

9 Local Services

Main Findings

In 2017, 51.9% of adults were satisfied with three public services: local health services, schools and public transport.

Satisfaction with the three public services is at its lowest level since first measured in 2007, and down from a peak of 66.0% in 2011 – due in part to a fall in satisfaction with local schools over the same period. The number of people who are very or fairly dissatisfied with local schools has remained stable throughout this period. The reason the number of adults very or fairly satisfied with local schools has fallen is almost entirely due to a corresponding increase from 11% to 25% in the number of people who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Satisfaction with the three public services among people who use those services is generally higher than that of the whole adult population, and is more stable over time.

Adults living in urban areas were more satisfied with the quality of the three public services than those in small towns and rural areas – mainly due to greater satisfaction with public transport.

In 2017, around a quarter (23%) of adults agreed that they can influence decisions affecting their local area. Around a third (33%) said they would like to be more involved in the decisions their council makes.

Generally, older adults were more likely than younger adults to say they are satisfied with local government performance and less likely to want to be more involved in making decisions.

Adults living in the most deprived areas were less likely to agree that they can influence decisions in their local area and less likely to want to be more involved in local decision making.

9.1 Introduction and Context

High quality public services which work together and with Scotland's communities are essential to support a fair, prosperous and inclusive society. The Scottish Government's approach to public service delivery seeks to place people and communities at the centre of what we do. In particular, it is an approach designed to target the causes rather than the consequences of inequalities; and to make sure that our public services are sustainable.

The National Performance Framework (NPF), which is supported by local councils, contains two National Indicators relating to public services where progress is monitored using data from this section of the Scottish Household Survey (SHS): "quality of public services", and "influence over local decisions".

Scotland's 32 local authorities work closely with other organisations (in a range of partnerships, including Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) to plan and deliver a wide range of services that improve the lives of people living in their areas. Under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, community planning is about how public bodies work together and with the local community to plan for, resource and provide or secure the provision of services which improve local outcomes in a local authority area, with a view to reducing inequalities. Each CPP must produce a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan which is collaboratively agreed. Many Community Planning Partnerships use the SHS to assess progress within their Local Outcomes Improvement Plans.

This chapter begins by exploring satisfaction with the quality of local services. It then reports respondents' views on local authority performance and attitudes to involvement in local decision-making.

9.2 Local Service Quality

9.2.1 Satisfaction among all adults in Scotland

The Scottish Government's National Indicator 'quality of public services' is measured by the percentage of adults who say they are (very or fairly) satisfied with three public services: local health services, schools and public transport. **Over the last year, the percentage of adults who said they were very or fairly satisfied with these services decreased from 56.1% in 2016 to 51.9% in 2017**, and has decreased from 66.0% in 2011 (Table 9.1).

Looking at the services individually, **adults tend to be most satisfied with local health services**. In 2017, 82% of adults were satisfied with local health services, compared to 70% who were satisfied with schools and 69% with public transport. **Satisfaction with schools has fallen over the last six years, from a high of 85% in 2011 to the current level of 70%**, and this is the biggest factor in the corresponding trend in the combined indicator over this period – though satisfaction with the other two services has also fallen since 2011.

Table 9.1: Percentage of people very or fairly satisfied with the quality of public services delivered (local health services, local schools and public transport) by year

Percentages, 2007-2017 data

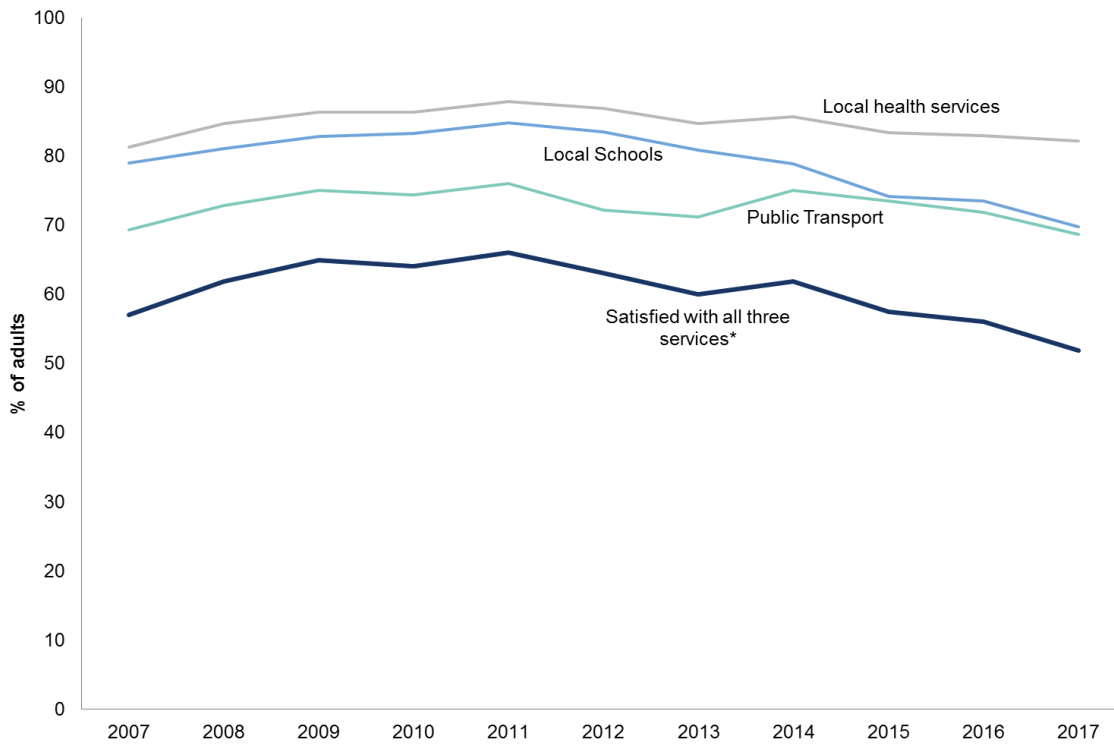
Adults	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Local health services	81	85	86	86	88	87	85	86	83	83	82
Local Schools	79	81	83	83	85	83	81	79	74	73	70
Public Transport	69	73	75	74	76	72	71	75	74	72	69
% satisfied with all three services*	57.1	61.8	64.9	64.0	66.0	63.0	59.9	61.9	57.5	56.1	51.9
Base (minimum)	6,270	5,500	5,470	5,000	5,510	5,340	5,700	5,720	5,790	6,130	6,260

* Percentages reported for all three services combined are those for which an opinion was given.

* Respondents could express no opinion for up to two of the services. While the base minimum has been quoted here (for the three main services) the base size for the composite "satisfaction with all three services" is for the whole adult sample 9,810.

Figure 9.1: Percentage of people very or fairly satisfied with the quality of public services delivered (local health services, local schools and public transport) by year

2007 - 2017 data, Adults (min base: 5,000)



* Percentages reported for all three services combined are those for which an opinion was given. Respondents could express no opinion for up to two of the services. While the base minimum has been quoted here (for the three main services) the base size for the composite “satisfaction with all three services” is for the whole adult sample 9,810.

Table 9.2 provides a more detailed breakdown of satisfaction levels with each of the three public services. **The number of adults very or fairly satisfied with local schools has fallen from 85% to 70% since 2011, this is almost entirely due to a corresponding increase from 11% to 25% in the number of people who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. The number of people who are very or fairly dissatisfied with local schools has remained stable throughout this period.**

Table 9.2: Percentage of people very or fairly satisfied with the quality of public services delivered (local health services, local schools and public transport) by year

Percentages, 2007-2017 data

Adults	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Local health services											
Very or fairly satisfied	81	85	86	86	88	87	85	86	83	83	82
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	7	6	5	5	4	5	6	5	6	6	6
Very or fairly dissatisfied	12	10	9	9	8	9	10	9	11	11	12
Local Schools											
Very or fairly satisfied	79	81	83	83	85	83	81	79	74	73	70
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	17	14	12	12	11	13	15	18	22	22	25
Very or fairly dissatisfied	4	5	5	5	4	3	4	3	4	5	5
Public Transport											
Very or fairly satisfied	69	73	75	74	76	72	71	75	74	72	69
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	14	12	11	12	10	14	12	13	12	15	15
Very or fairly dissatisfied	17	15	14	14	14	14	17	11	14	13	16
<i>Base (minimum)</i>	<i>6,270</i>	<i>5,500</i>	<i>5,470</i>	<i>5,000</i>	<i>5,510</i>	<i>5,340</i>	<i>5,700</i>	<i>5,720</i>	<i>5,790</i>	<i>6,130</i>	<i>6,260</i>

Table 9.3 shows the differences in people's perceptions of public services by urban rural classification. Overall, adults living in urban areas and remote small towns were more satisfied with the quality of public services than those in accessible small towns and rural areas. However, this is mainly due to differences in satisfaction with public transport in remote and rural areas. **Satisfaction with public transport in large urban areas was 79%, compared to only 48% in accessible rural areas.** Remote rural areas had higher levels of satisfaction with local schools (78% compared to 65% in large urban areas).

Table 9.3: Percentage of people very or fairly satisfied with the quality of public services delivered (local health services, local schools and public transport) by Urban/Rural classification

Percentages, 2017 data

Adults	Large urban areas	Other urban areas	Accessible small towns	Remote small towns	Accessible rural	Remote rural	All
Local health services	85	79	81	76	86	83	82
Local Schools	65	72	71	78	67	78	70
Public Transport	79	70	57	66	48	51	69
% satisfied with all three services*	58.0	51.4	45.4	52.4	41.0	47.1	51.9
<i>Base (minimum)</i>	<i>1,700</i>	<i>2,210</i>	<i>510</i>	<i>440</i>	<i>640</i>	<i>750</i>	<i>6,260</i>

* Percentages reported for all three services combined are those for which an opinion was given.

Respondents could express no opinion for up to two of the services. While the base minimum has been quoted here (for the three main services) the base size for the composite “satisfaction with all three services” is for the whole adult sample 9,810.

Table 9.4 shows the differences in people’s perceptions of public services by level of deprivation, as defined using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and divided into quintiles⁵². **Overall satisfaction with the quality of public services is broadly similar across all levels of deprivation**, with satisfaction being higher in both the most and least deprived quintiles due to higher levels of satisfaction with public transport.

Table 9.4: Percentage of people very or fairly satisfied with the quality of public services delivered (local health services, local schools and public transport) by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation quintiles

Percentages, 2017 data

Adults	← 20% most deprived		20% least deprived→			All
	1	2	3	4	5	
Local health services	80	81	82	83	84	82
Local Schools	71	69	69	70	70	70
Public Transport	74	69	65	64	71	69
% satisfied with all three services*	54.9	50.4	49.6	50.9	53.7	51.9
<i>Base (minimum)</i>	<i>1,070</i>	<i>1,220</i>	<i>1,420</i>	<i>1,380</i>	<i>1,170</i>	<i>6,260</i>

* Percentages reported for all three services combined are those for which an opinion was given.

Respondents could express no opinion for up to two of the services. While the base minimum has been quoted here (for the three main services) the base size for the composite “satisfaction with all three services” is for the whole adult sample 9,810.

⁵² See Annex 2: Glossary

9.2.2 Satisfaction among service users only

The SHS allows us to identify users of services and establish if the views of service users are different to those of the population as a whole.

Table 9.5 shows satisfaction with the three public services among service users only.

Satisfaction with both schools (87%) and public transport (76%) was higher in 2017 among those who use these services than the corresponding satisfaction level for the whole adult population, while satisfaction with health services (83%) among users was similar to the whole adult population. Satisfaction of service users is also more stable over time than that of all adults. This suggests that public opinion of services may be formed by more than current personal experience of those services.

Table 9.5: Percentage of service users very or fairly satisfied with the quality of public services delivered (local health services, local schools and public transport) by year

Percentages, 2007-2017 data

Service users	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Local health services	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	83
Local Schools	90	89	88	88	90	92	90	90	90	88	87
Public Transport	77	80	81	80	82	80	78	82	79	80	76
<i>Base (minimum)</i>	<i>2,040</i>	<i>1,740</i>	<i>1,880</i>	<i>1,650</i>	<i>1,800</i>	<i>1,750</i>	<i>1,820</i>	<i>1,780</i>	<i>1,690</i>	<i>1,740</i>	<i>1,660</i>

1. Users of Local health services not available prior to 2017
2. Users of Local schools identified by whether there is a school child present in the household
3. Users of Public transport identified by whether the respondent has used a bus or train within the last month

9.3 Perceptions of Local Authority Performance and Involvement in Local Decision Making

The Scottish Government's approach continues to be informed by the findings of the Christie Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services in 2011⁵³, providing consistent and clear strategic direction built around the four pillars of reform: partnership; prevention; people and performance. This approach places people and communities at the centre of public service delivery and policy making. Perceptions of local authority performance have been collected.

As well as satisfaction with local services, perceptions of local authority performance in the SHS are measured by asking people to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with various statements relating to the role of a local council and the perceived quality of communication and services, involvement in decision making, and value for money.

⁵³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/27154527/0>

Figure 9.2: Percentage agreeing with various statements about local authority services and performance

2017 data, Adults (base: 9,810)

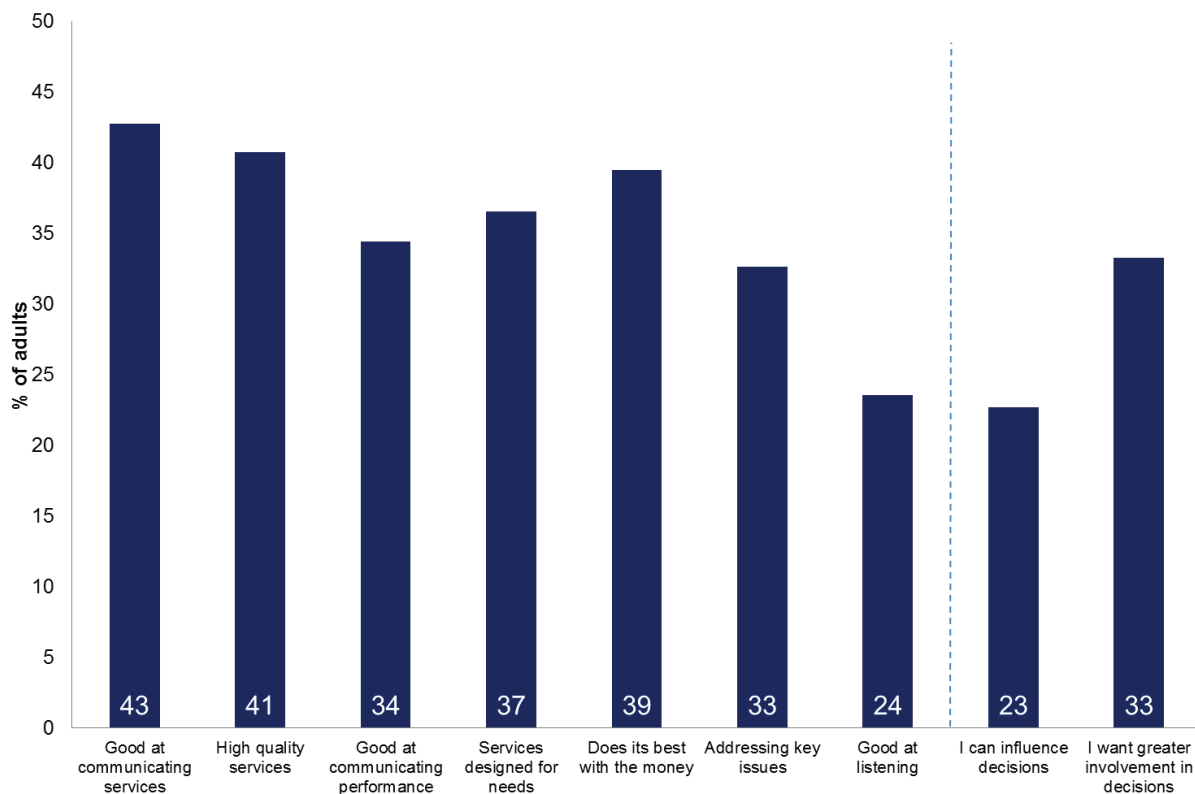


Figure 9.2, above, shows the percentage of adults who agreed (strongly or slightly) with these statements about different aspects of their local authority's performance. The highest level of agreement was amongst those who said their **council is good at letting people know about the kinds of services it provides (43%) and provides high quality services (41%).**

The lowest levels of agreement were with statements about being able to influence decisions in their local area (23%) and the council being good at listening to local people's views (24%).

The National Performance Framework National Indicator 'Influence over local decisions' is measured as the percentage of adults in the SHS who agree that they can influence decisions affecting their local area.

In 2017, 22.7% of people agreed that they can influence decisions affecting their local area, as shown in Table 9.6. This is an increase of 3.1 percentage points since 2007, and is unchanged⁵⁴ since 2015 when the Community Empowerment Act 2015 came into force.

⁵⁴ once accounting for statistical significance

Table 9.6: Percentage of people who agree with the statement 'I can influence decisions affecting my local area' by year

Percentages, 2007-2017 data

Adults	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
I can influence decisions	19.6	21.7	21.8	21.3	22.4	21.5	22.0	23.0	23.6	23.1	22.7
Base (minimum)	10,230	9,250	9,710	9,020	9,660	9,890	9,920	9,800	9,410	9,640	9,810

In 2017, 33% of adults said they would like to be more involved in the decisions their council makes that affects their local area, compared to 23% who felt they can influence decisions affecting their local area (Figure 9.2). In 2017, around a quarter (24%) of adults agreed that their council is good at listening to local people's views before it takes decisions.

Table 9.7 shows how level of agreement with the nine statements has changed over time. The percentage of people who agree that their local council is good at communicating services and good at communicating performance were both relatively stable between 2007 and 2014. However, since then **the percentage who say that their local council is good at communicating services has declined** (from 49% to 43%), **as has the percentage who say that their local council is good at communicating performance** (from 41% to 34%).

The percentage of people who want greater involvement in decisions affecting their local area has decreased since 2007 (from 38% in 2007 to 33% in 2017), while the percentage who think that their local council is good at listening has increased slightly over the same period (from 21% to 24%).

Table 9.7: Percentage agreeing with various statements about local authority services and performance by year

Percentages, 2007-2017 data

Adults	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Good at communicating services	47	48	49	48	49	48	48	49	46	45	43
High quality services	40	42	43	42	44	44	45	47	46	45	41
Good at communicating performance	42	42	41	41	40	41	40	41	38	37	34
Services designed for needs	32	34	38	39	39	40	40	41	40	40	37
Does its best with the money	35	38	36	39	39	40	40	41	41	41	39
Addressing key issues	33	34	34	34	34	35	36	37	36	36	33
Good at listening	21	22	23	23	23	25	25	26	25	25	24
I can influence decisions	20	22	22	21	22	21	22	23	24	23	23
I want greater involvement in decisions	38	37	36	36	36	33	35	34	34	34	33
Base (minimum)	10,230	9,250	9,710	9,020	9,660	9,890	9,920	9,800	9,410	9,640	9,810

All time series data is produced on a consistent basis. Figures published in the 2007 SHS Annual Report may differ slightly for some question statements

Figure 9.3 shows that there are some differences by age group in agreement with statements about local authority services and performance. **Generally, older adults are more likely than younger adults to say they are satisfied with the performance statements about local government services and less likely to want to be more involved in making decisions.** Around half of 60 to 74 year olds and those aged 75 years and over agreed with the statement that their council does the best it can with the money available, compared to around one third of 16 to 24 and 25 to 34 year olds.

The strongest desire to participate in local decision-making was shown by those aged 35 to 44, with 42% saying they would like to have greater involvement with decisions affecting their local area (compared to 29% for those aged 60-74, and 15% for those 75 and above). Those aged 75 and above were also least likely to feel that they can influence decisions (16%, compared to 25% for those aged 16-44).

Figure 9.3: Percentage agreeing with various statements about local authority services by age

2017 data, Adults (min base: 650)

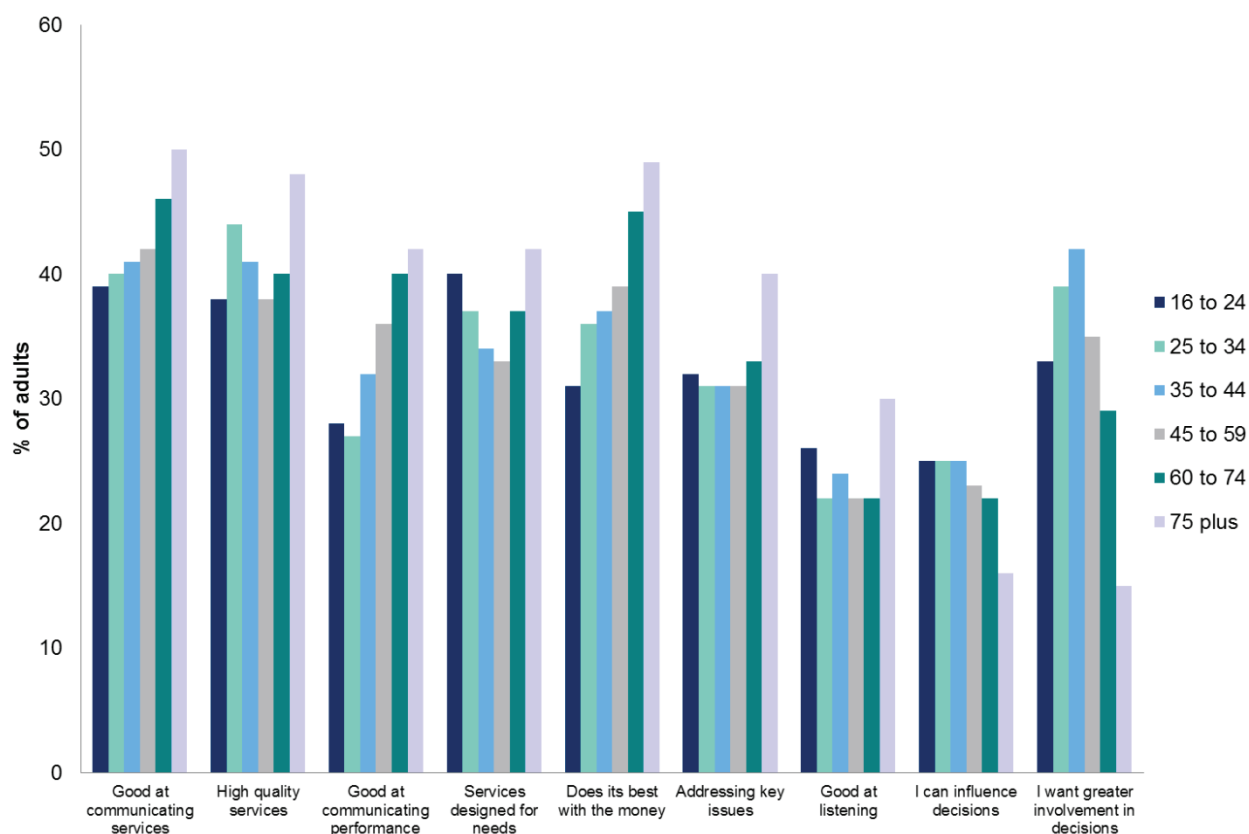


Figure 9.4 looks at differences in agreement with statements about local authority performance by the level of deprivation of the area, as defined using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and divided into quintiles as above. **Levels of agreement with most statements were similar across areas, regardless of deprivation levels.**

Perceptions of being able to influence decisions and the desire to be involved in decision-making were lower in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived areas. Adults living in the most deprived areas were less likely to agree that they can influence decisions in their local area (19% in the most deprived areas, compared to 25% in the least deprived areas) and less likely to want to be more involved in local decision making, (30% in the most deprived areas, compared to 40% in the least deprived areas).

Figure 9.4: Percentage agreeing with various statements about local authority services by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

2017 data, Adults (min base: 1,810)

