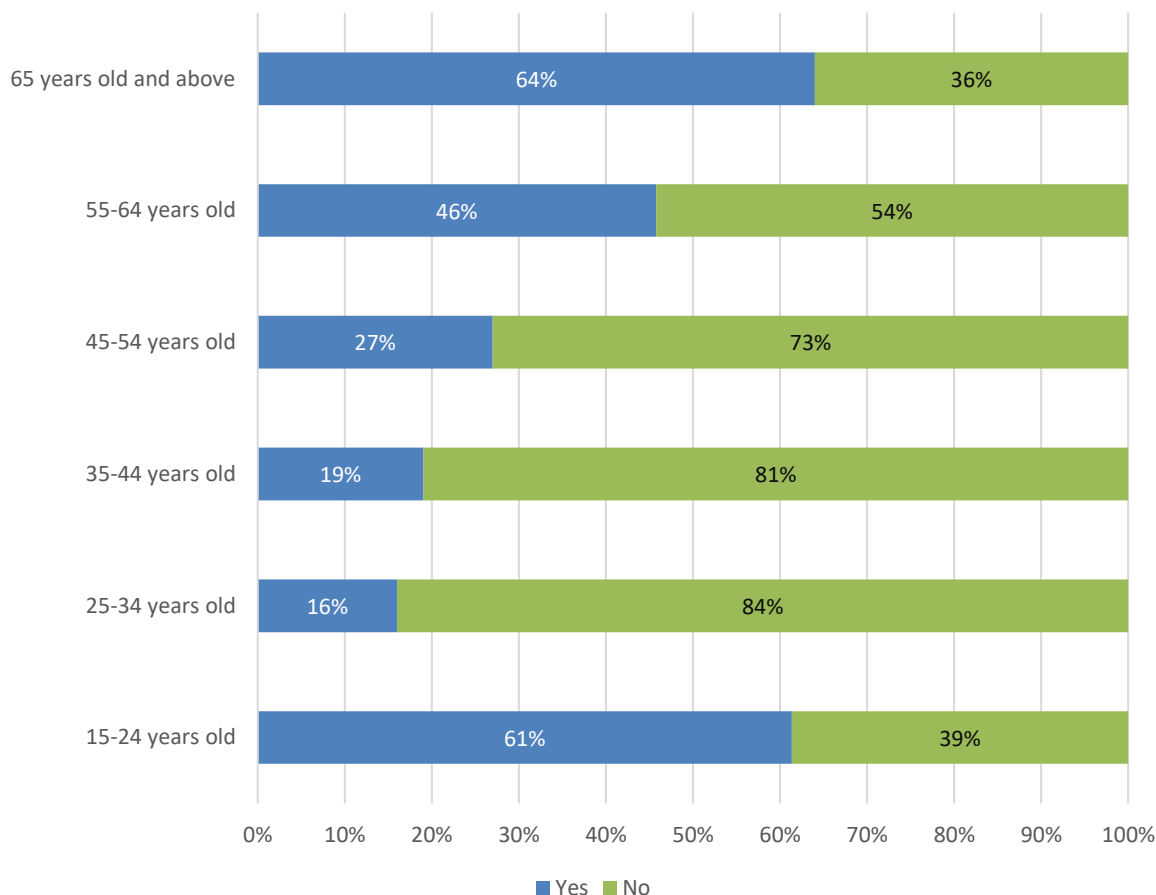
Addressing dereliction and vacancy and improving the appearance of buildings were picked up as the top priorities for Roscrea town centre by 67% and 60% of respondents respectively.

These actions were followed by preservation and conservation of historical and cultural assets (33%), improvement of public spaces (32%), and improving pedestrian facilities (21%). Several transport-related priorities were also singled out, such as reducing traffic throughflow (16%), increasing the availability of car parking (16%), and improving cycling facilities (13%).

Addressing dereliction and vacancy (67%) and improving the appearance of buildings (60%) were selected as the top priorities for Roscrea town centre

Q19: Do you agree with the statement “people of all age groups, backgrounds, and areas enjoy a good quality of life in Roscrea”?

Answered: 259 Skipped: 76



61% of the participants disagreed with the statement with only 39% of the respondents believed that people of all age groups, backgrounds, and areas enjoy a good quality of life in Roscrea.

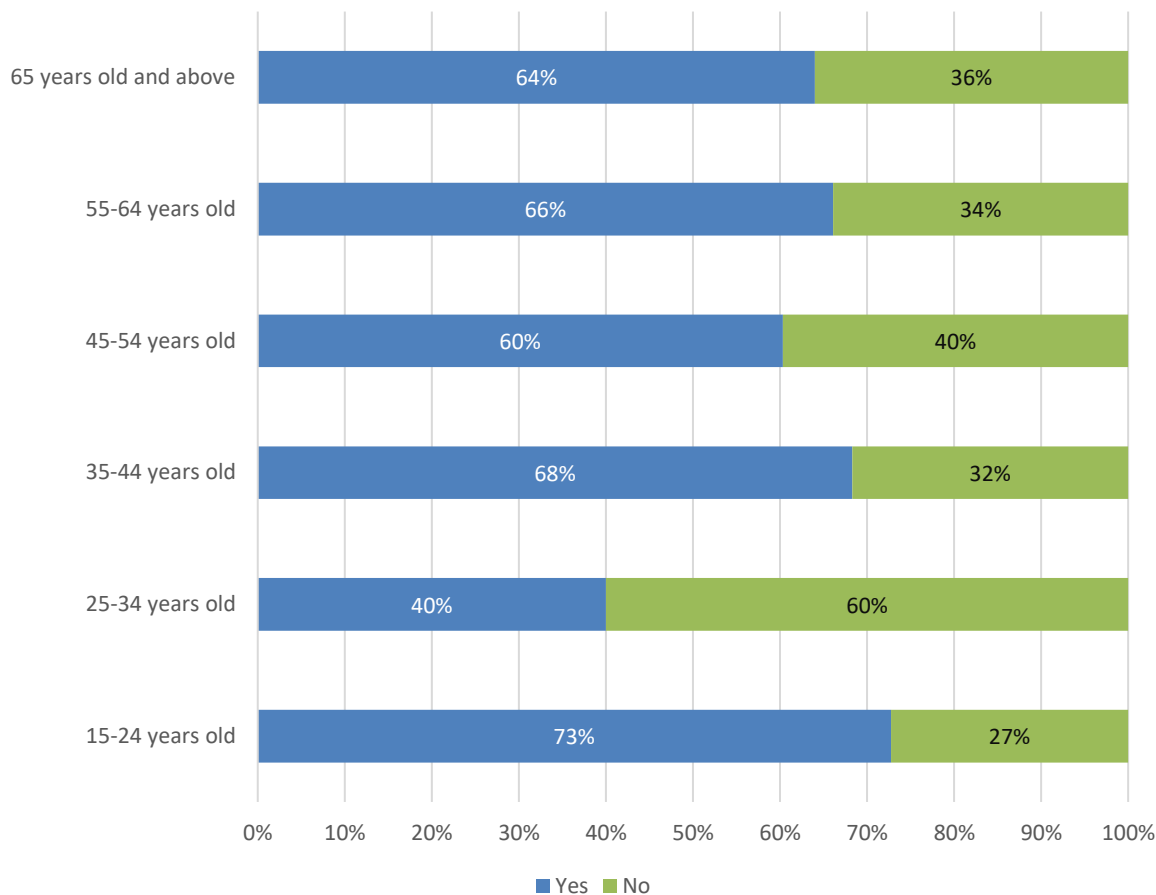
When disaggregated by age groups, the statement that people of all age groups, backgrounds, and areas enjoy a good quality of life in Roscrea received different response across age groups. In general, there is a greater tendency for people between 25-64 years old to express disappointment with the quality of life in Roscrea. 84% of the respondents aged between 25-34 years old disagreed with the statement that people of all age groups enjoy a good quality of life in Roscrea. It is followed by the age group of 35-44 years old with 81% disagreed.

Only the young population between 15-24 years old and the elderly aged 65 years old and above mostly agreed with the statement with 61% and 64% respectively voted yes.

There is a greater tendency for people between 25-64 years old to express disappointment with the quality of life in Roscrea.

Q20: Is Roscrea supportive and inclusive for minority communities?

Answered: 258 Skipped: 77



64% of the participants believed Roscrea is supportive and inclusive for minority communities, with 36% disagreed with the statement.

When disaggregated by age groups, age group of 25-34 years old is the only group with majority (60%) of the respondents didn't think Roscrea as supportive or inclusive for minority communities.

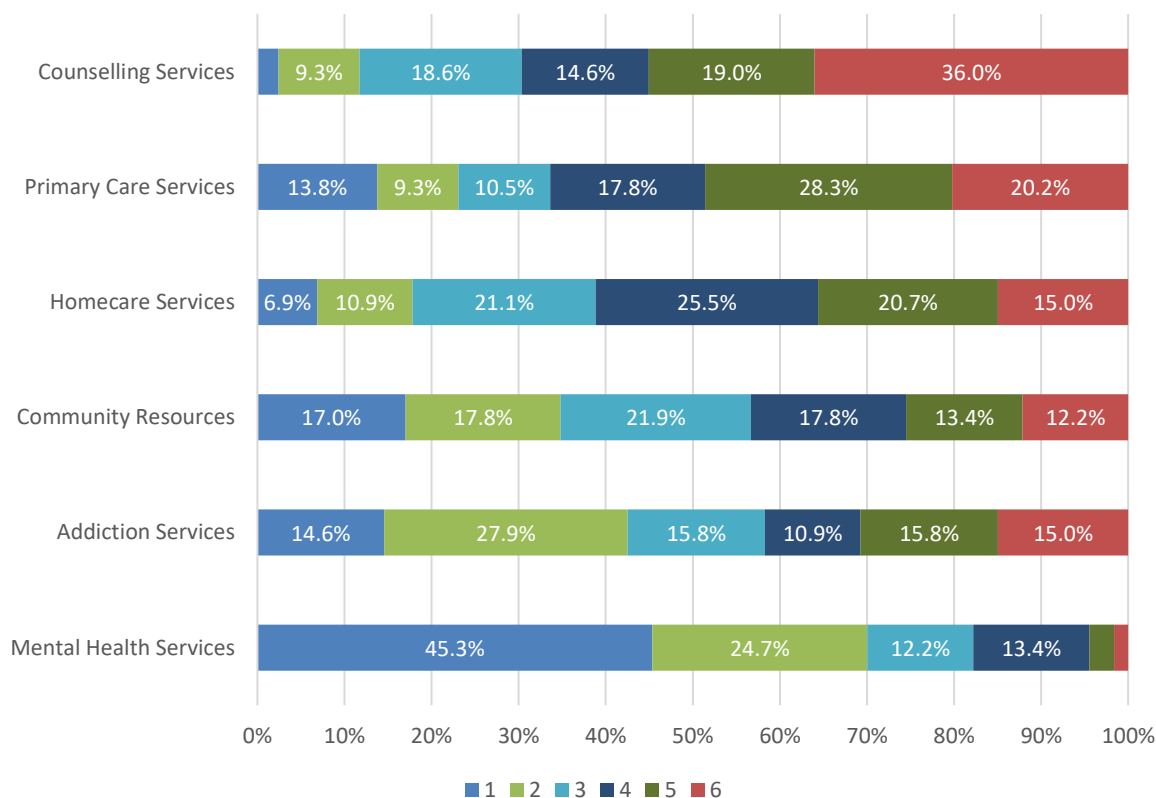
The participants indicated the issues exist in the integrating of minority groups, the communication and connection between different communities, and support for immigrants and refugees.

64% of the participants believed Roscrea is supportive and inclusive for minority communities.

Q21: In terms of supporting the health and wellbeing of the people of Roscrea, what do you believe should be the most important priority for investment? Please rank the following actions in order of importance, with 1 being the most important to you.

Answered: 247

Skipped: 88



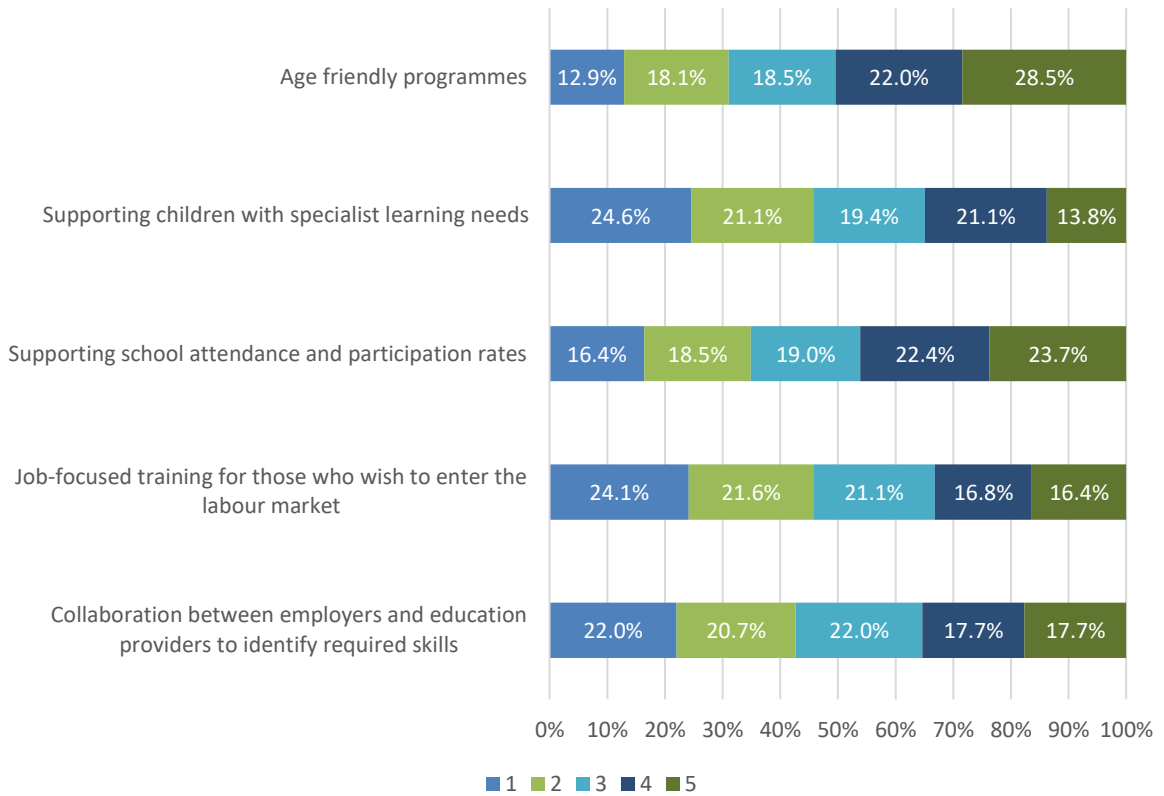
Mental health services was picked up by most respondents (45.3%) as the top area that should be prioritised for investment in supporting of the health and wellbeing of the people in Roscrea. Addiction services is considered the next in priority with 27.9% of the participants agreed it should be the second in priority.

These were followed up by community resources and homecare services. By comparison, primary care services and counselling services more often occupied the last two two places.

45.3% of the respondents chose mental health services as the top area that should be prioritised for investment in supporting of the health and wellbeing of the people in Roscrea.

Q22: In terms of supporting the people of Roscrea’s opportunity to access education and employment, what do you believe should be some of the priority areas to address? Please rank the following actions in order of importance, with 1 being the most important to you.

Answered: 232 Skipped: 103

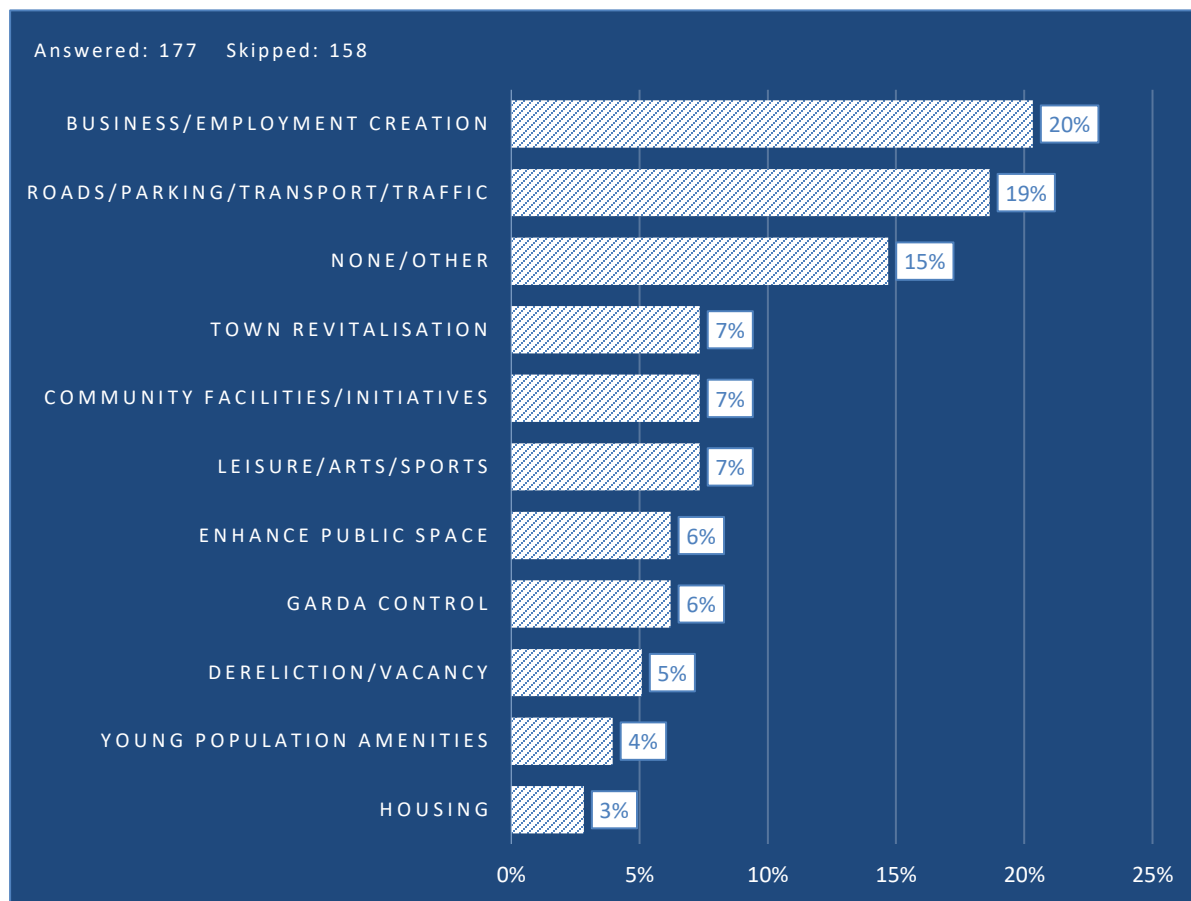


In general, supporting children with specialist learning needs, job-focused training for those who wish to enter the labour market, and collaborating between employers and education providers to identify required skills, are chosen as the top three priorities.

These were followed up by supporting school attendance and participation rates, and age friendly programmes.

In general, supporting children with specialist learning needs, job-focused training for those who wish to enter the labour market, and collaboration between employers and education providers to identify required skills, are the top three priorities.

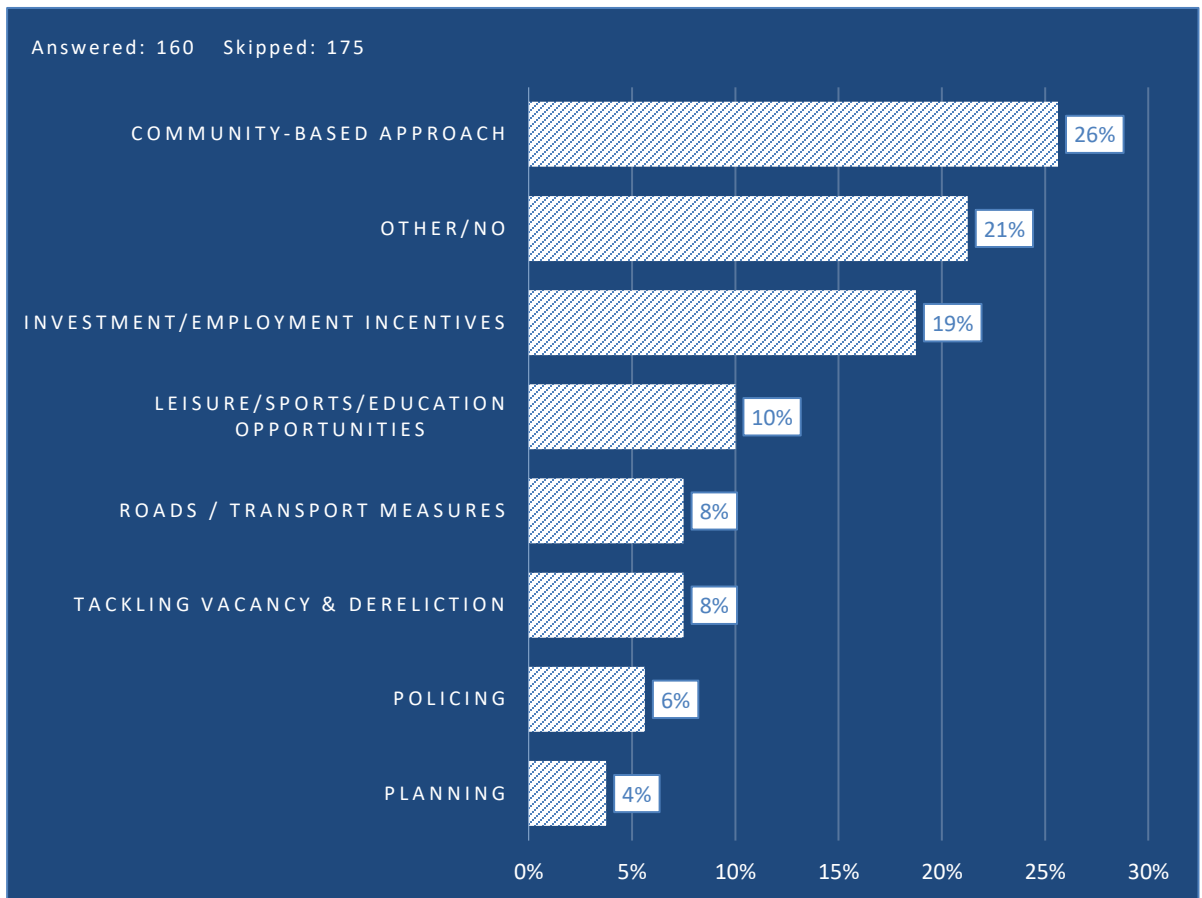
Q23: Are there any other important issues or goals that should be given priority in the Roscrea Town Centre First Plan?



As detailed in previous section, 177 open-ended answers were received for Question 23. Thematic reviews revealed that 20% of the answers agreed business and employment creation should be given priority, including attract business, employment, start-ups, investment etc. Another 19% of the responses highlighted issues and goals in relation to roads, parking, traffic and other transport matters.

20% of the answers agreed business and employment creation should be given priority.

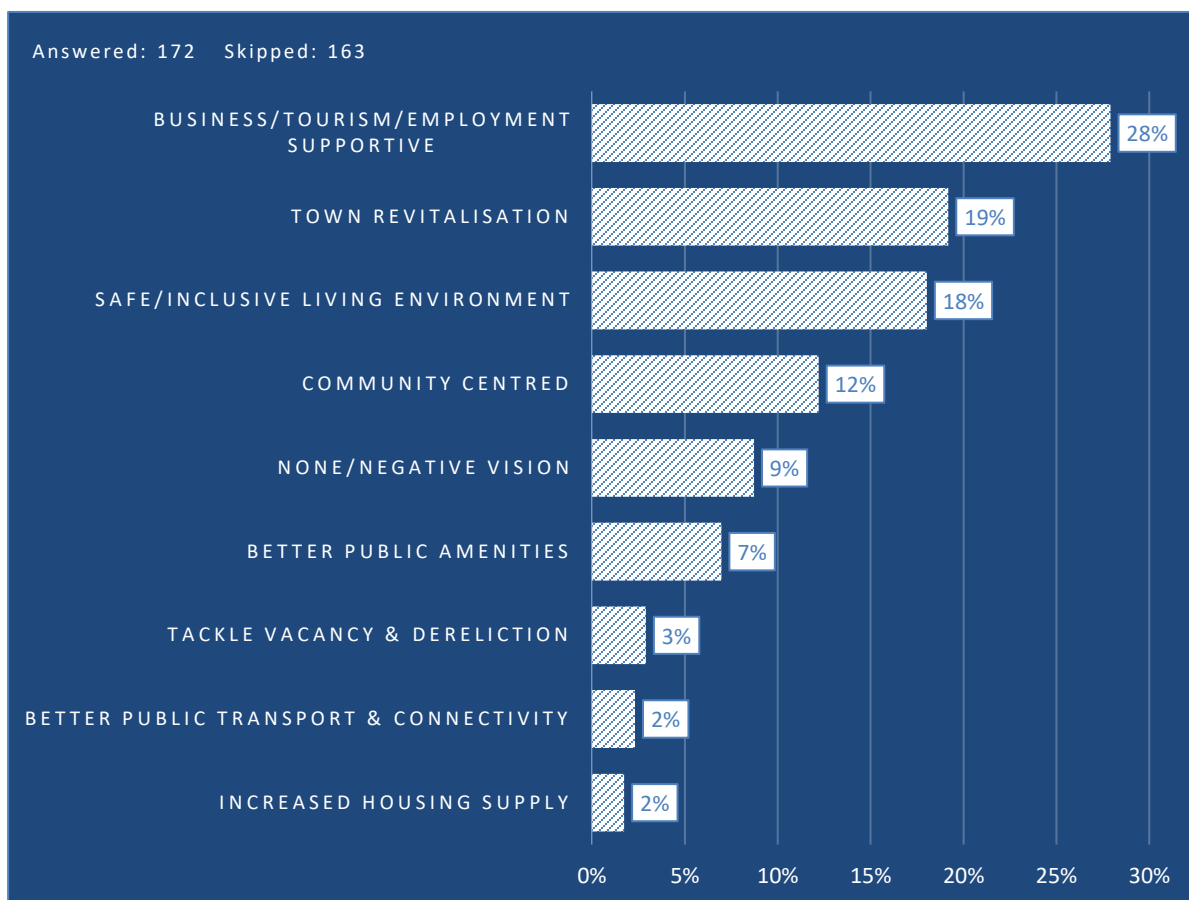
Q24: Can you think of any actions or objectives that could help achieve these goals?



160 open-ended answers were received for Question 24 and can be concluded under 7 main themes. 26% of participants suggested community-based approaches would help achieving the goals stated, including measures such as community events, meetings, and committees etc. Another 19% of the responses listed actions of investment and employment incentives.

26% of the participants suggested community-based approach would help achieving the goals stated.

Q25: What is your vision for Roscrea moving forward?



172 open-ended answers were received for Question 25. 28% of the participants would like to see Roscrea develop as a town that supports and attracts business, employment and tourism. It is followed by town revitalisation with 19% of the respondents indicated town centre should be brought back to life with more vibrant and friendly environment. 18% of the participants would like to see Roscrea to become more inclusive and safer for both residents and visitors.

Business/tourism/employment supportive, town revitalisation, and safe/inclusive living environment are the top three visions for Roscrea.

The image shows a dense forest with tall, thin trees and a ground covered in brown leaves and green ferns. A large, semi-transparent blue rectangle is overlaid on the upper portion of the image, containing white text. The text is arranged in three lines, with the first line being the largest and the subsequent lines being smaller. The overall aesthetic is clean and professional, with a natural background.

Appendix 2: Online Business Survey Results

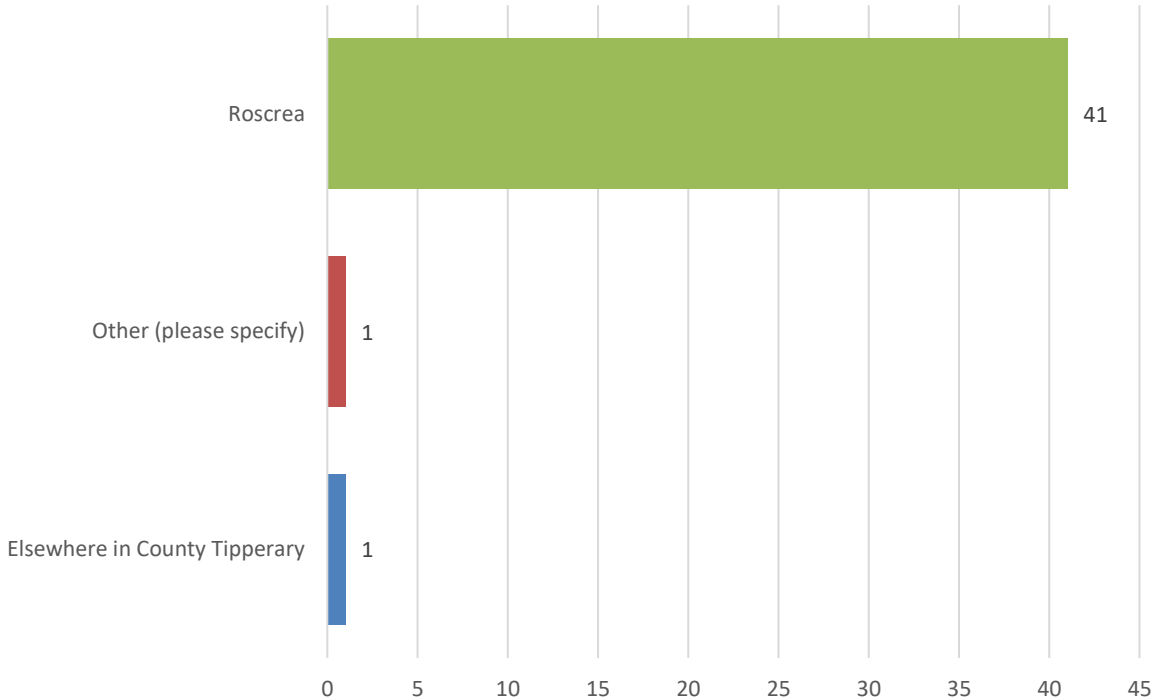
Business Survey Result

This section details the feedback received to the online business survey. The information presented in this section is a summary of the 43 answers received.

Q1: Where is your business / organisation based?

Answered: 43

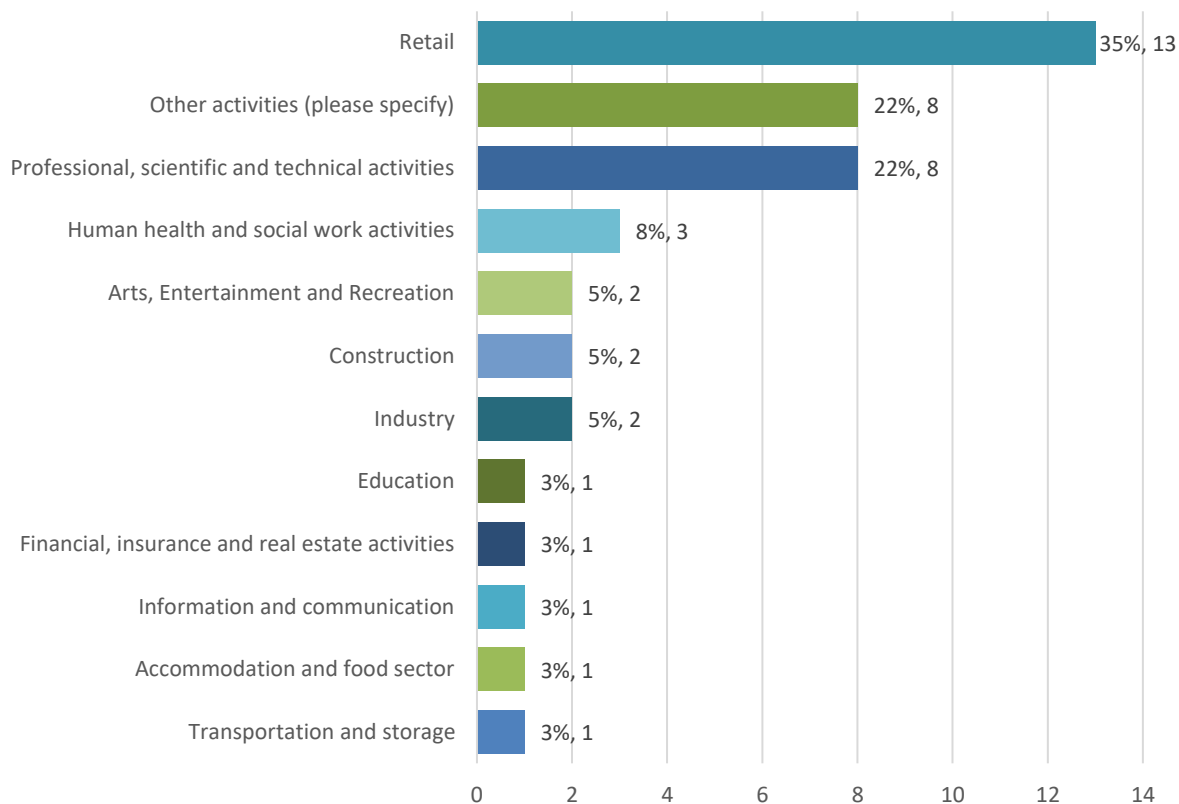
Skipped: 0



41 businesses surveyed are located in Roscrea, 2 businesses were located elsewhere in the wider County (x1) and beyond (x1).

Q2: In which sector does your business/organisation operate?

Answered: 37 Skipped: 6



Retail (35%), Other activities (22%), and Professional, scientific and technical activities (22%) make up the vast majority of business that took part in the survey. Human health and Social work made up 8%.

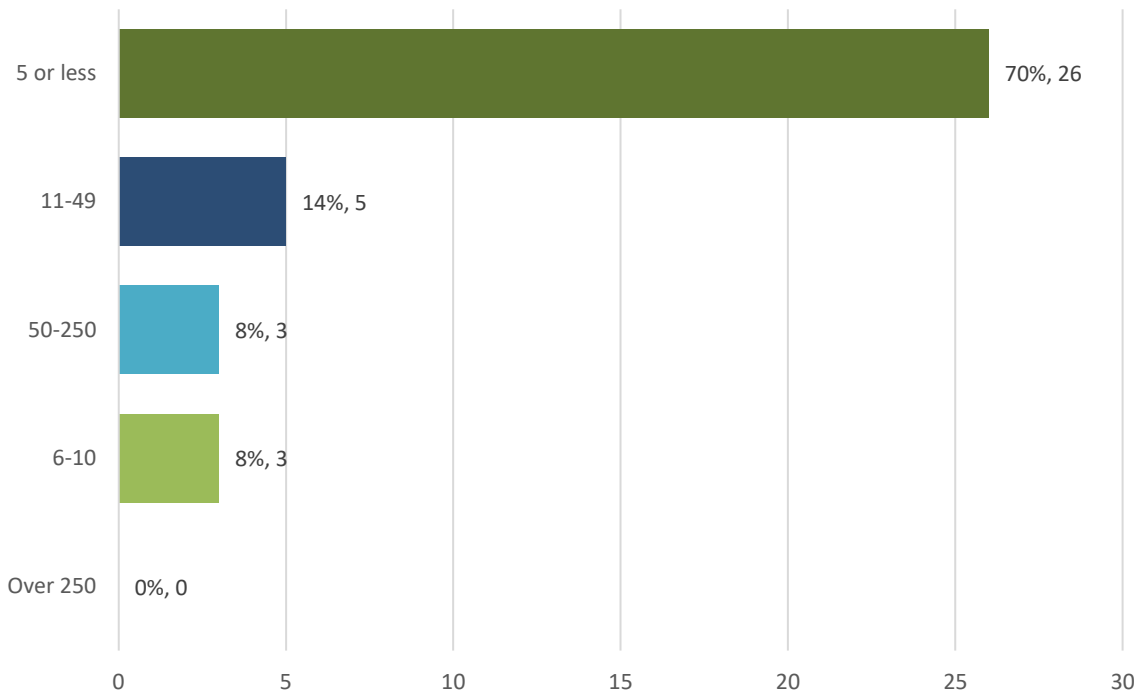
Arts, entertainment and recreation, Construction, and industry make up 5% of the operating sectors each, while, Education, Financial, insurance and real estate, Information and communication, Accommodation and food sector, and Transport and storage make up just 1% each.

13 businesses (35%) surveyed operates in retail sector, followed by 8 businesses in other activities (22%), and 8 businesses (22%) in field of professional, scientific and technical activities.

Q3: Approximately how many people does your business/organisation directly employ?

Answered: 37

Skipped: 6

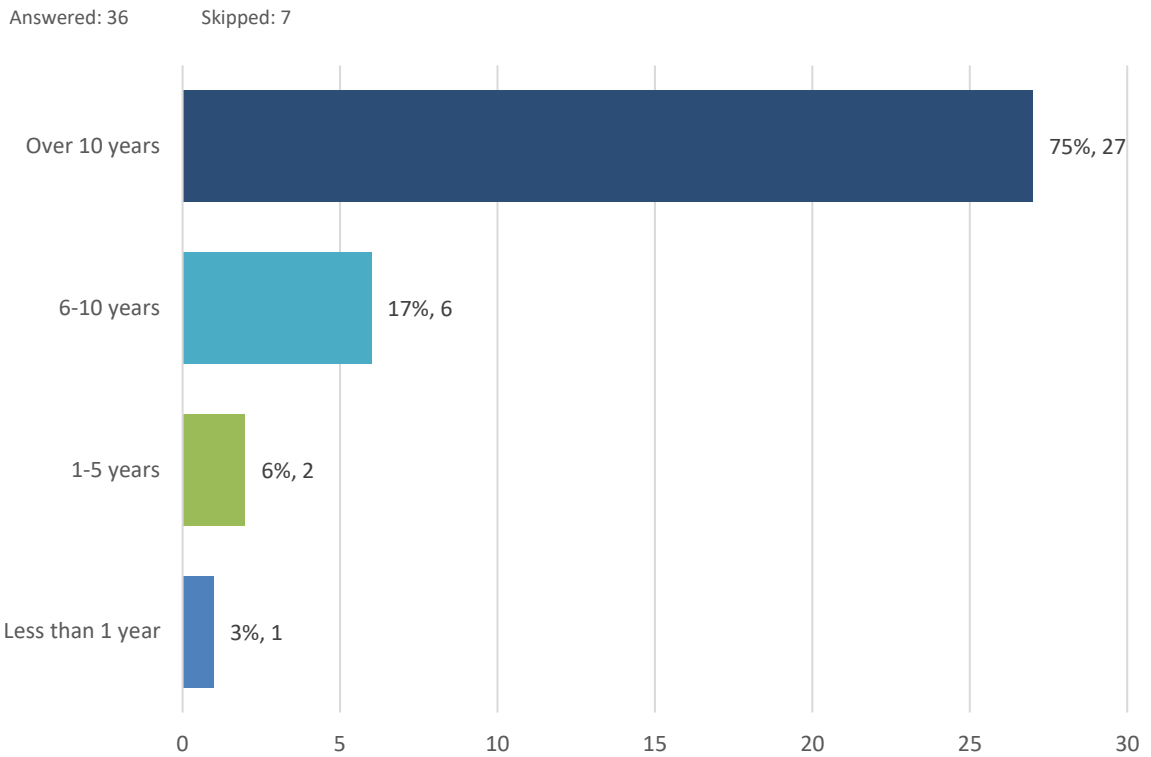


The vast majority of business who participated in the business survey employ 5 of less employees (70%) and 8% employs between 6 and 10 which indicated a smaller business size.

14% of businesses employ between 11 and 50 people, while just 8% employ between 50 and 250 people. There are zero business that employ more than 250 people.

70% of the businesses indicated they have 5 or less employees.

Q4: How many years have you been operating at your current location?



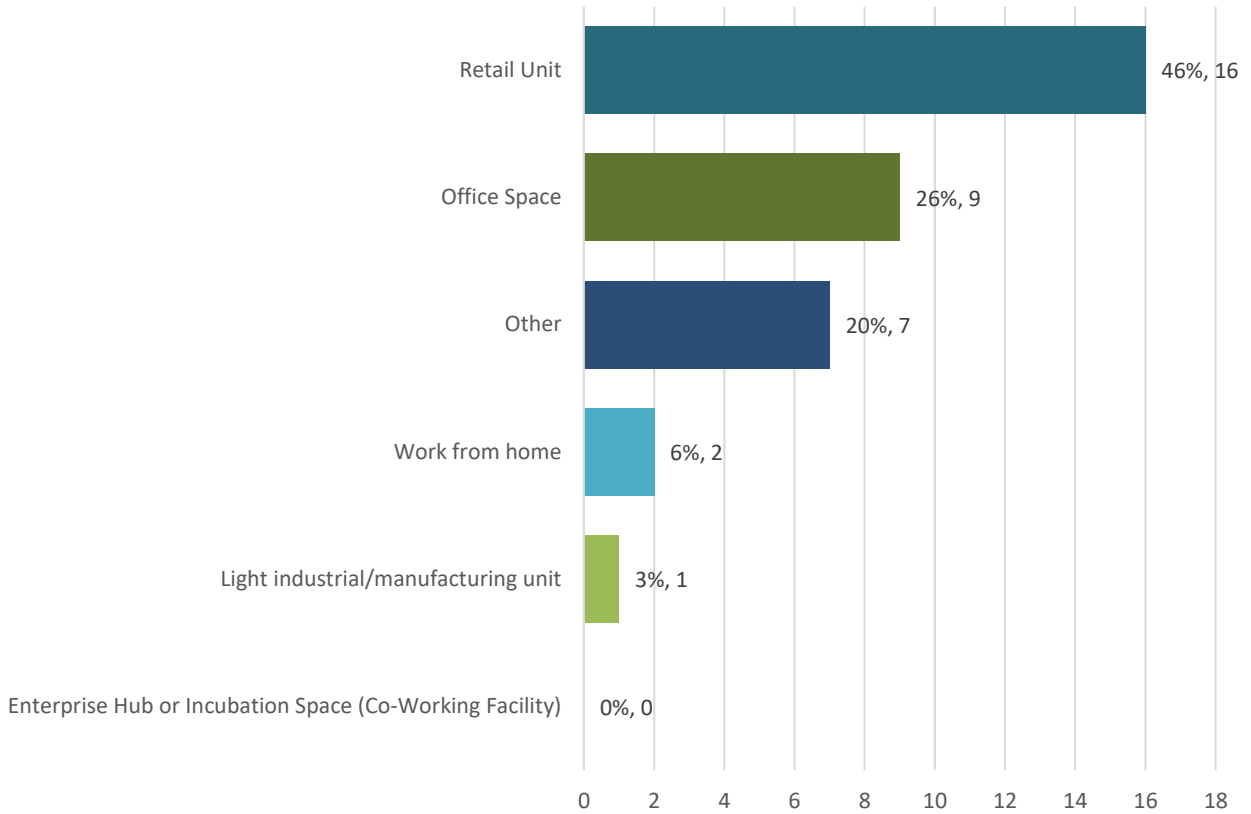
75% of businesses submit that they have been operating in Roscrea for ten years or more. 17% have been operating for between 6 and 10 years.

6% of businesses have been operating for 1 to 5 years in Roscrea and 3% have been doing business for less than a year.

75% (27) of the businesses surveyed have been operating their business for over 10 years in Roscrea.

Q5: What type of facility does your business / organisation primarily use?

Answered: 35 Skipped: 8



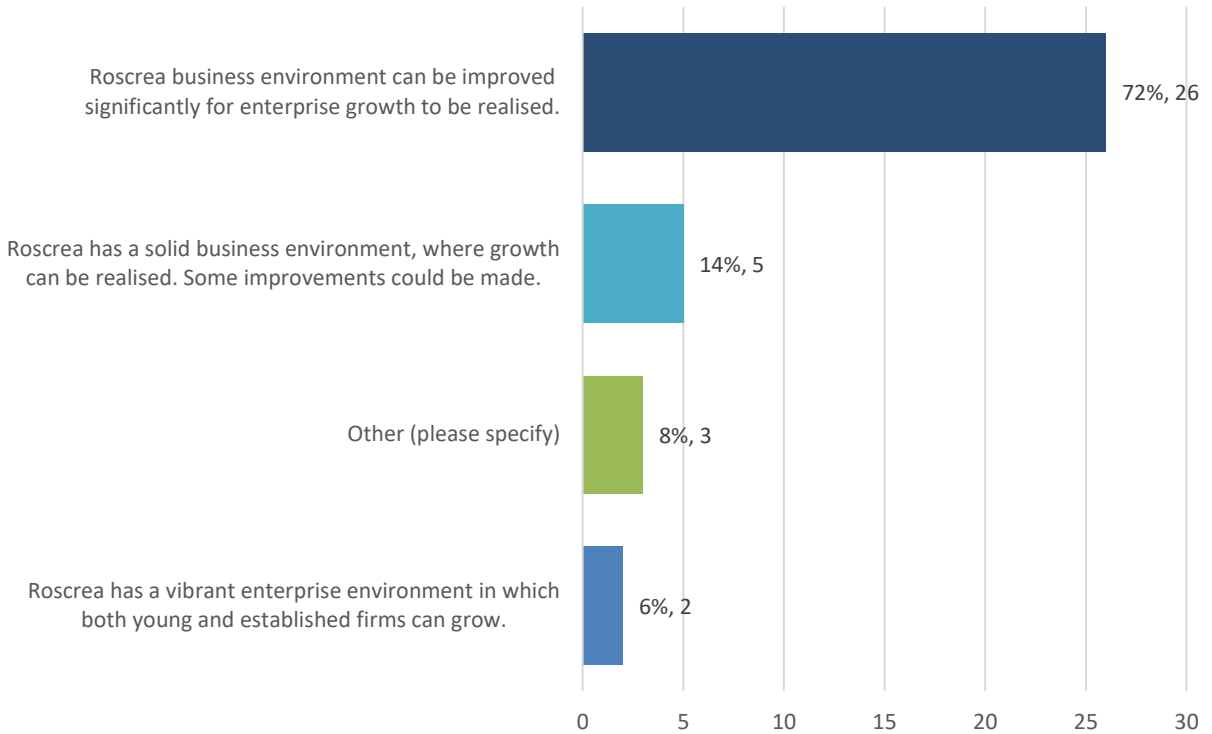
Retail units (46%) and office space (26%) were the most used primary facilities by Businesses. Other primary units accounted for 20% of the primary facilities used by businesses/organisations. Working from home and Light industrial/manufacturing units accounted for a much smaller proportion of 6% and 3% respectively.

No business/organisation submitted that their primary facility was an Enterprise Hub or Incubation Space (Co-working facility), drawing attention to a lack of such a facility.

Retail units (46%) and office space (26%) are the top two facilities that businesses/organisations primarily uses.

Q6: How would you respond to the question 'is Roscrea an attractive place to do business'?

Answered: 36 Skipped: 7

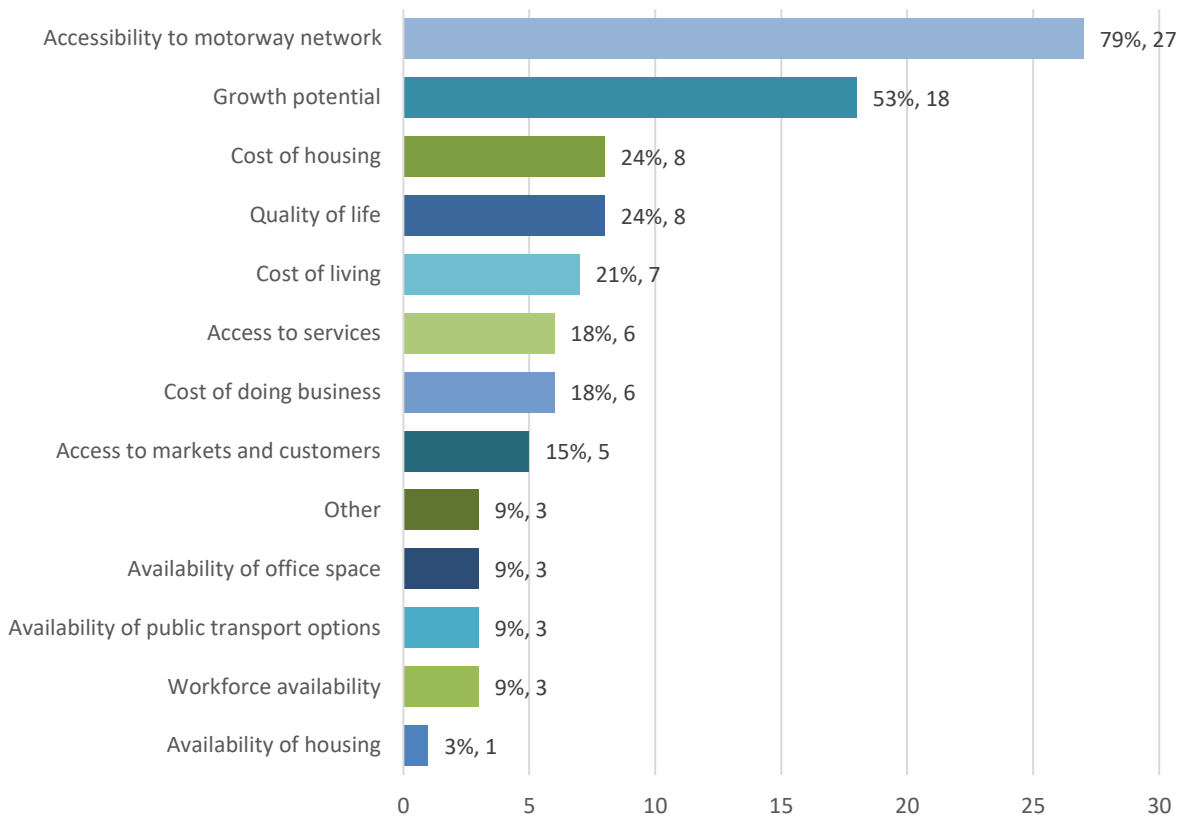


When asked about whether Roscrea is an attractive place to do business, the vast majority (72%) believed that “Roscrea business environment can be improved significantly for enterprise growth to be realised”. 14% had a positive outlook on the current business environment and growth potential but submit that “some improvements could be made”. 6% have a positive and optimistic outlook saying that “Roscrea has a solid business environment, where growth can be realised. Some improvements could be made.”

Just 6% say Roscrea is an attractive place to do business with the majority (72%) saying that Roscrea business environment can be improved significantly for enterprise growth.

Q7: In your view, what are Roscrea’s three main strengths as a place to do business? Please choose from the following options provided below.

Answered: 34 Skipped: 9



In response to “what are Roscrea’s three main strengths as a place to do business?”, the top three are Accessibility to motorway network (79%), Growth potential (53%), while the Cost of Housing, and Quality of life are tied at third place with 24% each.

The Cost of living (21%), Access to service (18%), Cost of doing business (18%), and Access to markets and customers (15%) had between 10% and 20% of responses.

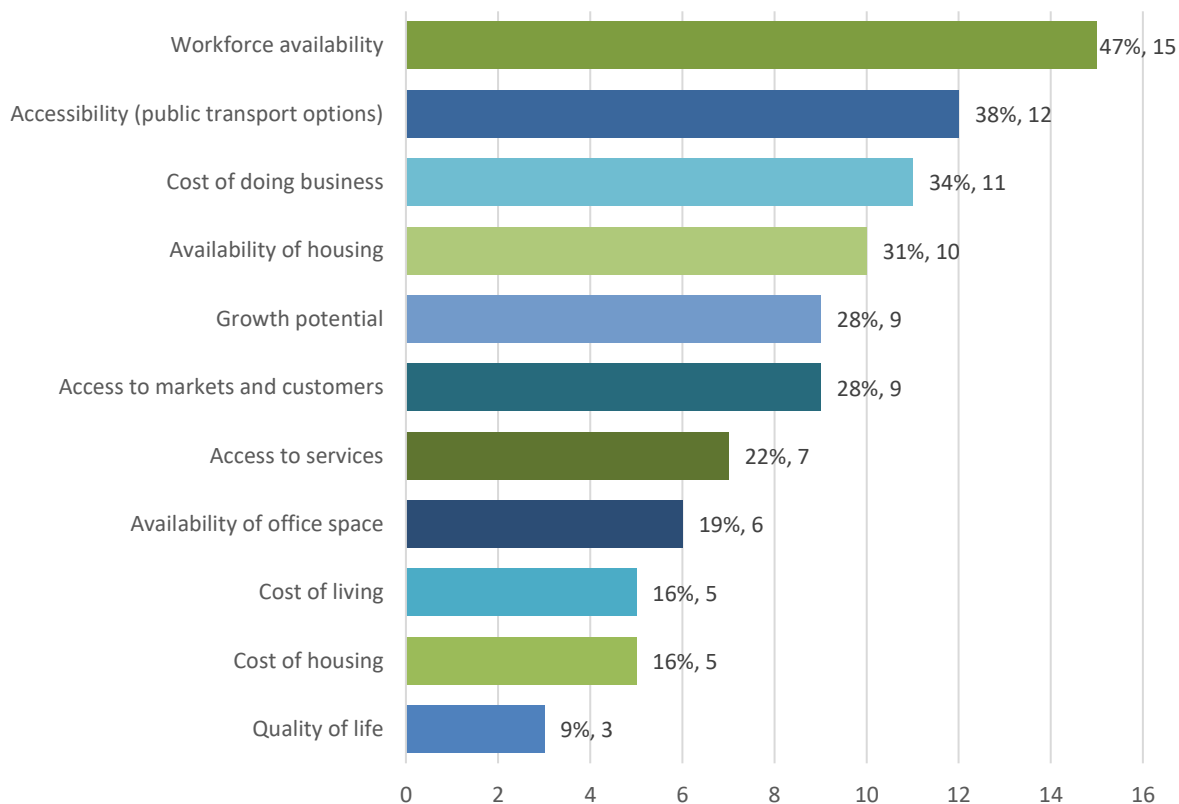
Other, Availability of office space, Availability of public transport, and Workforce availability all had 9% of responses each while, availability of housing was noted as a strength by just 3% of respondents.

Accessibility to motorway network, Growth potential, Cost of Housing, and Quality of life are the main strengths of Roscrea.

Q8: In your view, what are Roscrea’s three main constraints as a place to do business? Please choose from the following options provided below.

Answered: 32

Skipped: 11



Workforce availability (47%), Accessibility (38%), and Cost of doing business (34%) are the top three main constraints for doing business in Roscrea.

This was closely followed by Availability of housing (31%), Growth potential (28%) and Access to markets (28%).

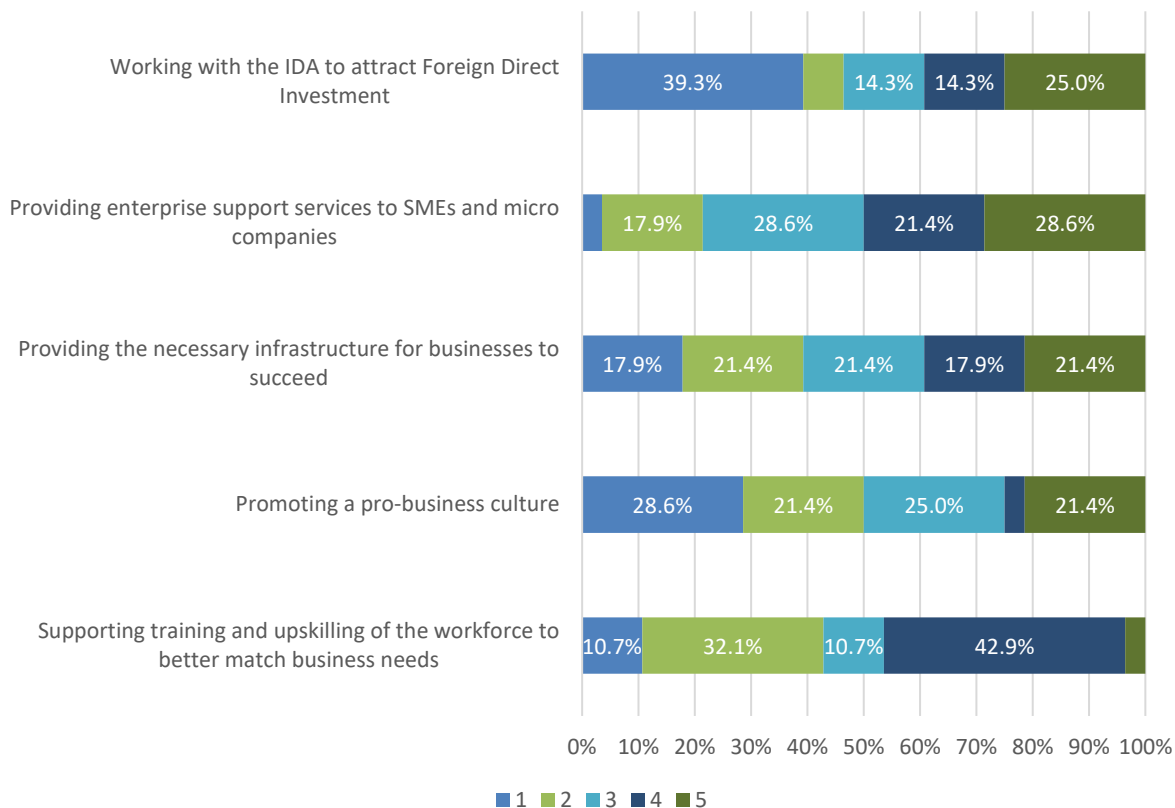
The remaining constraints as a place to do business were Access to service (22%), Availability of office space (19%), Cost of living (16%), Cost of housing (16%), and Quality of life (9%).

Workforce availability (47%), Accessibility (38%), and Cost of doing business (34%) are the top three main constraints for doing business in Roscrea.

Q9: What would you recommend as the top three priorities to help drive economic development in Roscrea? Please rank them

Answered: 28

Skipped: 15



The results can be best interpreted as the options with the greatest percentage of rankings in terms of 1 (dark blue), 2 (light green), and 3 (light blue).

Hence, the top 3 priorities to help drive economic development in Roscrea are: promoting a pro-business culture, working with the IDA to attract Foreign Direct Investment, and providing the necessary infrastructure for business to succeed.

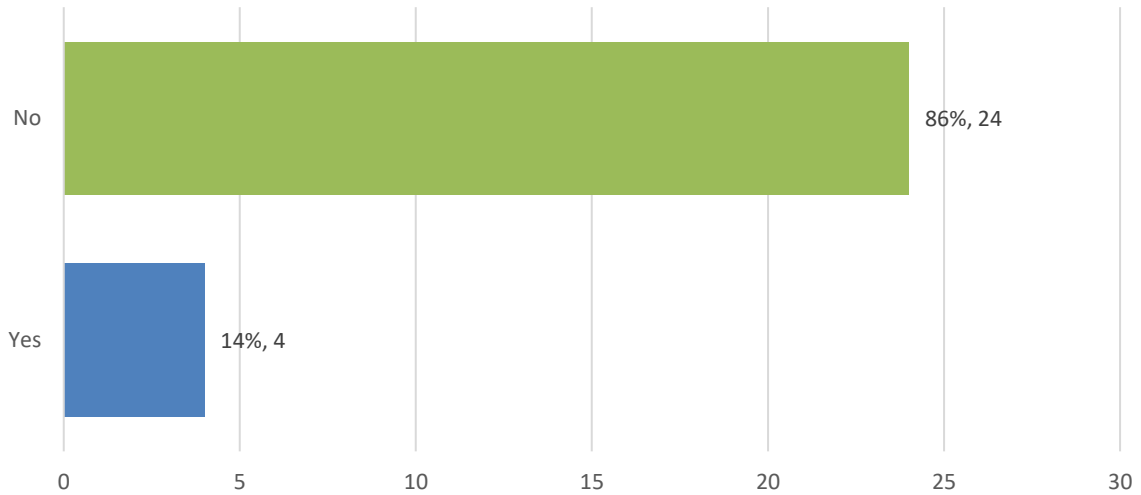
Supporting training and upskilling of the workforce to better match business needs and Providing enterprise support services to SMEs and micro companies were not within the top three priorities.

Top 3 priorities to help drive economic development in Roscrea are: promoting a pro-business culture, working with the IDA to attract Foreign Direct Investment, and providing the necessary infrastructure for business to succeed.

Q10: Have you tried to source space in Roscrea in the past 3 years?

Answered: 28

Skipped: 15

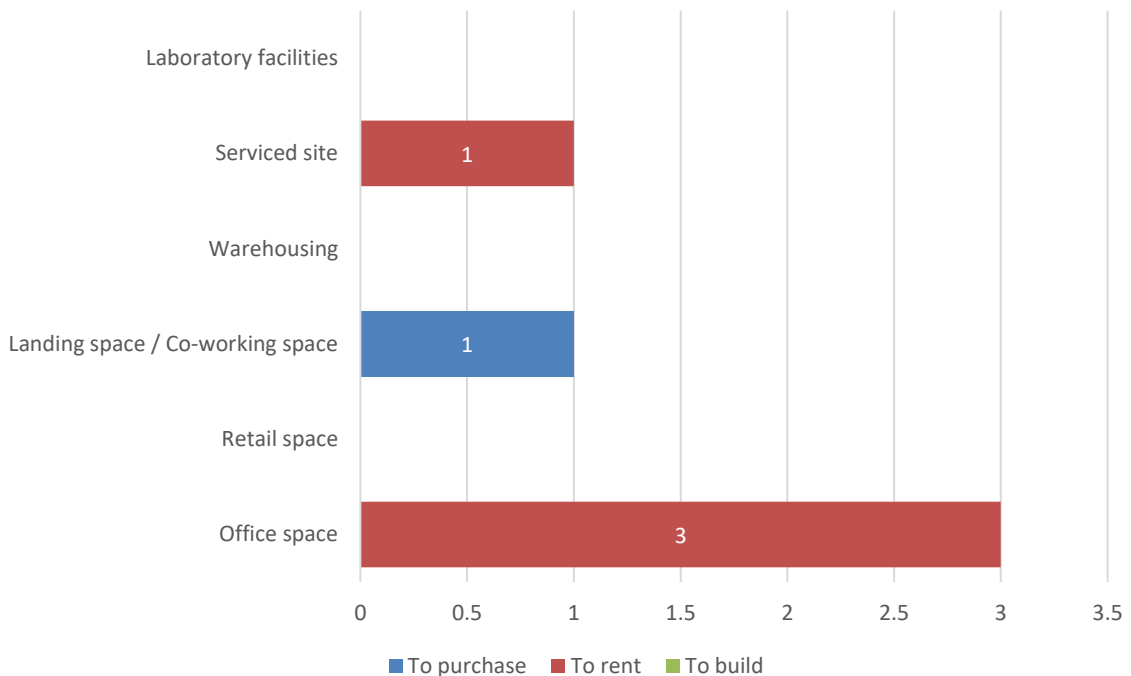


24 businesses (86%) have tried to source space in Roscrea in the past three years.

Q11: What type of space was this?

Answered: 4

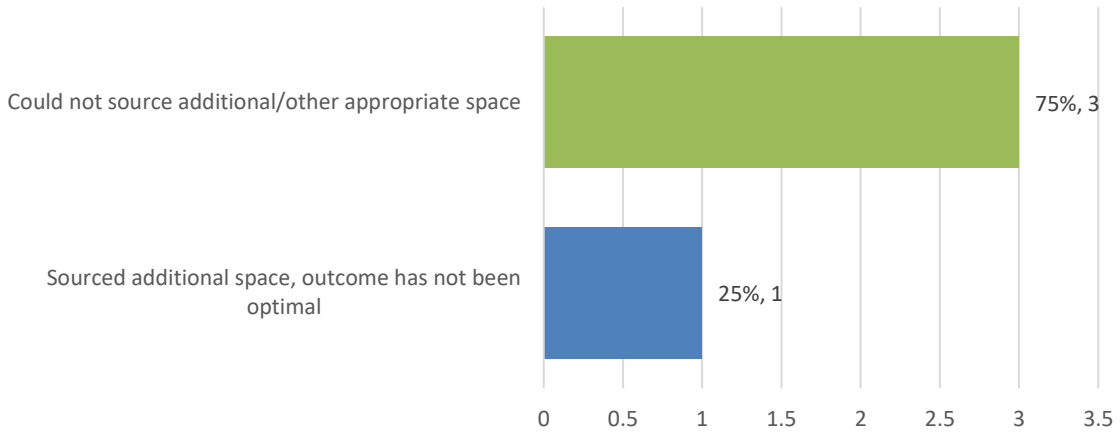
Skipped: 39



In total, 4 businesses were looking to rent one serviced site and 3 office space, while looking to purchase one landing space/co-working space.

Q12: What was the outcome of this action?

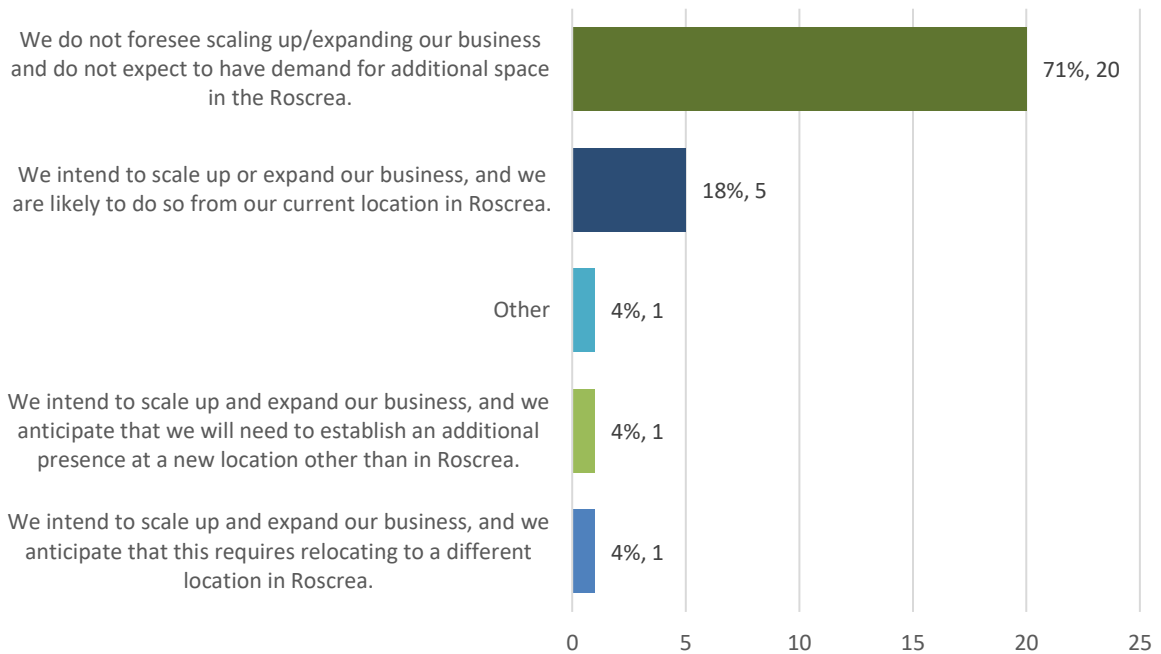
Answered: 4 Skipped: 39



3 out of 4 businesses could not source additional/other appropriate space.

Q13: Considering your own firm if currently located in Roscrea, what is your own position on scaling-up, expanding or relocating your operations in the future?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 15

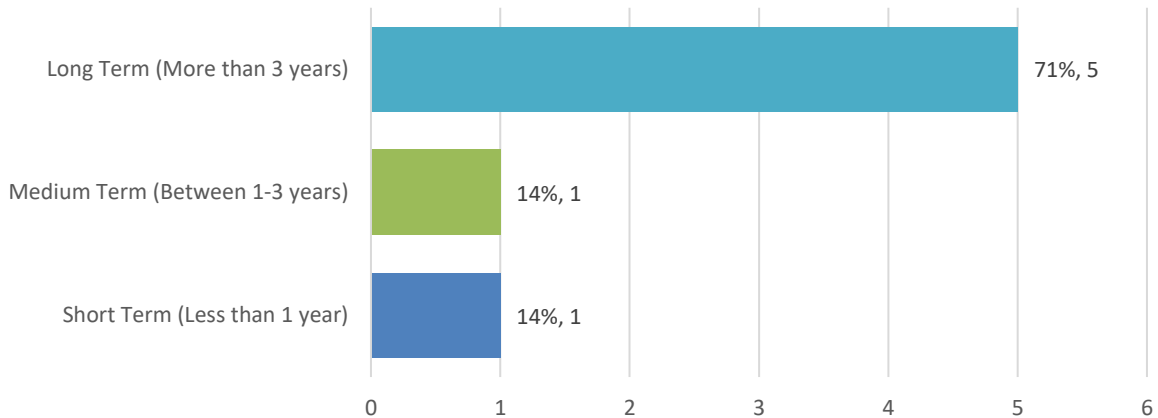


20 businesses (71%) do not foresee scaling up/expanding business and do not expect to have demand for additional space in Roscrea.

Q14: If you are planning to scale up / expand, what timeframe are you planning this over?

Answered: 7

Skipped: 36

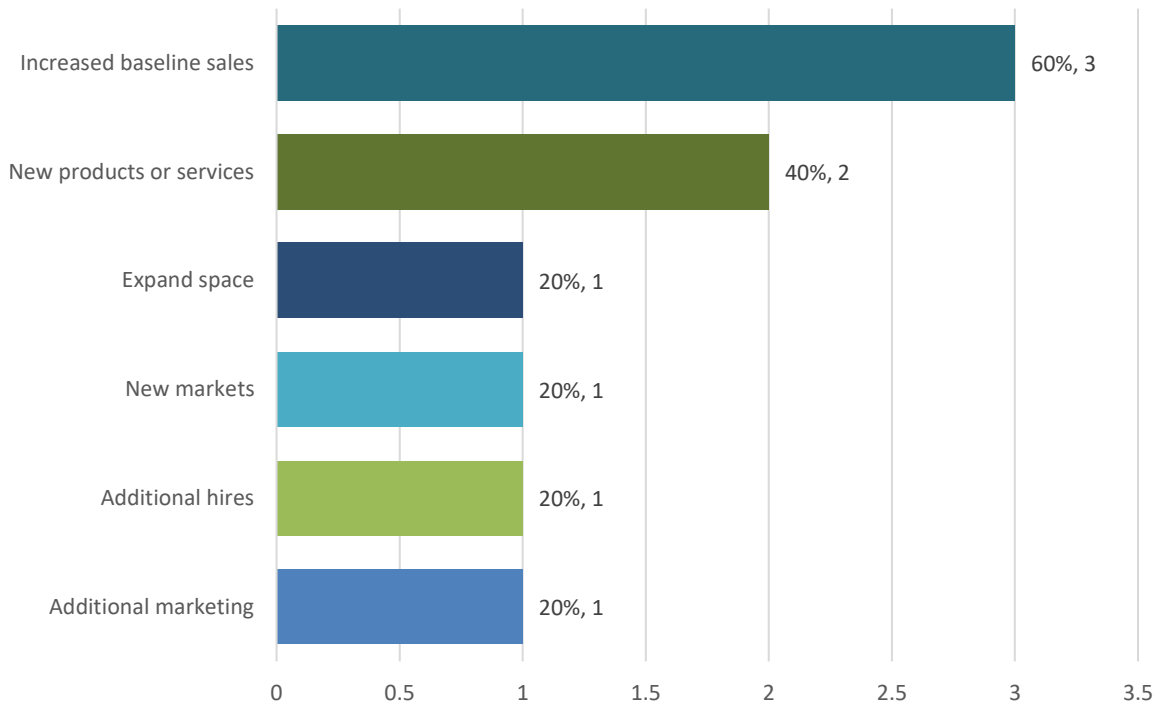


5 out of 7 businesses who plan on scaling up/expanding their business are plan this for the long term (three years or more).

Q15: Please outline the ways in which you plan to scale-up (e.g., new products, increased production, more staff, etc.) or expand (e.g., areas, target markets, new site locations). Please tick all that apply

Answered: 5

Skipped: 38

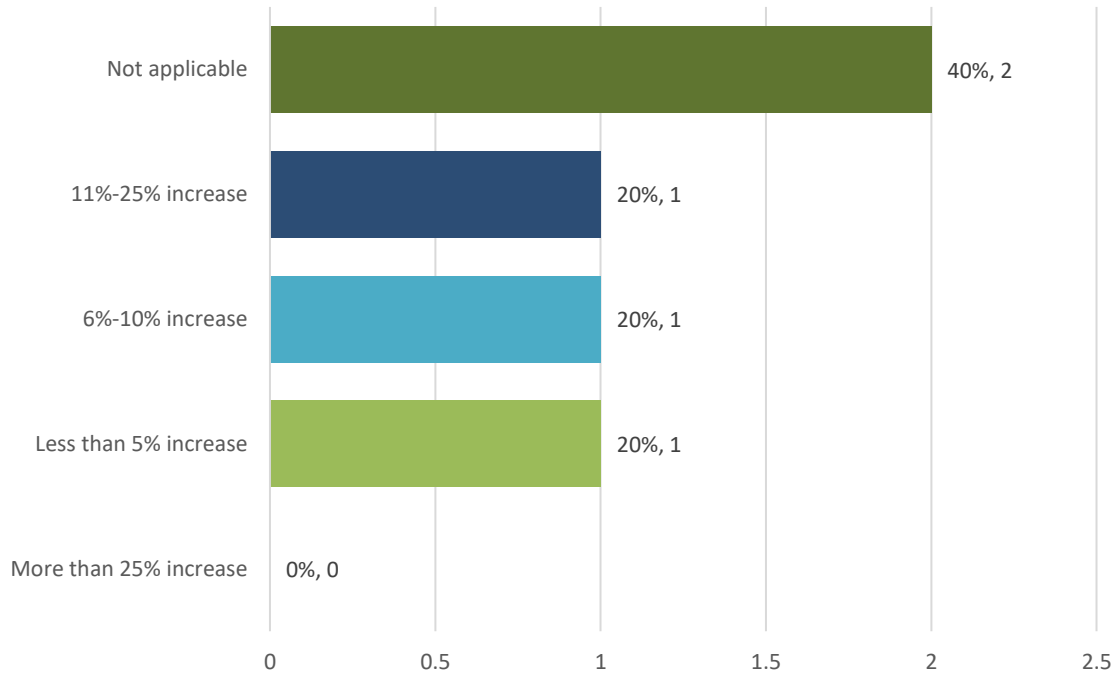


Increasing baseline sales, and producing new products/services are the two most common ways to upscale/ expand.

Q16: If additional staff are required to realise your growth targets in the next 3 years, by how much do you think headcount might change?

Answered: 5

Skipped: 38

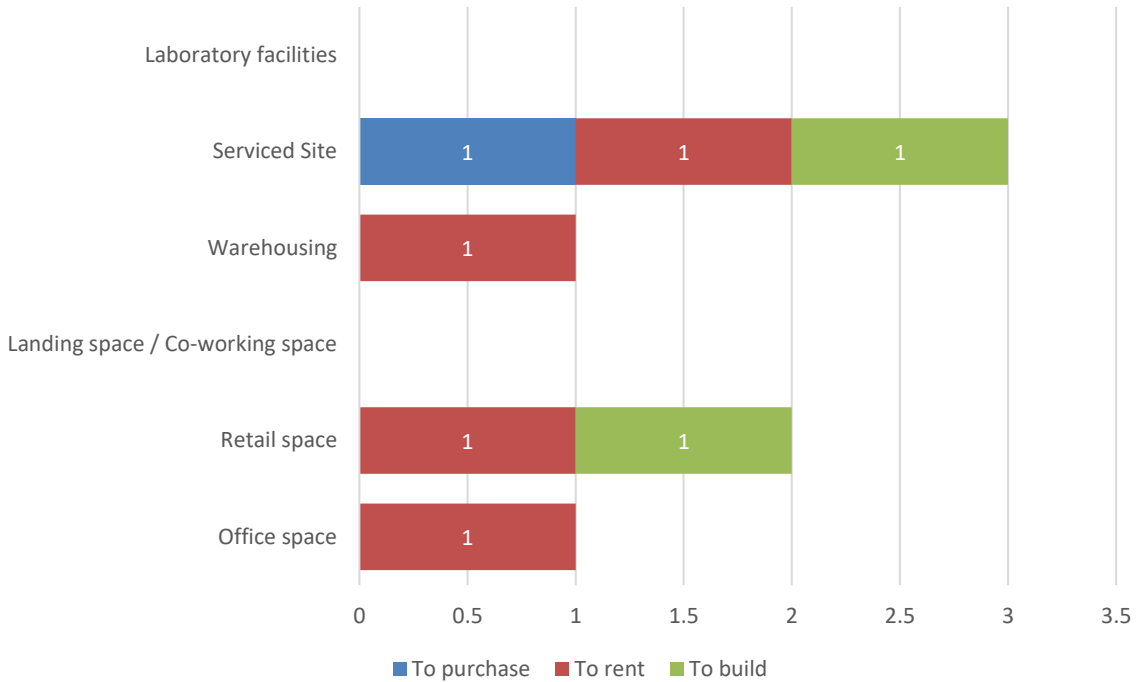


40% believe staff is not the limiting factor to their growth targets, and 0% believe a staff increase of more than 25% is required to reach these targets.

Q17: To grow in the next 1-3 years, what types of spaces would you consider and what tenure type would you prefer?

Answered: 5

Skipped: 38



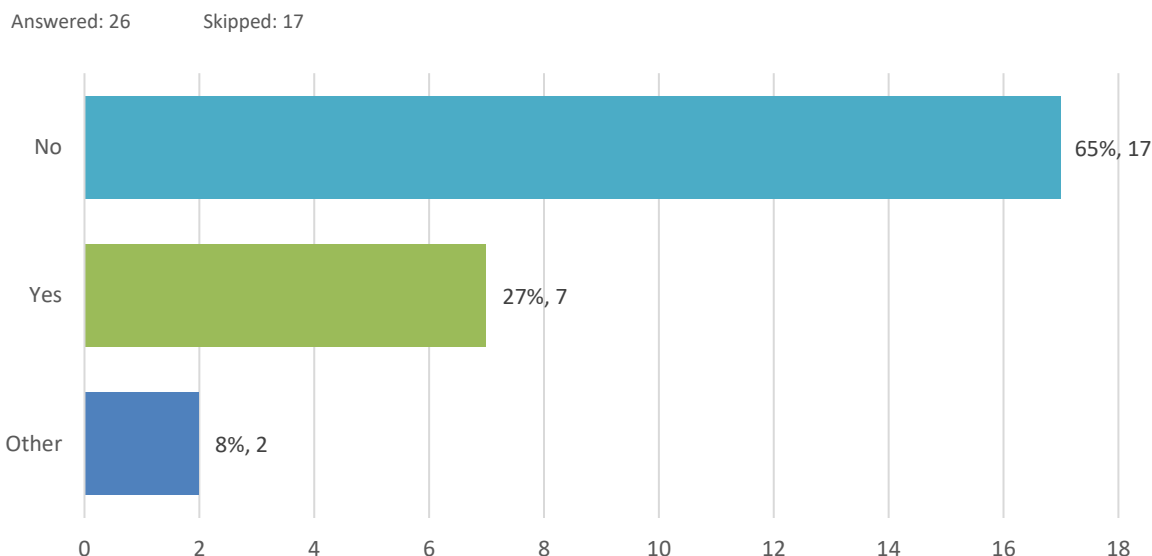
Serviced sites and Retail spaces are the most sought after spaces with the majority looking to rent.

Q18: What level of floorspace (in square meters) would be required for the spaces indicated in your previous answer?

Answer Choices	Responses
Retail space	1540 sqm
Warehousing	100-300 sqm
Serviced Site	12-15 acres
Answered	5
Skipped	38

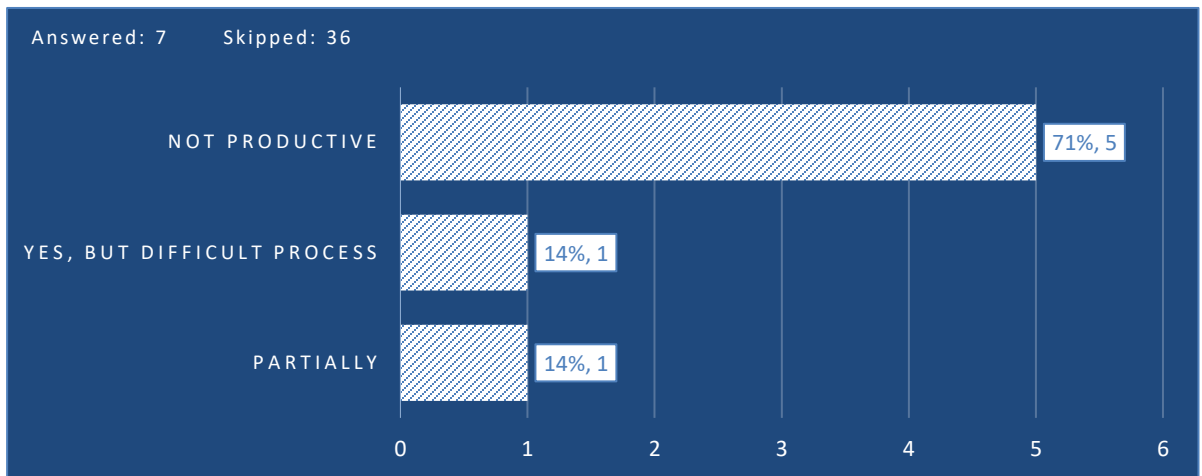
In total, 5 businesses indicated they would require approximately 1540 sqm retail space, 100-300 sqm warehousing, and 12-15 acres services site.

Q19: Have you considered availing of available grants to upgrade vacant or derelict buildings in the town centre?



17 businesses (65%) have not considered availing of grants to upgrade vacant or derelict buildings, while 7 businesses (27%) have.

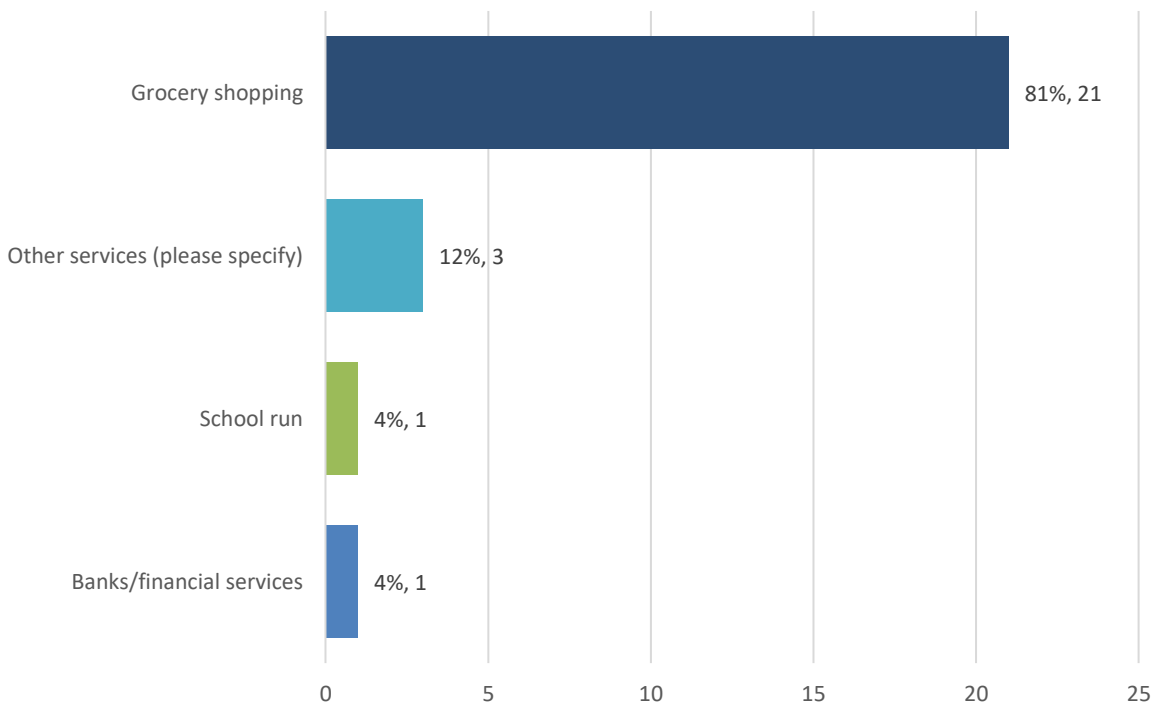
Q20: Please tell us about your experience accessing grants to upgrade vacant or derelict buildings in the town centre. Was this a productive endeavour?



Accessing grants to upgrade vacant or derelict buildings has been largely negative, as 5 businesses (71%) say it is unproductive with only one business receiving a grant.

Q21: What do you think is the main thing that attracts customers to Roscrea Town Centre?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 17

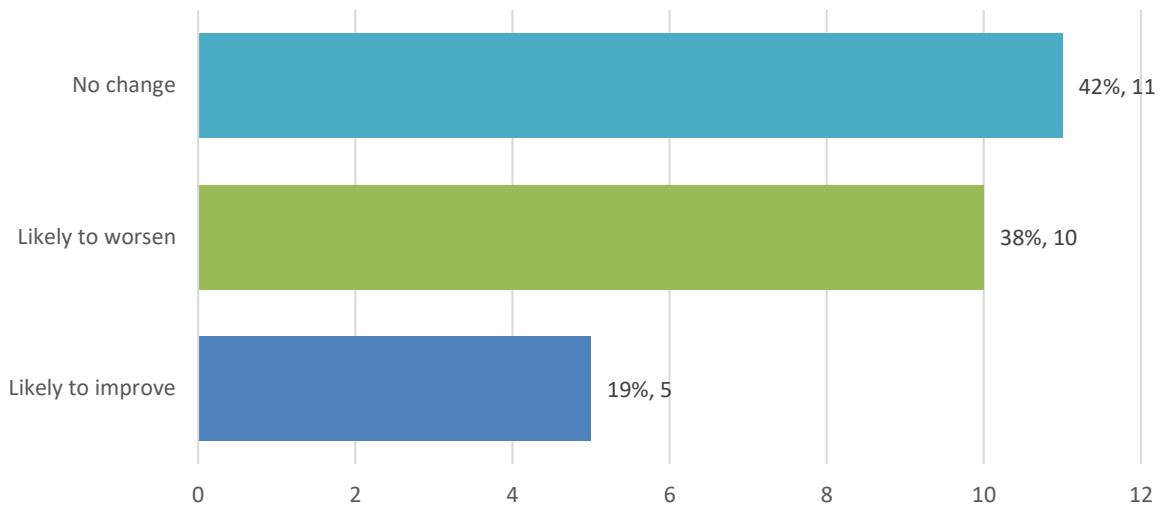


21 businesses surveyed (81%) believe grocery shopping is the main thing attracts customers to Roscrea Town Centre.

Q22: What are your expectations for trading over the next two years?

Answered: 26

Skipped: 17

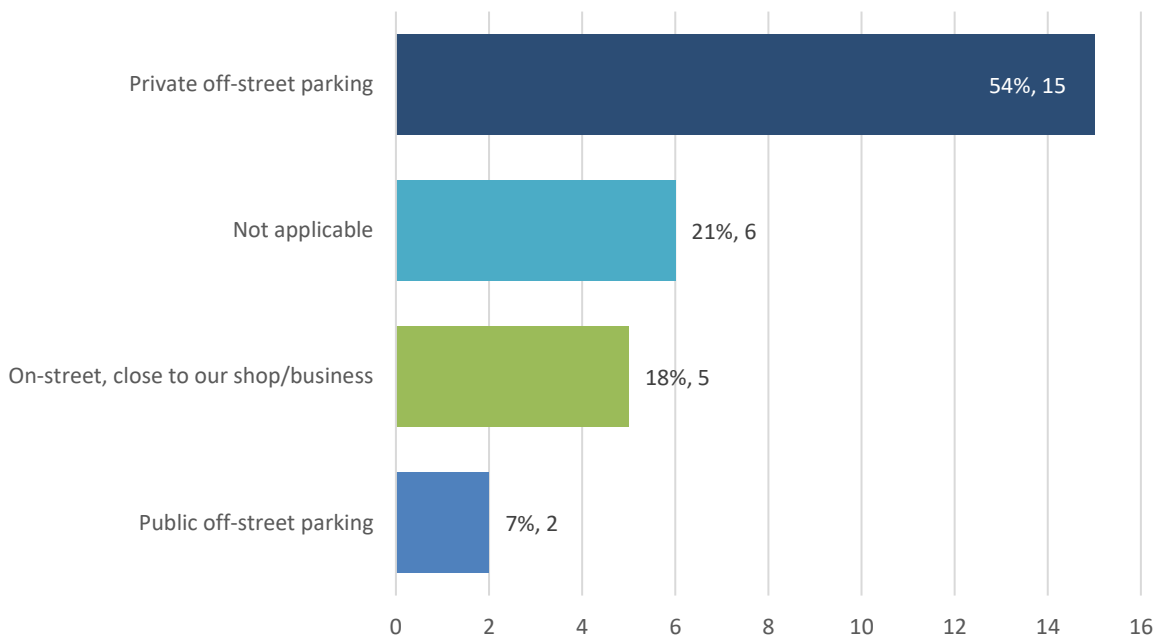


19% have an optimistic outlook for trading over the next two years, while 42% have a neutral outlook and 38% believe it's likely to worsen.

Q23: Where do you and your staff park your personal vehicles?

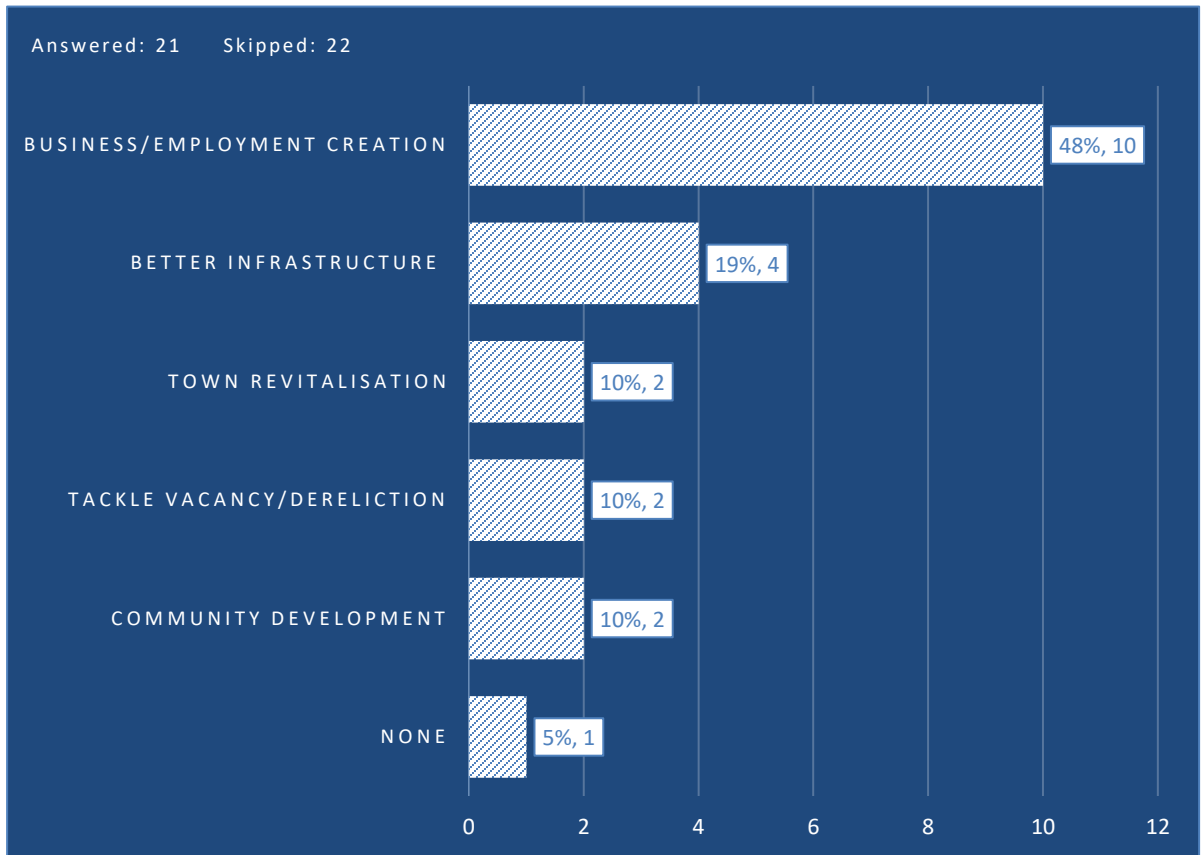
Answered: 28

Skipped: 15



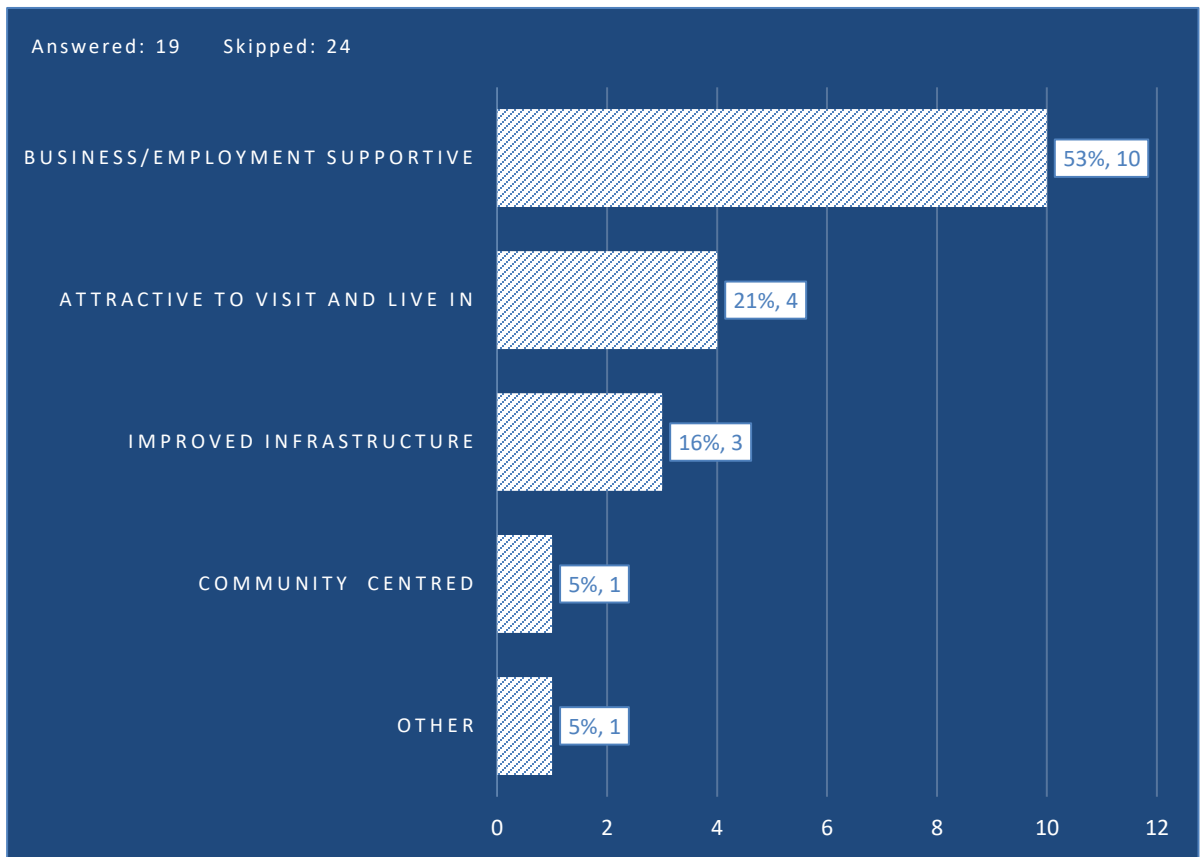
15 businesses (54%) have private off-street car parking. 5 businesses have on street car parking close to their business.

Q24: Are there other important issues or goals that should be given priority in the Roscrea Town Centre First Plan?



The top 4 important issues or goals raised are business/employment creation (48%), better infrastructure (19%), town revitalisation (10%), and tackle vacancy/dereliction (10%).

Q25: What is your vision for Roscrea moving forward?



The top three visions by theme are to be supportive of business/employment (53%), attractive to visit and live (21%), and improved infrastructure (16%).