



State of Wellbeing 2026

Northern Beaches Community
Wellbeing Framework indicator report



Northern
Beaches
Council



We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of these lands
and show respect to Elders, past, present and emerging.

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Definitions

Liveability.

A widely used term, sometimes used interchangeably with wellbeing, to describe quality of life and community wellbeing. It is commonly held that liveability is underpinned by healthy communities, environmental sustainability, social capital and social cohesion.

Personal wellbeing.

A complex combination of a person's physical, mental, emotional and social health factors.

Community wellbeing.

The combination of social, economic, environmental, cultural and political conditions identified by individuals and their communities as essential for them to flourish and fulfil their potential.

Mental health.

A state of wellbeing in which every individual realises their own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and effectively and is able to contribute to their community.

Outcomes framework.

An impact evaluation approach that unpacks an initiative's theory of change and provides a framework to collect data on immediate, basic changes that lead to longer, more transformative change.

Statistically significant.

A change large enough that it is unlikely to be caused by chance. Because survey results come from a sample rather than the whole community, only changes that pass this test are reported as improving or deteriorating.



Introduction

We developed our Community Wellbeing Framework in 2021 to measure and monitor the wellbeing of the Northern Beaches community. It is built around 4 domains: Healthy, Liveable, Participatory and Connected. Across these domains it tracks a set of outcomes and 33 indicators that together capture the objective and subjective sides of how people are travelling.

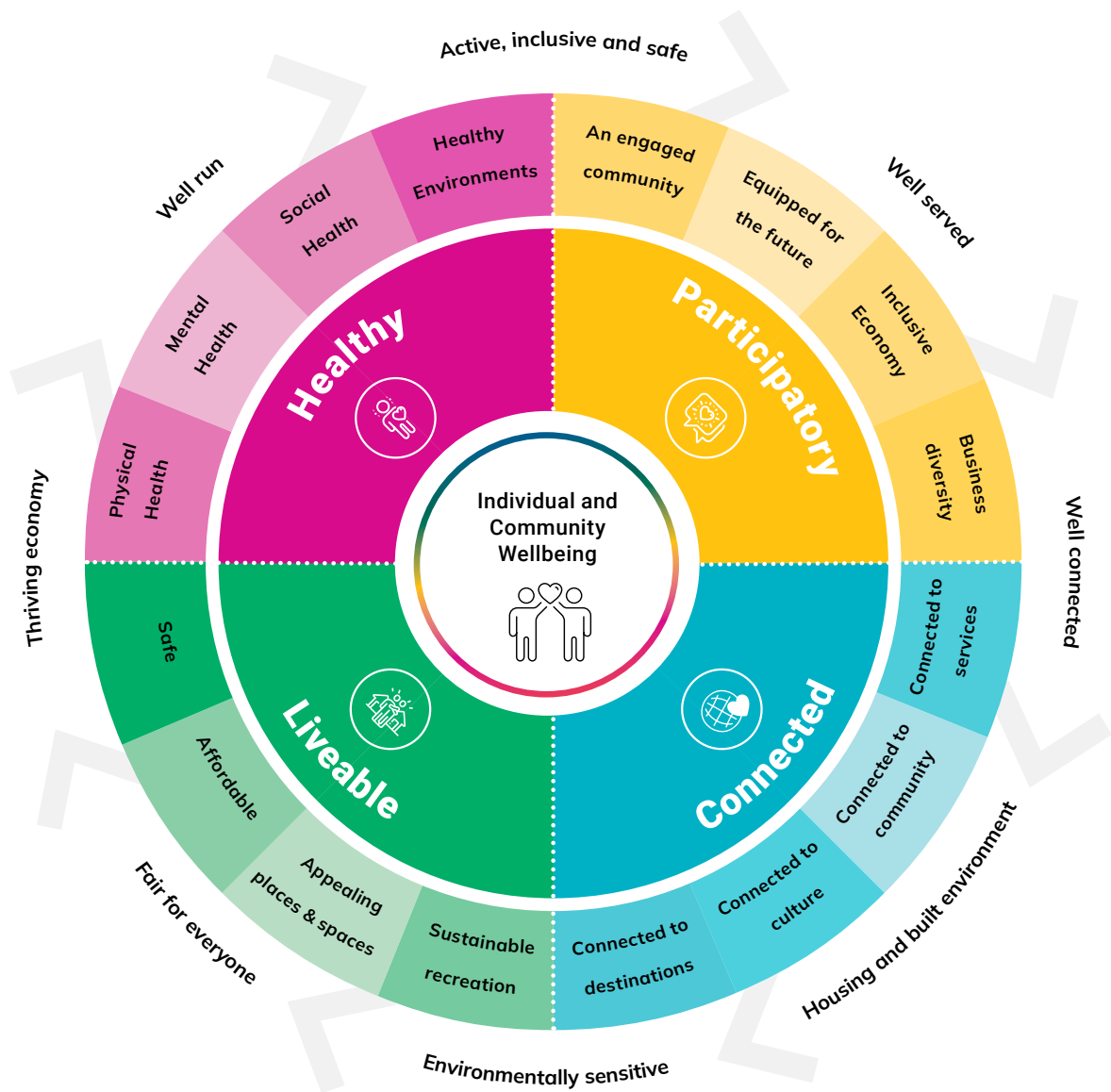
We published the first State of Wellbeing Report in 2022, with mostly baseline data across the indicators. This 2026 report presents updated

results and compares them against earlier waves. Reading the results together helps us understand what shapes wellbeing locally and where to focus effort to maintain and improve it.

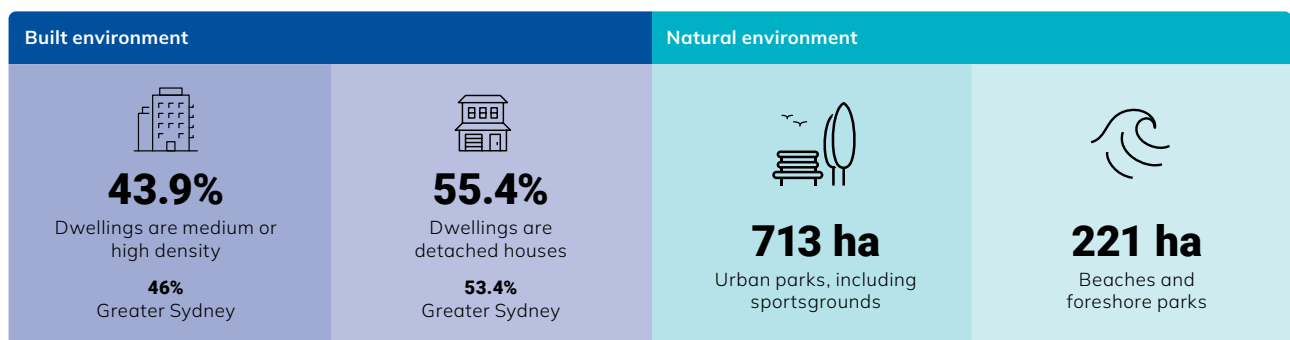
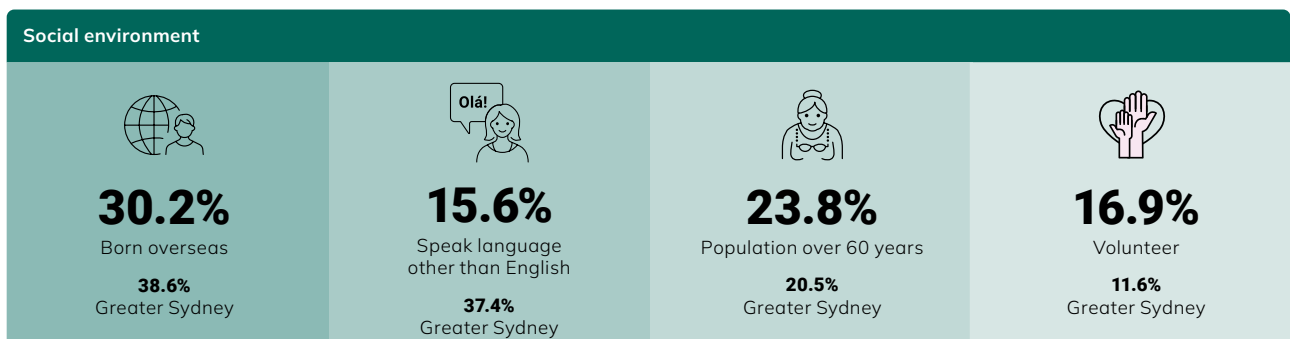
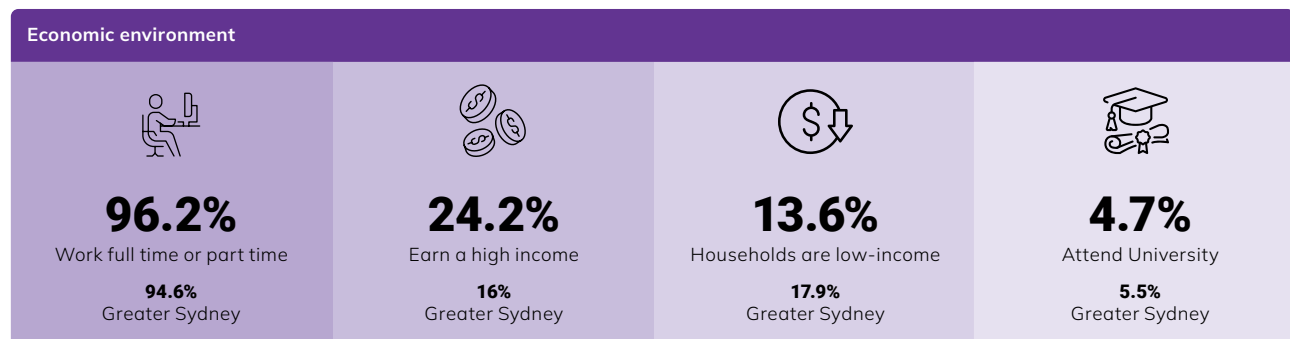
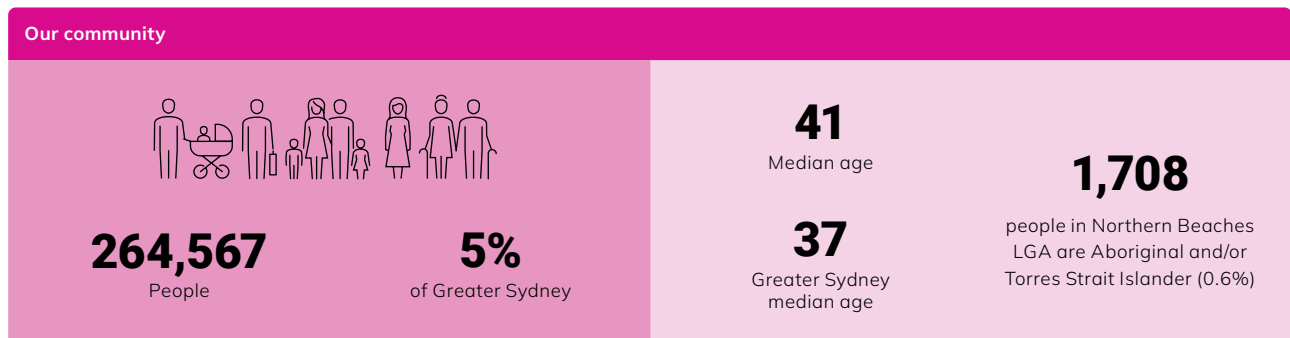
The Community Views survey is an independently run, robust and repeatable survey about how residents experience liveability and wellbeing. The survey ran in 2022, 2024 and 2026 to provide the data for the subjective indicators in the framework. Objective indicators draw on other data sources, noted alongside each result.

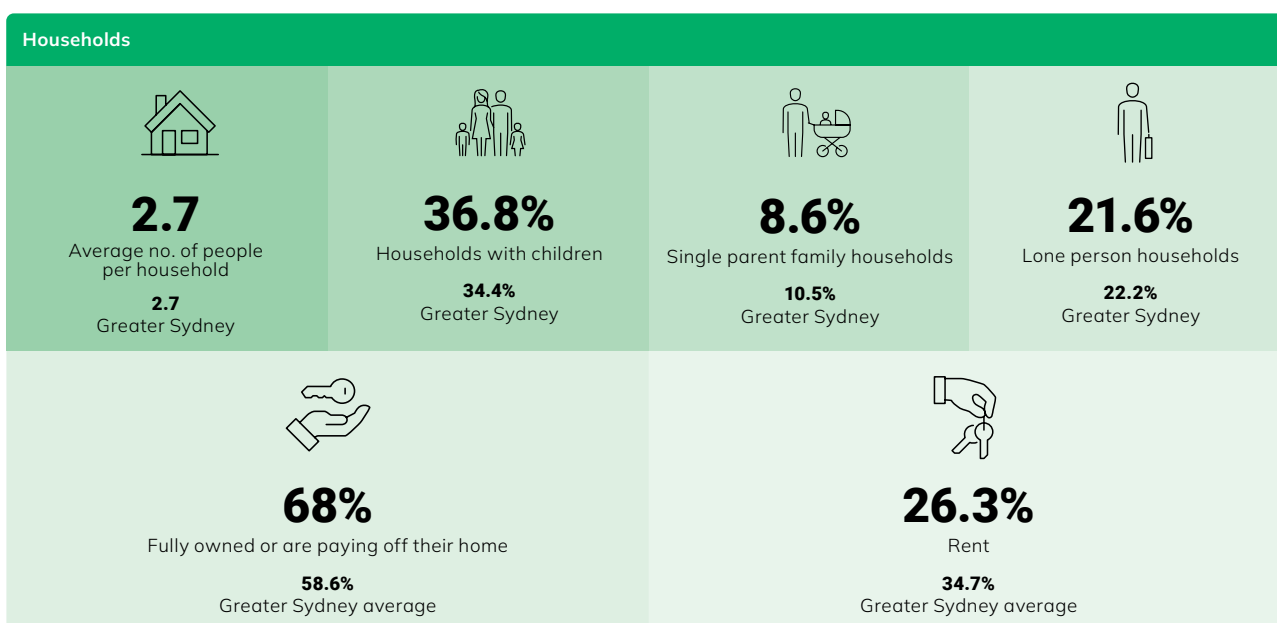
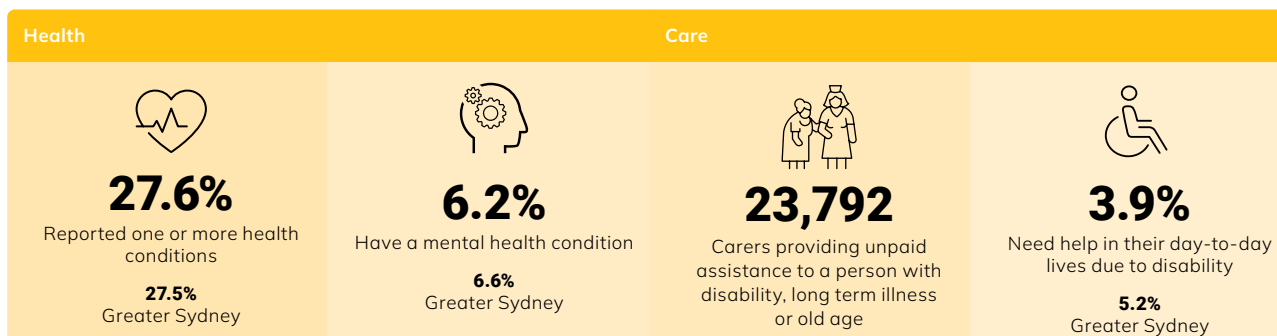


Figure 1. Community wellbeing framework



Our community





ID Community profile, 2021

Key wellbeing insights 2026

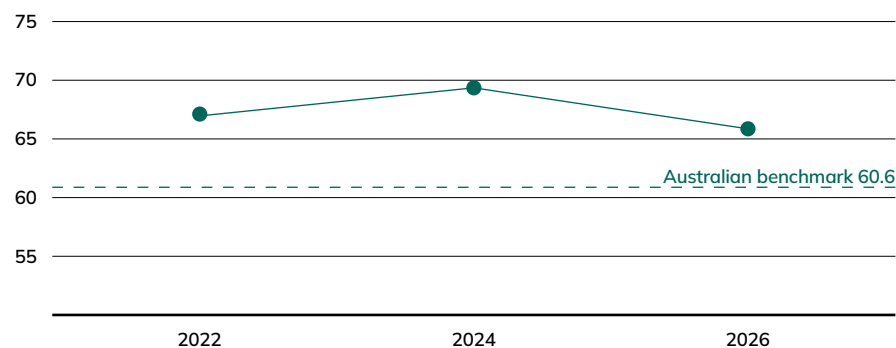
In February 2026 we ran our third Community Views Survey for the Northern Beaches, with 1,270 residents taking part. The survey asked residents what matters most about where they live and how they experience it day to day. Together these gave an overall liveability index, a single score out of 100 we use to track quality of life over time.

The Northern Beaches remains one of the most liveable places in the country

Overall Liveability Index

Northern Beaches	Nation	NSW	Greater Sydney
65.8/100	60.6/100	61/100	61.2/100

Residents continue to experience strong safety, access to nature and genuine community connection, defining how life across the Beaches is experienced. With 3 waves of data now available, we can begin to track how liveability is moving over time. The index rose from 67.8 in 2022 to 69.4 in 2024 and has softened to 65.8 in 2026. This movement is not significant, so liveability is holding steady. This recent softening is not unique to the Northern Beaches, reflecting a broader pattern across all benchmarks, which recorded similar movement over the same period.



Movement across the three waves is not statistically significant



Key insights: What’s working well

Access to the natural environment is the key attribute for what makes the Northern Beaches a great place to live

Beaches, bushland, coastal walks and open space are central to how residents describe a good quality of life.

Importance	Experience
equal 1st of 16 (67 percent of respondents)	1st of 16, rated 8.7 out of 10 on average

“Living in such a beautiful environment with the native trees, bushland and wildlife, along with the beautiful beaches and waterways.”

-Female, Pittwater Ward, 60 and over

Feeling safe is an enduring positive aspect of community life

Safety is rated well above every benchmark (Australia - 6.4, NSW - 6.7, Greater Sydney 6.6). Perceptions have softened slightly, consistent with national trends, but remain comparatively strong.

Importance	Experience
equal 1st of 16 (67 percent of respondents)	2nd of 16, rated 7.9 out of 10 on average

Strong community ties reinforce how safe people feel

The more connected residents feel, the safer they feel. Those with a high sense of community rated their safety at 8.3 out of 10, compared with 7.2 among those with moderate connection and 5.9 among those who felt less connected.

Importance	Experience
4th of 16 (42 percent of respondents)	4th of 16, rated 7.2 out of 10 on average

Residents feel a stronger sense of belonging this year

Both increases are significant and point to a real shift in how connected people feel. Feeling valued has climbed at every wave, from 36 percent in 2022 to 41 percent in 2024 and 52 percent now, a 16-point rise over four years. Older residents reported the strongest local connection of all.

Belong in their neighbourhood	Feel valued in the community
73 percent of respondents (up from 66 percent in 2024)	52 percent of respondents (up from 41 percent in 2024)

“Strong sense of community, especially through local events. Community markets, surf lifesaving events, school fundraisers and festivals bring people together and make the area feel welcoming and connected.”

Female, Pittwater Ward, 18 to 34

Residents steadily report strong health and wellbeing

Residents rate their physical health, mental health and social wellbeing well above national, state and Greater Sydney benchmarks. An active, outdoor lifestyle is part of what supports consistently high responses across all aspects of personal wellbeing.

Physical health	Mental health	Social wellbeing
7.6/10	7.6/10	7.6/10

Key insights: Where pressure is building

Public transport is the clearest pressure point

Experience has declined each wave, from 6.3 in 2022 to 5.9 in 2026, while importance has risen from 47 percent to 57 percent. Residents pointed to unreliable buses, congestion and long travel times. With major rail and metro investment occurring elsewhere across Sydney, the Northern Beaches remains heavily reliant on buses, and the gap between what residents value and what they experience continues to widen.

Importance	Experience
3rd of 16 (57 percent of respondents)	11th of 16 rated 5.9 out of 10 on average

Health services are a growing focus

Importance is growing and the level of concern about healthcare and hospitals increased from 10 percent to 17 percent since 2024. Experience levels are falling but remain above benchmarks (Australia – 6.3, NSW – 6.3, Greater Sydney – 6.7) which suggests residents are looking ahead to whether services will keep pace with a growing and ageing population, rather than responding to a problem with care today.

Importance	Experience
5th of 16 (36 percent of respondents)	5th of 16 rated 6.8 out of 10 on average

Affordable decent housing remains the hardest challenge

Housing is now the top local issue residents identify.

The pressure is not felt evenly. Younger residents aged 18 to 34 and renters report the most difficult experience, although both groups have improved marginally since 2022.

Housing also shapes wellbeing more broadly. Residents who own their home outright report stronger mental health and financial wellbeing than those paying a mortgage or renting.

Importance	Experience
7th of 16 (34 percent of respondents)	16th of 16, rated 3.7 out of 10 on average

How housing situation relates to wellbeing (2026)

Housing situation	Mental health (out of 10)	Financial circumstances (out of 10)
Own home outright	8.1	7.2
Paying a mortgage	7.5	6.4
Renting	7.5	5.9
Northern Beaches average	7.7	6.6



How different groups experience the Beaches

Liveability is not felt evenly.

Alongside the 16 liveability attributes, residents were asked how strongly they agree with a set of statements about belonging, safety and participation, drawn from our wellbeing framework. Testing these results by demographic group shows where some communities experience life on the Beaches differently from the average.

People with disability report the clearest gap. Their Wellbeing Index sits at 6.0, significantly below the Northern Beaches average of 7.7. They are also significantly less likely to feel they can take part in community life without experiencing exclusion or discrimination, and without facing access barriers. Reducing barriers to participation is where the strongest case for targeted effort lies.

The picture is more positive for others. Residents aged 75 and over report a significantly stronger sense of belonging and are significantly more likely to know where to get help when they need it. Families are significantly more likely to feel they can take part in community life without feeling unsafe.

These are the only group differences that tested as significant this wave. Some groups, including LGBTIQ+ residents, one parent families and young people aged 18 to 24, were captured in smaller numbers, so their results are less representative of the whole demographic group.

How housing situation relates to wellbeing (2026)

Grooup	Measure	Group result	LGA average	Variation
People with disability	Health and Wellbeing Index (out of 10)	6.0	7.7	Significantly lower
	Take part without exclusion or discrimination	62%	75%	Significantly lower
	Take part without access barriers	50%	64%	Significantly lower
Older residents (75 and over)	Belong in their neighbourhood	84%	73%	Significantly higher
	Know where to get help when needed	73%	64%	Significantly higher
Families	Take part without feeling unsafe	87%	83%	Significantly higher

All variations shown are statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level, compared with the 2026 Northern Beaches average.

Looking ahead

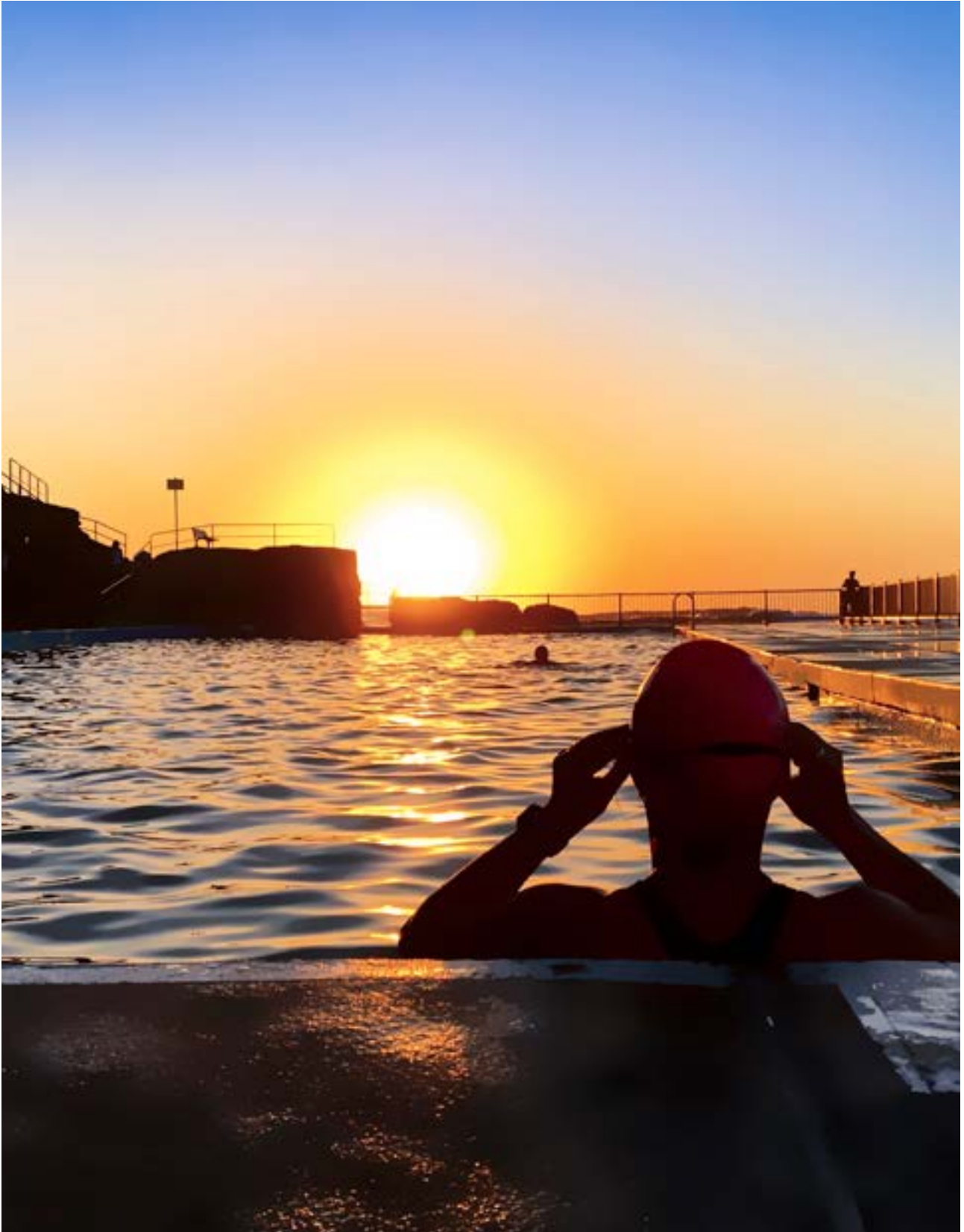
Population growth and ageing

will shape future priorities

The population continues to grow and to age, with the strongest growth expected among residents aged 70 and over from 2031 onwards. Older residents place value on public transport, reducing congestion, health services and a strong sense of community, the things that help people stay active, connected and independent as they age. The task ahead is to protect what residents value most, while planning and advocating for the services a growing and ageing community will increasingly depend on.

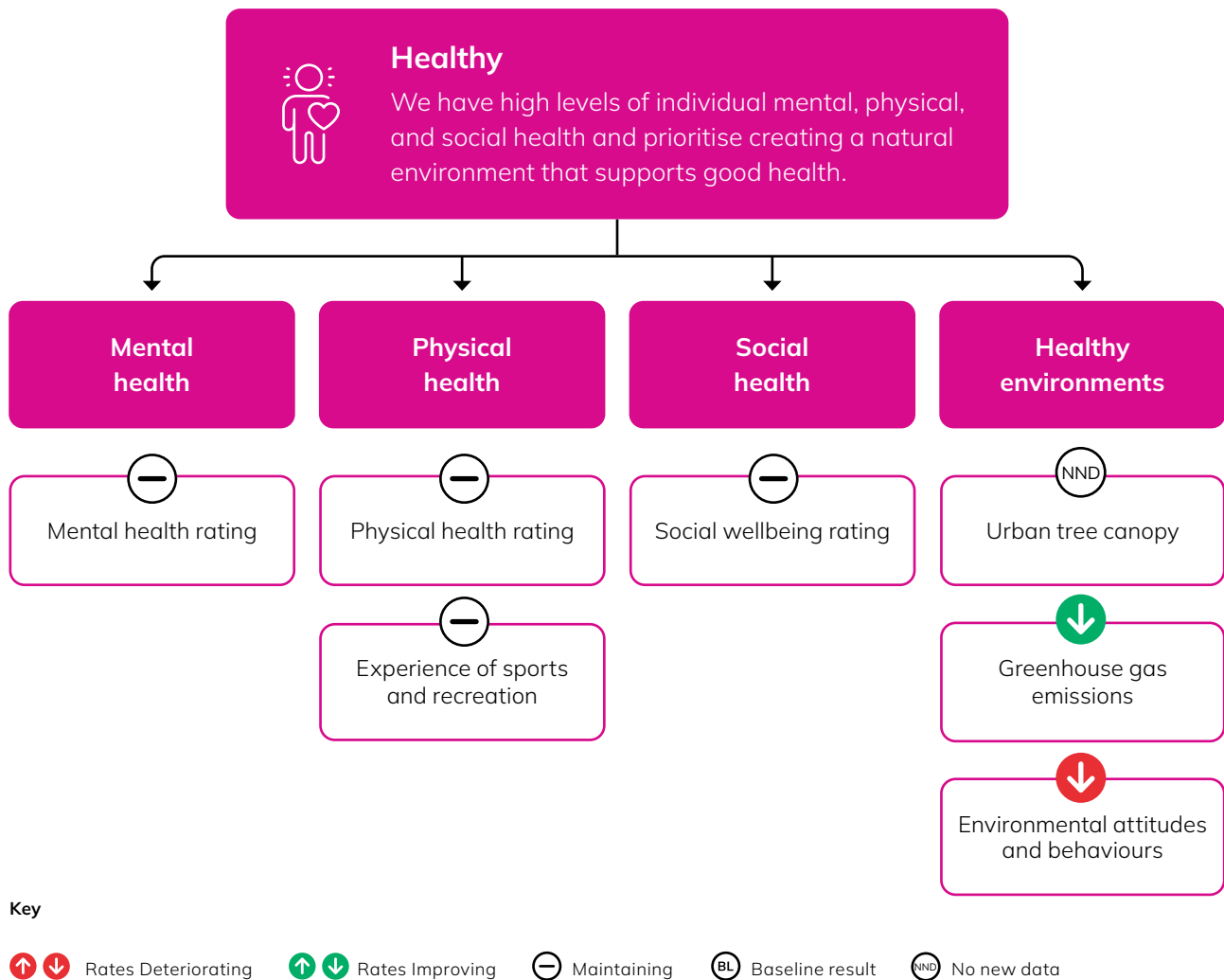
4 key takeaways

- The Northern Beaches remains a highly liveable community.
- Community life and active lifestyles, along with safety and the natural environment, are central to local wellbeing.
- Infrastructure and affordability pressures are becoming more visible.
- Population growth and ageing will shape future priorities.





Healthy



Good health, both physical and mental, underpins everything else about living well on the Northern Beaches. This domain looks at how people are travelling in their health and wellbeing, and the state of the natural environment that supports it.

There are 4 outcomes and 7 indicators for the Healthy domain.

All have sufficient data to determine a trend over time (at least 2 reporting periods):

- 6 have updated trends for 2026
 - 1 improved (greenhouse gas emissions)
 - 4 maintained (mental health, physical health, sports and recreation and social wellbeing)
 - 1 deteriorated (environmental attitudes and behaviours)
- 1 has no new data and the trend remains as previously reported in 2024 (urban tree canopy)

Healthy domain indicators

Indicator	Baseline	Latest result	Trend over time	Performance against benchmark	What it tells us
Outcome: Mental Health					
Mental health rating	7.6/10 (2022)	7.6/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly above Australian benchmark (7.1)	Mental health ratings have held firm at 7.6 since 2022. Holding steady is a positive sign for the community.
Outcome: Physical Health					
Physical health rating	7.7/10 (2022)	7.6/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly above Australian benchmark (7.0)	Physical health ratings have held steady since 2022. A stable result at this level suggests the community is, overall, in good physical shape.
Experience of sports and recreation	7.5/10 (2022)	7.4/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly above Australian benchmark (6.8)	People continue to rate their experience of sport and recreation highly, holding at 7.4. A result this steady points to a community were getting active and connecting through sport stays part of everyday life.
Outcome: Social Health					
Social wellbeing rating	7.6/10 (2022)	7.4/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly above Australian benchmark (6.9)	Social wellbeing has stayed level at 7.6 between 2022 and 2026. Connection and quality of life remain one of the real strengths of life on the Northern Beaches.

Key



Rates Deteriorating



Rates Improving



Maintaining



Baseline result

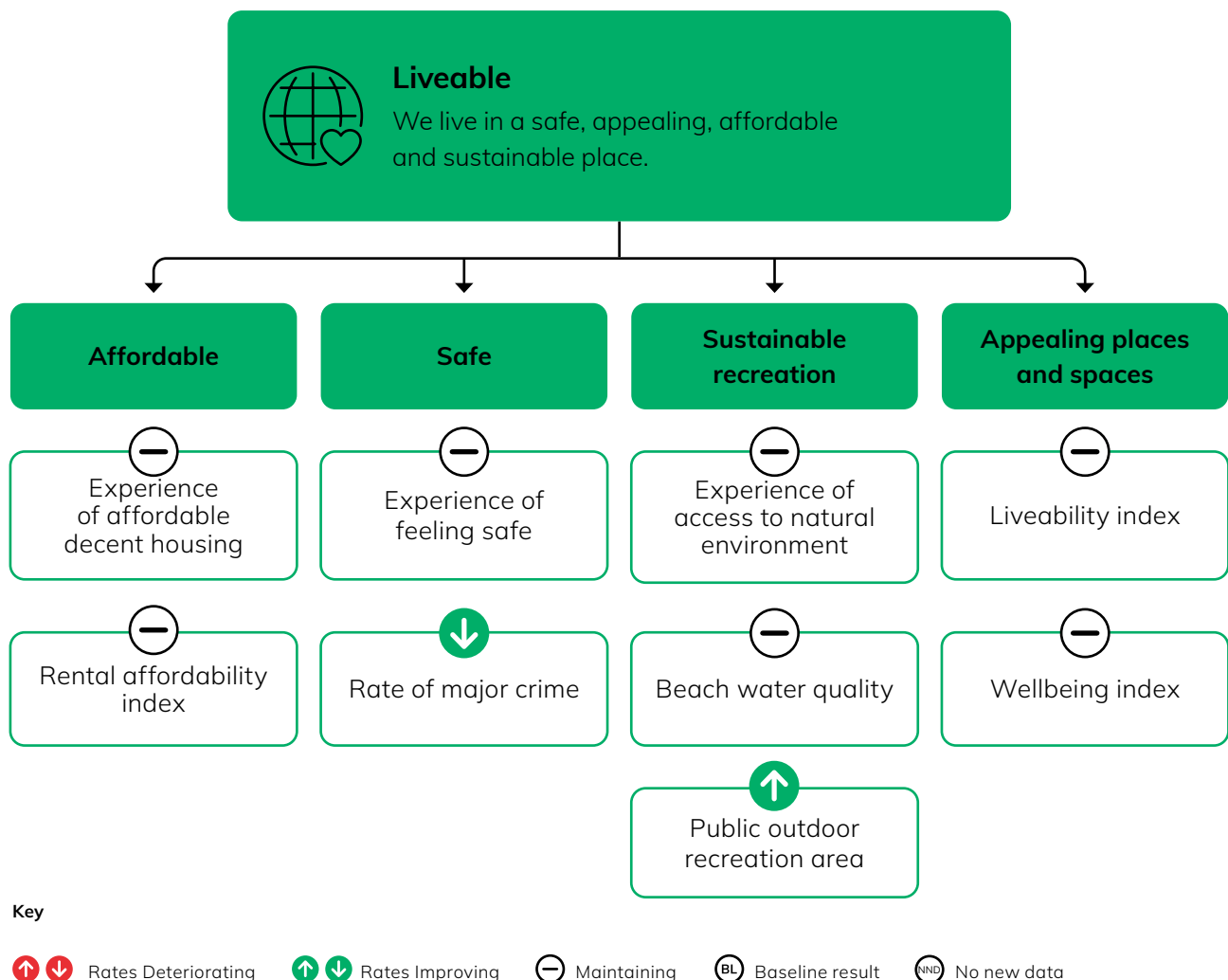


No new data

Indicator	Baseline	Latest result	Trend over time	Performance against benchmark	What it tells us
Outcome: Healthy Environments					
Urban tree canopy	57.07% (2013)	58.64% (2023)	Improving 	No benchmark available	No new data recorded for 2026. Overall, canopy coverage grew slightly from 57.07% in 2013 to 58.64% in 2023, supporting cooling, habitat and amenity across the Northern Beaches.
Greenhouse gas emissions (tonnes per person)	7.6t per capita (2018)	6.5t per capita (2024)	Improving 	No benchmark available	Per capita greenhouse gas emissions have fallen 15.9% across the community since the 2017/18 baseline.
Environmental attitudes and behaviour	56% (2017)	38% (2025)	Deteriorating 	No benchmark available	Overall, this indicator represents a significant decrease in overall environmental attitudes that is likely driven by increasing concern about personal pressures such as cost of living and housing. Despite this, many residents continue to adopt positive environmental behaviours. Note there was a change in methodology between 2021 and 2025 that has influenced the outcome of this indicator.

Note - For Community Views survey indicators, trends are reported as Improving or Deteriorating only where the change from baseline is statistically significant. Otherwise, the indicator is reported as Maintaining.





A liveable place is one that feels safe, gives people things to do, protects the natural environment and stays within reach for the people who live there. This domain looks at how residents experience daily life, from feeling safe and close to nature through to the harder question of whether people can afford to stay.

There are 4 outcomes and 9 indicators for the Liveable domain of the Community Wellbeing Framework. All have sufficient data to determine a trend over time (at least 2 reporting periods) and all have updated trends for 2026:

- 2 improved (rate of major crime and public outdoor recreation space)
- 7 maintained (affordable decent housing, rental affordability, feeling safe, access to the natural environment, beach water quality, liveability index and wellbeing index)

Liveable domain indicators

Indicator	Baseline	Latest result	Trend over time	Performance against benchmark	What it tells us
Outcome: Affordable					
Experience of affordable decent housing	3.6/10 (2022)	3.7/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly below Australian benchmark (4.6)	At 3.7, affordable decent housing remains stable with the baseline and the lowest-scoring attribute in the Liveable domain. It reflects the ongoing pressure of housing costs and limited supply on how people experience life here.
Rental affordability index	Severely Unaffordable (2014)	Severely Unaffordable (2024)	Maintaining 	Below benchmark (moderately unaffordable, Greater Sydney)	The rental affordability index sits at 71, which places rents in the severely unaffordable category. This means that households would have to spend between 38% and 60% of their gross income to afford a median rental property. Rental affordability remains a structural pressure for lower-income households.
Outcome: Safe					
Experience of feeling safe	8.0/10 (2022)	7.9/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly above Australian benchmark (6.4)	Residents' sense of safety has held stable since 2022. Feeling safe remains one of the most consistent parts of life on the Northern Beaches.
Rate of major crime	2,185 per 100,000 (2017)	1,486 per 100,000 (2026)	Improving 	Exceeds NSW benchmark (3,295)	The major crime rate has fallen from 2,185 per 100,000 people in 2017 to 1,486 in 2026, continuing a long-term downward trend across the area.

Key

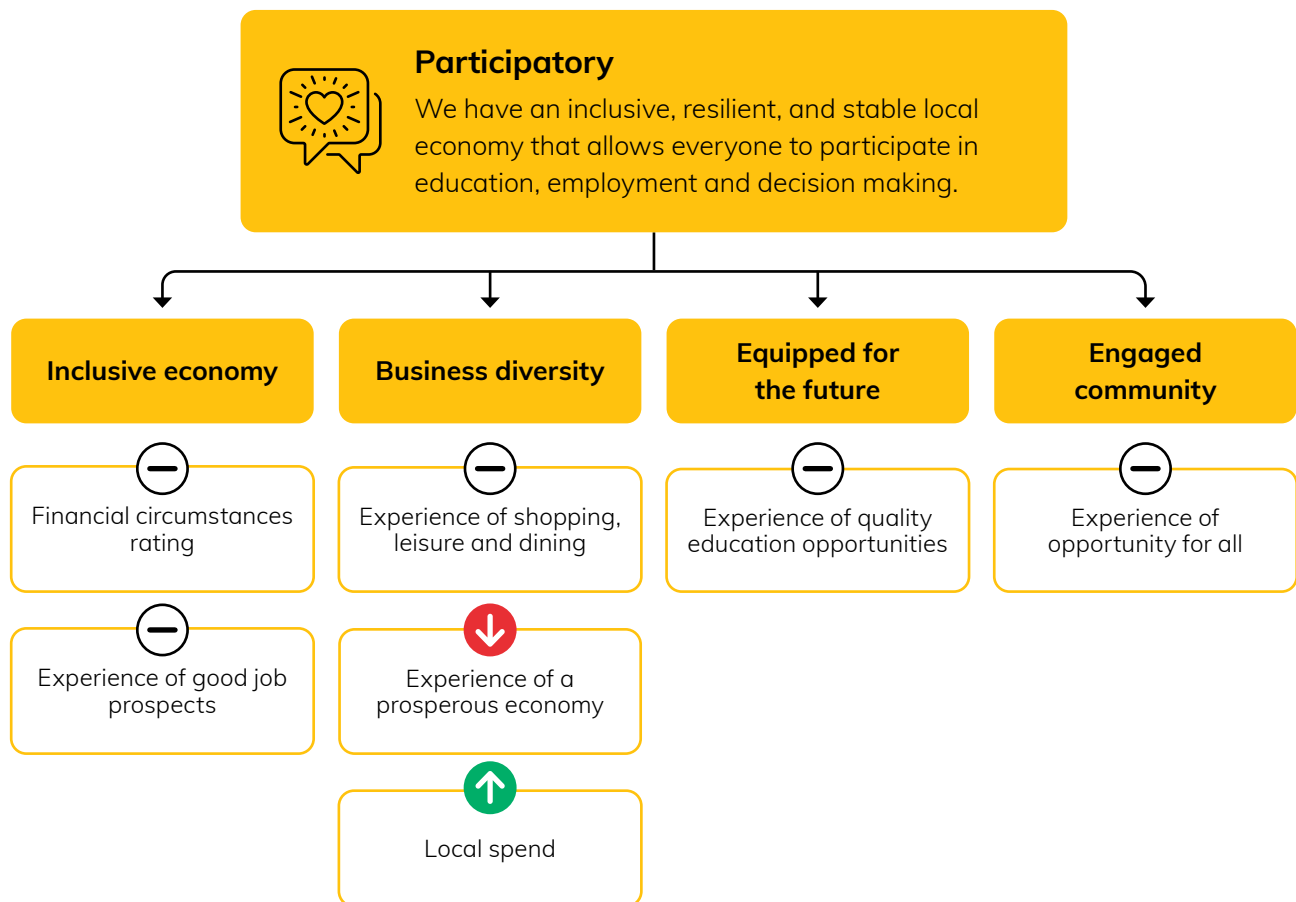
  Rates Deteriorating
   Rates Improving
  Maintaining
  Baseline result
  No new data

Indicator	Baseline	Latest result	Trend over time	Performance against benchmark	What it tells us
Outcome: Sustainable Recreation					
Experience of access to the natural environment	8.7/10 (2022)	8.7/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly above Australian benchmark (7.6)	Access to the natural environment is the highest-scoring attribute in the domain, steady at 8.7 since 2022. Beaches, bushland and open space remain central to how people experience daily life.
Public outdoor recreation space	11.66ha per 1,000 people (2022)	11.95ha per 1,000 people (2026)	Improving 	No benchmark available	Public outdoor recreation space has edged up to 11.95ha per 1,000 people, from 11.66ha at the 2022 baseline. There is no benchmark for this measure, but the area continues to offer generous open space for its population.
Beach water quality	Very good (2020)	Very good (2025)	Maintaining 	Exceeds NSW benchmark	Beach water quality continues to hold a 'Very good' rating. Clean swimming water is a defining feature of the area, and the rating has stayed strong across recent years.
Outcome: Appealing places and spaces					
Liveability Index	67.8 /100 (2022)	65.8/100 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly above Australian benchmark (60.6)	The overall liveability score eased from 67.8 in 2022 to 65.8, a movement in line with the gentle softening seen across several measures rather than a significant shift. Liveability on the Northern Beaches remains high overall.
Wellbeing Index	7.6/10 (2022)	7.7/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly above Australian benchmark (7.0)	The wellbeing index has held steady since 2022. It points to a community whose overall sense of physical, mental and social wellbeing stays in good shape.

Note - For Community Views survey indicators, trends are reported as Improving or Deteriorating only where the change from baseline is statistically significant. Otherwise, the indicator is reported as Maintaining.



Participatory



Key

Rates Deteriorating
 Rates Improving
 Maintaining
 Baseline result
 No new data

Participation is about whether people can take part in local economic and social life and share in what the area has to offer. This domain looks at how residents rate their finances and the local economy, their job and education prospects and the everyday experience of getting out to shops, services and things to do.

There are 4 outcomes and 7 indicators for the Participatory domain of the Community Wellbeing Framework.

All have sufficient data to determine a trend over time (at least 2 reporting periods), and all have updated trends for 2026:

- 1 improved (local spend)
- 5 maintained (financial circumstances, shopping, leisure and dining, good job prospects, high quality education opportunities and opportunity for all)
- 1 deteriorated (experience of a prosperous economy)

Participatory domain indicators

Indicator	Baseline	Latest result	Trend over time	Performance against benchmark	What it tells us
Outcome: Inclusive Economy					
Financial circumstances rating	6.7/10 (2022)	6.6/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly above Australian benchmark (6.1)	After dipping to 6.3 in 2024, residents' rating of their financial circumstances has come back to 6.6, close to where it sat in 2022. A steadier result after a couple of tighter years.
Experience of good job prospects	5.5/10 (2022)	5.3/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Below Australian benchmark (5.5)	Residents' sense of their job prospects has remained steady since 2022 but is the lowest-rated attribute in this domain. It points to some concern about local work availability.
Outcome: Business diversity					
Experience of shopping, leisure and dining	7.0/10 (2022)	6.6 /10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly above Australian benchmark (5.9)	The experience of local shops, dining and things to do has come back from its 2024 high of 7.2 to 6.6. Residents still rate the everyday options on the Beaches well above the benchmark.
Experience of a prosperous economy	7.10 (2022)	6.8/10 (2026)	Deteriorating 	Significantly above Australian benchmark (5.7)	Residents' experience of a prosperous economy has lessened each wave, from 7.2 in 2022 to 6.8. Cost of living and a softer economic mood are showing up in how people see the local economy.
Local spend	\$7.43 billion (2020)	\$7.71 billion (2026)	Increasing 	No benchmark available	Local spending across the 14 tracked expenditure categories increased from \$7.43 billion in 2020 to \$7.71 billion in 2026, steadily building year on year and representing overall growth of \$280 million, or 3.8%.

Key



Rates Deteriorating



Rates Improving



Maintaining



Baseline result



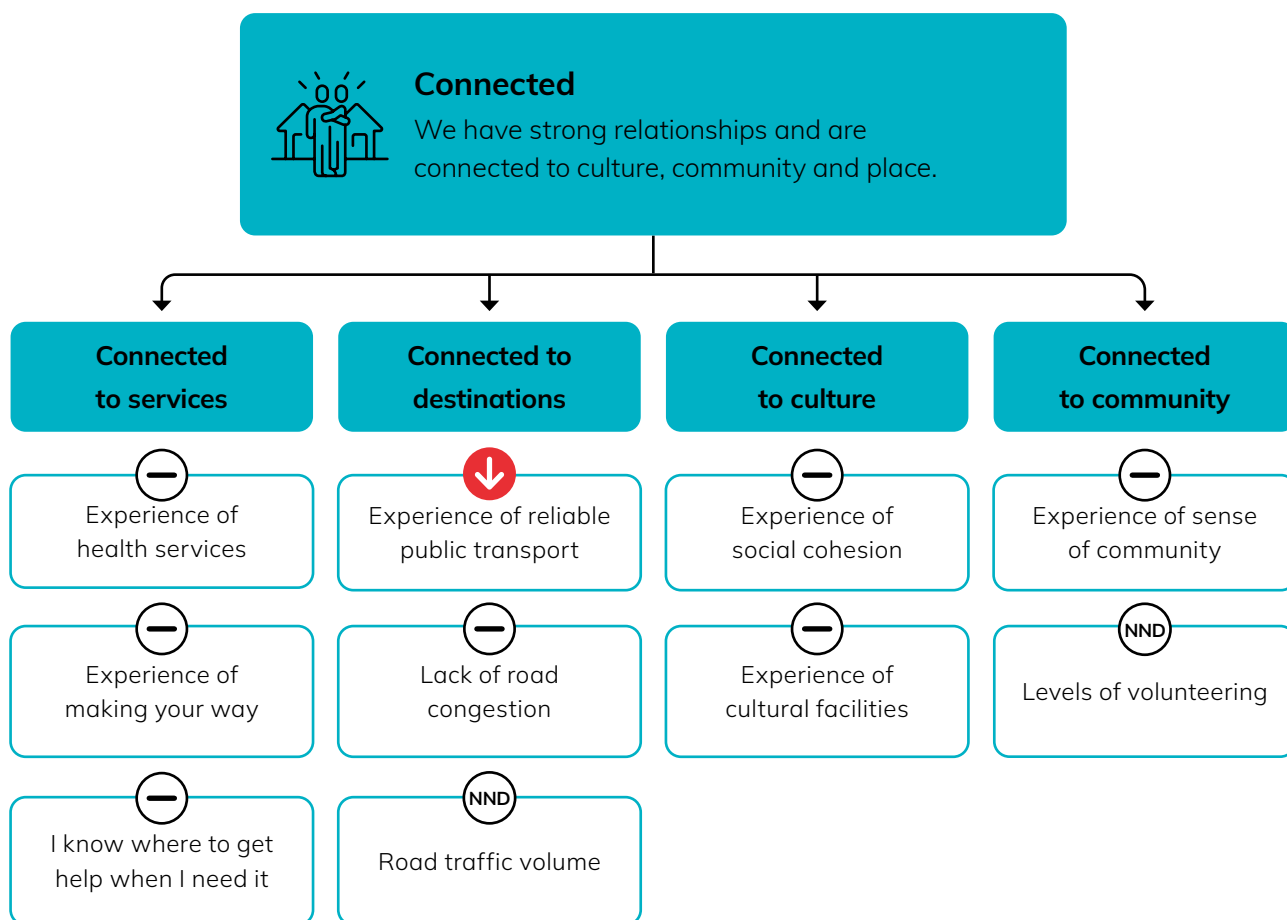
No new data

Indicator	Baseline	Latest result	Trend over time	Performance against benchmark	What it tells us
Outcome: Equipped for the future					
Experience of high quality education opportunities	6.7/10 (2022)	6.8/10 (2026)	Maintaining ⊖	Significantly above Australian benchmark (6.3)	The experience of education opportunities has held steady since 2022. Local access to good schooling and learning remains a consistent strength.
Outcome: Engaged community					
Experience of opportunity for all	6.2/10 (2022)	6.5/10 (2026)	Maintaining ⊖	Significantly above Australian benchmark (6.0)	Residents' sense that opportunity is open to everyone has edged up from 6.2 in 2022 to 6.5. A small but steady gain in how fairly people feel the area's opportunities are shared.

Note - For Community Views survey indicators, trends are reported as Improving or Deteriorating only where the change from baseline is statistically significant. Otherwise, the indicator is reported as Maintaining.



Connected



Key

↑ ↓ Rates Deteriorating
 ↑ ↓ Rates Improving
 ⊖ Maintaining
 BL Baseline result
 NND No new data

Feeling connected, to services, to places and to other people, is part of what makes somewhere a community rather than just a collection of houses. This domain looks at how easily residents can get around and find help, and at the strength of the social ties that hold the Northern Beaches together.

There are 4 outcomes and 10 indicators for the Connected domain of the Community Wellbeing Framework.

All have sufficient data to determine a trend over time (at least 2 reporting periods):

- 8 have updated trends for 2026
 - 7 maintained (know where to get help, making your way, cultural facilities, health services, social cohesion, sense of community and a lack of road congestion)
 - 1 deteriorated (experience of public transport)
- 2 have no new data and the trend remains as previously reported in 2024 (road traffic volume and levels of volunteering)

Connected domain indicators

Indicator	Baseline	Latest result	Trend over time	Performance against benchmark	What it tells us
Outcome: Connected to services					
Experience of health services	7.2/10 (2022)	6.8/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Above Australian benchmark (6.3)	Residents' experience of health services has eased to 6.8, down from 7.2 in 2022. With a growing and ageing population, residents are increasingly focused on whether services will keep pace.
Experience of making your way	5.7/10 (2022)	5.4/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly below Australian benchmark (6.1)	Getting to and from the services people need day to day remains stable since 2022. Distance and limited transport options can make everyday trips a real effort for some demographic groups.
I know where to get help when I need it	67% (2022)	64% (2026)	Maintaining 	No benchmark available	The share of residents who know where to get help is down slightly from 2022 but up a little on 2024. Most people still know where to turn, though there is room to make support easier to find.
Outcome: Connected to destinations					
Experience of public transport	6.3/10 (2022)	5.9/10 (2026)	Deteriorating 	Significantly above Australian benchmark (5.3)	Residents' experience of public transport has dropped each wave, from 6.3 in 2022 to 5.9. With major rail and metro investment happening elsewhere in Sydney, the Beaches stays reliant on buses, and frustration with reliability and travel times is growing.
Experience of a lack of road congestion	4.0/10 (2022)	4.0/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly below Australian benchmark (5.4)	The experience of getting around without congestion remains stable since 2022 but is the lowest-rated attribute in the domain. Traffic remains one of the clearest day-to-day frustrations for residents.

Key



Rates Deteriorating



Rates Improving



Maintaining



Baseline result



No new data

Indicator	Baseline	Latest result	Trend over time	Performance against benchmark	What it tells us
Road traffic volume	242,124 (2018)	211,372 (2021)	Data not available 	No benchmark available	Traffic volume across five major arterial roads fell from 242,124 in 2018 to 211,372 in 2021, a drop of about 13%. The 2021 figure is the most recent available, and may reflect lower travel during the pandemic. Due to ongoing data availability, this indicator will be reviewed as part of the next reporting cycle for its ongoing use.
Outcome: Connected to culture					
Experience of social cohesion	6.5/10 (2022)	6.6/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Above Australian benchmark (6.4)	How well residents feel people in the area get along has held steady since 2022.
Experience of cultural facilities	4.8/10 (2022)	4.8/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly below Australian benchmark (5.6)	After lifting to 5.2 in 2024, the experience of cultural facilities has settled back to 4.8, the same as its 2022 baseline. It is one of the lower-rated parts of community life and an area residents would like to see improve.
Outcome: Connected to community					
Experience of sense of community	7.1/10 (2022)	7.2/10 (2026)	Maintaining 	Significantly above Australian benchmark (6.4)	Residents' sense of community remains stable since 2022 and one of the strongest results in the domain. Local events, markets and surf clubs keep people connected to where they live.
Levels of volunteering	21.9% (2016)	16.9% (2021)	Data not available 	Above Greater Sydney benchmark (11.6%)	The share of residents who volunteer fell from 21.9% in 2016 to 16.9% in 2021. This indicator updates with the census, so the next refresh is due in 2027. Volunteering remains a strong part of local life and participation exceeds the benchmark.

Note - For Community Views survey indicators, trends are reported as Improving or Deteriorating only where the change from baseline is statistically significant. Otherwise, the indicator is reported as Maintaining.



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