



Cornwall
Community
Foundation

Cornwall's Vital Signs 2025



University
of Exeter

Sig

social innovation group



UKCF
Quality Accredited

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A big thank you to **James Williams** CVO Vice Lord-Lieutenant, and former Chair of Cornwall Community Foundation, for his generous donation to support the publication of the Vital Signs report for the third time. 'I am very proud to be able to support this essential research into social and economic conditions in our County. The knowledge that is gained will help to focus the Community Foundation and its donors on the areas of real need throughout Cornwall.' – **James Williams**.

Vital Signs

Vital Signs® is a research project designed to identify social and community priorities.

Prepared by Cornwall Community Foundation (CCF) it reports on the vitality of our communities, identifying significant trends in a range of areas critical to quality of life. Feel free to use the stats from this report in your own work. We would appreciate a quick credit to Cornwall Community Foundation and the original source.

Core themes

The core themes are the backbone of this report.

This follows the approach recommended by UKCF and repeats themes from the 2017 and 2022 Vital Signs reports. Each area of research, the surveys, consultations and meetings have all been aligned to these themes, where possible. Themes cross over and impact one another and therefore should not be interpreted in isolation. In addition, there are two further cross-cutting themes that, whilst not considered separately, impact all eight main themes: transport and rurality. The impact of COVID, and the cost-of-living crisis also continue to exacerbate the issues facing communities across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Methodology

Our research for Vital Signs consisted of several work streams.

- We collaborated with the University of Exeter and reviewed statistical data, reports and consultations from charities, local authorities and national government.
- We supplemented this research with a survey of residents who use the services of, or are connected to the community groups, charities, and social enterprises CCF has supported. 371 responses were received.
- We explored the emerging themes in more detail at three community consultations.

We thank The Rame Centre in Millbrook, KBSK Performing Arts CIC in Bodmin and TRELYA in Penzance for kindly hosting and facilitating these consultations.

Full research and references can be found in our Vital Issues research paper on our website. www.cornwallcommunityfoundation.com

Welcome to Cornwall's Vital Signs an analysis of social need

This Vital Signs report, produced by Cornwall Community Foundation (CCF), offers a comprehensive, data-driven overview of life in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly in 2025. Its purpose is to identify key social priorities and trends affecting the region's wellbeing drawing on published research, public surveys and community consultations.



Tamas Haydu,
Chief Executive

The report is structured around eight core themes, or social determinants of health, that interconnect to reflect the complexity of local challenges, while also recognising the overarching influence of rurality.

Cornwall is marked by deep contrasts. On one hand, the region boasts strong community cohesion, a rich cultural heritage and beautiful landscapes. On the other, it faces entrenched socio-economic challenges, with rising inequality, housing shortages, health pressures and educational disparities. Many of these issues are intensified by Cornwall's rural geography and seasonal economy.

Economically, Cornwall continues to struggle with low wages, insecure employment and rising living costs. Social inequality is stark, with child poverty rates alarmingly high in many areas. Access to services – healthcare, education, transport, digital connectivity – is uneven, especially in rural communities. Public services face mounting pressure, and the voluntary sector plays a critical role in supporting vulnerable populations. Mental health services are under-resourced and shortages in social care staff reflect systemic strains.

Sadly, housing and homelessness are at crisis levels. House prices far outpace earnings, and the demand for social housing has doubled in five years. Over 21,000 households are now on the social housing register. It is also very important that we do not overlook environmental concerns. Climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss threaten the region's natural assets, although there are notable developments in renewable energy and conservation.

Despite these challenges, Cornwall's communities demonstrate remarkable resilience, creativity and solidarity. The strength of its voluntary sector, the richness of its culture, and the deep connection people have to place and one another, are powerful forces for change. From grassroots campaigns to national recognition as a Living Wage Place, from cultural revival to environmental innovation, Cornwall is not standing still. The Vital Signs report is not just a mirror of the present – it is a call to action. It shows that with shared purpose, bold leadership and community-driven solutions, Cornwall can turn adversity into opportunity and build a future that is fairer, healthier and more sustainable for all who call it home.

Oll an gwella,

1. Local Economy and Employment

As of mid-2023, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly had a population of 578,324, with a workforce marked by high levels of part-time work and self-employment.

Key employment sectors include retail, health, construction, hospitality and education. These sectors made up 60% of all employment. Cornwall faces persistent economic challenges including low wages, high housing costs and increasing living expenses. In 2024, the average salary in Cornwall was £37,542 –significantly below the UK average. Over 20% of workers earned below the real Living Wage, with South East Cornwall being most affected.

Employment dropped in 2024, with economic inactivity rising to 22.4%. Self-employment (14.7%) remains above the national average, but earnings are low. Universal Credit claimants increased by 35% between 2022–2024. Most people commute by car, while public transport use remains low due to limited services, high costs, and infrequent or non-existent routes.

Cornwall’s economy is dominated by micro and small enterprises, especially in construction and agriculture. The county has three Enterprise Zones supporting marine, aerospace and space sectors.

The visitor economy contributes £2 billion annually but is under strain due to inflation, reduced consumer spending and a skills shortage.

The rise of the gig economy and low-pay, insecure jobs, especially in rural areas with limited transport, adds to employment challenges. In 2025 Cornwall has become the first UK county or Duchy to be recognised as a “Living Wage Place” by the Living Wage Foundation, thanks to a successful campaign led by Simon Fann, Truro Foodbank Manager.

Vital statistics



In 2024 the average wage in Cornwall was £37,542. The UK average wage was £45,836.



Across Cornwall in 2024 1 in 5 employees (20.1% of the population) earned less than the real living wage (£12.60 per hour), compared to 15.7% across the U.K.



1 in 3 employees earn below the real living wage in South East Cornwall. In the West, in St Ives and Penzance, 1 in 4 employees earn below the real living wage. In North Cornwall, in St Austell and Newquay, 1 in 5 employees earn below the real living wage—all these areas are worse than the national average.



34.5% of part time jobs paid below the real living wage, vs 12.8% of full-time jobs. Part-time work accounts for over 37.6% of jobs in Cornwall.



267,600 people (ages 16 to 64) were employed in Cornwall in June 2024. Employment in Cornwall has decreased compared with the previous year.



There were 58,963 people on Universal Credit in December 2024 compared to 43,917 in May 2022 showing a rate of increase of 35% in two and a half years.



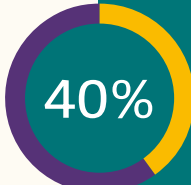
Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly attracts 4 million overnight visits every year, along with 14 million day trips. Overall, the visitor economy makes up 15% of the Cornish economy.



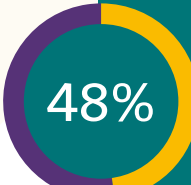
The current cost of living is likely to impact visits to the county as people look to cut costs and budget. 34% are spending less on eating and drinking out and 29% are looking for more ‘free things’ to do.

Vital Signs community survey

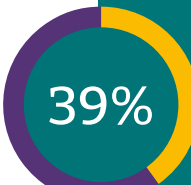
The employment situation worsened in 2025, with increased difficulty securing stable jobs and a growing mismatch between skills and employer needs:



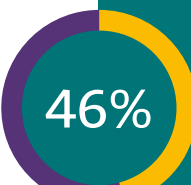
40% of respondents reported difficulties securing or retaining good quality, year-round employment, a significant increase on 2022 results (25%).



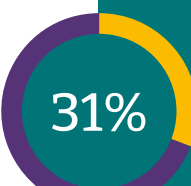
Almost half of the respondents (48%) to our survey feel that they don't receive a fair wage for the work they do.



39% reported their current skills did not match employer needs.



Many people (46%) still feel that Cornwall is not doing well after the pandemic and economic uncertainties (42% in 2022).



A third of respondents (31%) are struggling to pay all their bills and buy food for their families.

Case study: Falmouth Food Co-op

Falmouth Food Co-op CIC (FFC) is a social enterprise building fairer, more sustainable food systems in Cornwall. Through their three linked projects — The Grocery, Loveland, and The Kitchen — they connect local growers with customers and offer jobs, training and volunteer roles to support the community.

With support from the CCF’s Social Enterprise Fund, the ICB Health Improvement Fund and the Carew Pole Fund, the Co-op has helped strengthen the local economy. By giving small producers a consistent place to sell their food, they’ve created a strong alternative to big supermarkets. This model also helped them stay open during the cost-of-living crisis, when many similar food hubs were closing, and has allowed them to grow a more sustainable, long-term model that supports local farmers and keeps money in Cornwall.



“Shopping with FFC has made it easy for me to access a range of local suppliers and good quality, organic and agroecological food. I believe it is also saving me money as I now rarely, if ever, go to a supermarket and so my shopping and my cooking is done in a more thoughtful and planned way.”

Amber, regular customer

Community consultation - listening and learning

“Businesses are finding it difficult to find apprentices. It is a wonderful opportunity if you have the support, but the pay is so little.”

– Millbrook community consultation

“We’ve become very good at lifting the bar of the Cornish economy, but what we haven’t done is raise the floor. The Shared Prosperity Fund hasn’t achieved this either.”

– Bodmin community consultation

“Transport in Cornwall has always been an issue. Sometimes getting from Bodmin to Newquay can take two hours on a bus.”

– Bodmin community consultation

“Our foodbank use in St Ives goes up in the winter, by about 25%, usually due to the amount of seasonal work.”

– Penzance community consultation

2. Fairness and Strong Communities

Cornwall faces significant socio-economic challenges across multiple dimensions of deprivation, including education, employment, health and housing.

Over half of households experience at least one form of deprivation, with child poverty particularly alarming – one in three children live in poverty, peaking at **42%** in some wards. Fuel poverty affects **15.4%** of households, with energy-inefficient homes worsening the issue. Rising living costs have driven record reliance on foodbanks, and increased eligibility for free school meals, now at **22.9%** of pupils. However, not all eligible children receive them.

Poor public transport and broadband infrastructure exacerbate rural isolation, limiting access to jobs, healthcare, and education. A decline in rural post office access further impacts vulnerable residents. Cornwall's average internet speed lags behind the UK average, with over one-third of residents facing slow connections.

University of Exeter research shows that the skills of talented people living in rural Cornwall are being wasted because of poor public transport and lack of internet access.

Citizens Advice reports **40,000** residents have negative budgets, with housing and energy costs driving financial stress.

Despite these hardships, Cornwall boasts a vibrant voluntary sector with **140,000** volunteers contributing an estimated **£490 million** to the local economy. Local initiatives like the Winter Wellbeing program and Council financial support provide essential aid, but sustained intervention is needed to address widespread deprivation and inequality.

Vital statistics



One in three children in Cornwall are living in poverty after housing costs.



Child poverty is highest in North Cornwall (**36%**) and Camborne and Redruth (**35%**) parliamentary constituencies. In the Bodmin St Mary's & St Leonard ward **42%** of children are living in poverty.



Fuel poverty affects over **15%** of all households in Cornwall and **18%** on the Isles of Scilly (England average is **13%**).



Since 2011/2012, Cornwall Council's Winter Wellbeing program has assisted over **40,000** households in staying warm, well, and safe during the winter months.



In 2023/24 Citizens Advice Cornwall assisted **1,200 people** with debt issues, helping them write off a total of **£769k** in debt and reschedule a further **£92k**.



Food banks in Cornwall distributed over **35,500** emergency food parcels between April 2024 and March 2025, with more than **12,500** of these parcels provided for children under the age of 16.



Volunteer Cornwall has **3,600** volunteers throughout Cornwall who can help with food shopping collections, signposting to debt advice, general health and wellbeing support.



In 2024 **23%** of all pupils in Cornwall were eligible for free school meals, a record number in the past nine years.



As of December 2024, the average internet speed in Cornwall is 103 Mbps. **42%** lower than the UK average (158 Mbps).

Vital Signs community survey

Financial inequalities and public transport limitations remained significant concerns in 2025, with more people feeling disadvantaged and excluded due to rising costs and lack of transport options. However, results show strong localised community support.

91%

91% of respondents believe there is a wide income gap between people in Cornwall (a 4% increase from 2022, 87%).

57%

57% reported feeling disadvantaged compared to others.

71%

71% of respondents said there were not enough means of public transport for commuting and accessing services.

73%

However, **73%** stated that they know their neighbours and feel able to get to know people in their community, with **73%** getting involved in local events and activities.

'Affordable housing and transport in rural areas are out of reach for most low-income families.'

Case study: Cornwall Pride

Cornwall Pride supports LGBTQ+ people across Cornwall, tackling discrimination, isolation and poor mental health through inclusive community events and services. Operating in rural and coastal areas where services are limited, they host Pride events as well as providing peer-led wellbeing spaces, digital signposting, community outreach and year-round inclusion training to create safer communities where everyone feels seen and valued.

With funding from the ICB Health Improvement Fund Cornwall Pride has significantly expanded its Penguin Soup project, creating vital wellbeing spaces at Pride events across the county. These spaces offer immediate support, crisis signposting and peer-led care for LGBTQ+ individuals who often face barriers to traditional services. The project has helped people feel less alone by running regular social groups, making it easier to get support, and giving volunteers with similar experiences the chance to help others.



"Thank you for being there when no one else was. I felt safe, for the first time."

Penzance Pride attendee

Community consultation - listening and learning

"A lot of pensioners, mentally ill people and disabled people who are getting no social interaction, don't come to the foodbanks because they can't get out. But there is a level of need there that we are not yet meeting."

– Penzance community consultation

"Elderly people are so embarrassed that they come to the foodbank in tears. People are paying a really high rate for services as they are not online, and a large number of elderly people have been scammed."

– Penzance community consultation

"The Rame is a peninsula within the peninsula. Bus services are not adequate, and it is almost impossible to get to beyond Torpoint. You have to go to Plymouth first to get to Saltash and it takes half a day on the bus."

– Millbrook community consultation

"We were stranded at Derriford with no public transportation late evening and had to spend £60 on a taxi to get home."

– Millbrook community consultation

"Small shops charge more so those who are less able to travel have to pay more."

– Millbrook community consultation

3. Healthy Living

Cornwall rates as ‘average’ for healthy living indicators with life expectancy figures marginally higher than the UK.

However, there are certainly areas for concern with long waiting lists for mental health assessments, high suicide rates and more people living with depression since the COVID-19 pandemic.

The NHS Confederation reports that only 8% of the mental health budget and less than 1% of the total NHS budget is spent on children and young people’s mental health. This indicates a significant disparity in funding allocation, as 50% of adult mental health problems are present by age 15, and 75% by age 24.

Cornwall has a **higher-than-average** proportion of people with a long-term health condition or disability. One in five people are affected by disability. Improving health inequalities requires action across all the social determinants of health, including employment, housing, education and community.

Obesity is a major concern in Cornwall, **62.7%** of adults are overweight or obese. Drug use, especially crack cocaine and synthetic substances, is growing,

with **2,388** adults in drug treatment and **1,808** for alcohol treatment. Alcohol-related deaths are higher than national rates.

There is a lack of access to both routine and emergency NHS dental care across Cornwall. The cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated cost concerns for dental care. People are paying for private dental care out of desperation even though they can’t afford it, with many people getting into debt.

Between 2020 and 2043, the proportion of residents aged 65 and over is expected to increase from **25.1%** to **31.5%**, while those aged 0–15 will decline from **17.0%** to **15.3%**. Dementia affects nearly **10,000** older adults, with diagnosis rates just below national figures. Disability affects 21% of the population.

One in ten residents provides unpaid care, and social care staff shortages remain high, with 11% of posts vacant. These issues highlight deep-rooted health and social care challenges in the region.

Vital statistics

- 62.7%** of adults in Cornwall are overweight or living with obesity.
- An estimated **27,700** people took illicit drugs in Cornwall last year.
- The waiting list for children’s autism assessments is **three years**. For adults it is **11 years**.
- Only **19** Mental Health Practitioners are currently employed in GP surgeries – far below the target of **46**.
- 66,261** adults live with depression which is **13.5%** of adults

- The suicide rate in Cornwall, **15.6** deaths per **100,000** people, is much higher than the rate for England and Wales at **10.7**.
- 21.2%** of the population has a disability, much higher than the average in England at **17.3%**.
- The Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Integrated Care Board (ICB) is ranked **36th** out of **42** ICBs for the percentage of the adult population that has been seen by a dentist over the last **24** months. For children, it is ranked **41st** out of **42** ICBs.

Vital Signs community survey

Healthcare access remained a challenge in 2025, with mental health and transportation to appointments worsening, and waiting times continuing to be a major concern.

- 76%** of respondents reported inequality in healthcare access with **75%** stating they could not see a healthcare professional when needed.
- 68%** reported difficulty seeing a healthcare professional without long waiting times.
- Mental health provisions were of particular concern with **72%** stating that mental health support was not readily available when needed.
- There has been a significant increase in the number of people who find it difficult to arrange transport for attending healthcare appointments, **44%**, compared to 19% in 2022.

‘Health and social care are stretched beyond limits, making access difficult.’
‘I struggle to get the healthcare I need when I need it.’

Community consultation - listening and learning

- “You have to plan your whole day around the travel to get to somewhere like the hospital.”
– **Bodmin community consultation**
- “There isn’t enough support for rehabilitation. We are concerned about the mental health of men and those coming out of prison, trying to change their life.”
– **Bodmin community consultation**
- “Dental health and access to a dentist is an issue in Cornwall. With the wait time being something like 7 years.”
– **Penzance community consultation**

- “Somebody I know waited for 16 hours for an ambulance with a broken hip.”
– **Penzance community consultation**
- “We need change at a grass roots level, learning to grow food, to cook food, to have a balanced diet, to being able to provide for ourselves.”
– **Millbrook community consultation**

Case study: Trelya

Trelya in Penzance is charity that supports children, young people and families. They help people across West Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly by improving access to education, reducing poverty and offering safe spaces for fun and learning.

With generous support from the Sedel-Collings Foundation, the Caledonia Investments Charitable Foundation and the Emily Bolitho Fund, Trelya has been able to grow its key services and reach more people.

Surviving Winter funding helped them support 65 vulnerable families during the cost-of-living crisis, making sure those families remained healthy during a very difficult time.



“This funding relieved the stress, anxiety and financial pressure of families experiencing poverty, especially during this cost-of-living crisis. It helped improve the lives of these families by ensuring they have the basic resources they need to thrive.”

Alison Elvey, Trelya

4. Housing and Homelessness

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly face a significant shortage of affordable housing, making it difficult for local residents to find and afford homes, especially those on lower incomes.

Cornwall has high house prices, increasing homelessness rates, and a shortage of social housing, with a doubling of applicants for social housing and a significant rise in families and individuals in temporary accommodation.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated an already fragile housing situation in Cornwall. There was a significant demand on existing homes that housed local people to be converted into holiday lets and this was particularly high in coastal areas. Cornwall's Housing Register hit an all-time high and the Council declared Cornwall as officially in a Housing Crisis.

In January 2025 there were 960 households in temporary and emergency accommodation.

Since 2019 there has been a 224% increase in the number of households in temporary accommodation.

Homes for Cornwall, an independent coalition of representatives from the voluntary sector, private businesses, local government and policy makers, is dedicated to speeding up the local response to this crisis, creating more opportunities for more people, more quickly.

To end homelessness in Cornwall, we need solutions that not only provide immediate housing but also tackle the root causes to prevent homelessness in the future.

Vital statistics



There are **284,160** properties in Cornwall. **66%** of homes are owned by occupants.



Social rented properties represent **13%**, in contrast to **17%** in England.



In Cornwall the average home cost **8.8** times average earnings in 2024, compared to **7.5** in England and Wales. While earnings have doubled since 1997, house prices have more than quadrupled.



The average monthly private rent in Cornwall was **£957** per month in April 2025. This was an increase from **£883** in April 2024, a **8.4%** rise.



In August 2024 there were **21,120** households on Cornwall Homechoice social and affordable housing register. This has increased by **131%** over the last 5 years.



As of November 2024, there are **13,305** active Airbnb listings in Cornwall.



1,987 new social housing lets were offered to tenants in Cornwall in 2022-23, the lowest figure of any year over the past decade.



There are **14,123** second homes in Cornwall as of 2024. That's an increase of nearly **1,000** homes in the space of a year. **One in every 20** dwellings in Cornwall is now classed as a second home.



The number of long-term empty properties in Cornwall is **2,652**.



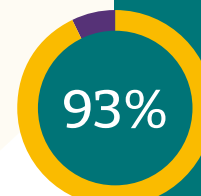
During the 2024-25 winter St Petrocs' Winter Service supported **538** people, a **27%** increase from the previous winter. In 2024 St Petrocs ended homelessness for **537** people.

Vital Signs community survey

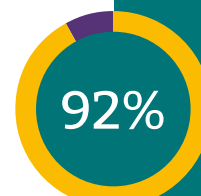
The housing crisis worsened in 2025, with increasing concern over affordability, unoccupied homes and lack of available housing for low-income households:



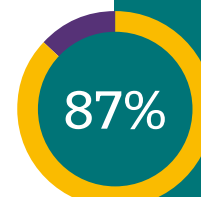
91% of respondents believe there is insufficient local, affordable housing.



93% agreed that there aren't enough houses for people on low income, an increase of 10% since 2022.



92% stated that private rental accommodation is unaffordable for most people, a 5% increase since 2022.



87% agreed that too many homes stood unoccupied all year.

'There are not enough affordable houses and private rents far exceed wages.'

Case study: St Petrocs

St Petrocs provides services across Cornwall in support of people who are experiencing homelessness, or who are at risk of experiencing homelessness. Funding from the Cornwall Christmas Fair, Surviving Winter Fund, Cornwall Glass Fund, Caledonia Investments Charitable Foundation, Carew Pole Charitable Trust, People in Mind Fund and the Emily Bolitho Fund contributed to their invaluable work.

In 2024 St Petrocs helped 537 people move on from homelessness. They engaged 1,402 people across their services. In 2024, 346 people lived in St Petrocs' 24 supported accommodation units. The five most common causes of homelessness experienced by their clients include relationship breakdown, family or friends cannot support them, loss of rented accommodation, mental health and violence. It shows that homelessness is complex, shaped by personal challenges, social factors and broader issues such as lack of affordable housing.



Community consultation - listening and learning

"We're facing a lot of families with living conditions that are totally unacceptable. The mould and damp are serious problems."

– Bodmin community consultation

"There are a lot of homeless people. We have people living in the woods, living in the cemetery, some camp out at the beach."

– Penzance community consultation

"We looked at a property to rent on Saturday and within two hours there were five applicants, and the property had gone to someone else."

– Millbrook community consultation

"Housing is a massive issue here. There are a lot more Airbnbs and not enough properties for rent. The need far outstrips the availability – it is a vicious circle."

– Millbrook community consultation

"You have one option for emergency accommodation offered by Cornwall Council, and they may offer you to move to other side of Cornwall. If you turn that down you are at the back of the queue. It hollows out the community."

– Millbrook community consultation

5. Safety

Cornwall is performing relatively well against the rest of the UK. It is perceived as a safe place to live and work, as reflected in our questionnaire results (75% agreed) and this is confirmed by comparatively low crime rates.

While Cornwall is still perceived as safe, safety concerns have increased, with more residents feeling unsafe at night, being affected by anti-social behaviour and perceiving inadequate police presence.

Cornwall's crime rate is 11% lower than the national average for similar areas, with 33,083 crimes reported in the past year. However, crime increased by 13% compared to 2023, driven by rising shoplifting and persistent issues with violence, domestic abuse and drug-related offences.

Over half of recorded crimes occur in town centres, and two-thirds happen in ten major towns where only one-third of Cornwall's population lives.

Reports of domestic abuse and sexual violence continue to increase year-on-year, and it is estimated that one in three women in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly will be affected during their lifetime. The true figure is likely to be far higher too as many incidents go unreported to police.

Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service, despite strong staffing, face challenges due to its rural coverage and reliance on on-call firefighters. It was rated as needing improvement in ensuring fairness and promoting diversity.

Vital statistics



In the past year, 33,083 crimes were reported to the police, equating to a rate of 57.5 crimes per 1000 residents, 11% lower than the average for similar areas nationally.



Compared with the same period in 2023, crime numbers increased by 13%.



Violence, domestic abuse, drug-related crime and exploitation are key concerns due to the high risk of harm to communities. Over 55% of recorded crime occurs in our town centres.



Sexual offences have risen by 40% in Cornwall over the past four years with 1,835 reported to police in the year up to September 2024.



Each year 10,000 reports of domestic abuse are made. Of the 22 domestic abuse related death reviews commissioned in Cornwall since 2020, 19 involve a female victim.



Devon and Cornwall Police recorded 2,433 shoplifting offences in Cornwall, marking a 30% increase from the 1,878 reported a year earlier. In Devon and Cornwall, 19% of shoplifting offences led to a charge or summons over this period, with no suspect identified in 38% of cases.



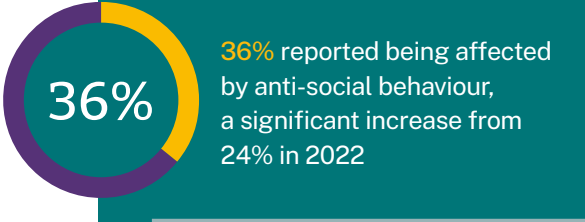
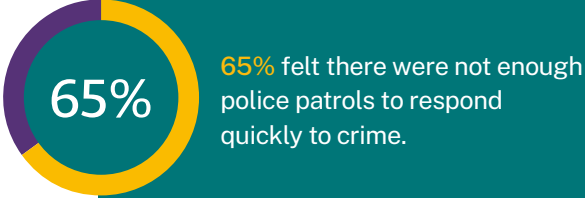
Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service operates 31 fire stations with 43 fire engines across Cornwall, staffed by approximately 167 Full-Time Firefighters (24 hrs) and around 400 On-Call Firefighters.



Safer Cornwall's Strategic Assessment 2024-25 reported that since pandemic restrictions ended in 2021, levels of reported crime have increased year on year.

Vital Signs community survey

While Cornwall is still perceived as safe, safety concerns in 2025 increased, with more residents feeling unsafe at night and perceiving inadequate police presence.



‘There are not enough police, crimes are not being responded to quickly.’

‘I don't feel safe walking alone in certain areas, especially at night.’

Case study: The Sparkle Foundation

The Sparkle Foundation is a volunteer-led charity that supports people going through tough times such as poverty, crisis, illness, domestic abuse or bereavement. Particularly providing support to those with nowhere else to turn. They offer kind, non-judgmental help that protects people's dignity and treats everyone equally.

With major support from the CCF's Crisis Fund, the Worval Foundation, the Police Property Act Fund, Goonhilly Wind Farm, the Business Club and the Surviving Winter Funds, the Sparkle Foundation has been able to provide emergency help when it's needed most.

Their support has helped people stay warm and fed, reduced the risk of offending, eased stress and offered relief while they wait for long-term support. One elderly couple were sleeping on the floor in multiple layers of clothes, because they could only afford to heat one room, until the Sparkle Foundation stepped in to help.



“The biggest outcome for most is they know there is help and that someone cares, that they matter.”

Leigh Yates, The Sparkle Foundation

Community consultation - listening and learning

“Communities are seeing an increase in anti-social behavior during school holidays, especially in the summer. Everything stops during summer, even football has a break.”
– Bodmin community consultation

“We have massive issues of anti-social behaviour. People are intoxicated, with that comes disruptive behaviour which can be very intimidating.”
– Penzance community consultation

“We must think about discrimination and the safety of people that are represented by the protected characteristics, people who are gay, are black, are disabled, are discriminated simply on how we look and who we are. I think that we need to tackle that discrimination.”
– Penzance community consultation

6. Education and Learning

Cornwall continues to face significant educational challenges, particularly for disadvantaged students.

A 2024 report by the South-West Social Mobility Commission reveals that the region has the lowest proportion of disadvantaged students attaining Level 3 qualifications (A-levels, T-levels and equivalents) and the highest school absence rates in England. The report warns that these entrenched challenges, coupled with rising living costs, threaten long-term social mobility in the region.

75,718 pupils are attending 295 schools in Cornwall in 2024/25. This includes 278 state-funded and six independent schools. Early years development and KS2 performance for children eligible for free school meals lags behind national averages in most constituencies. GCSE results varied widely, with the top school achieving 61% grade 5+ in English and maths, while others fell below 30%.

Nationally, 45% reached this benchmark; in Cornwall, only 19% of disadvantaged students did.

In 2023/2024, Cornwall supported over 4,000 children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). A significant portion of these children have Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans, with an 18% increase in EHC plans in recent years.

Funding for schools in Cornwall is among the lowest in England, with the lowest average teacher salaries. Recruitment challenges persist, particularly in rural areas, driven by low funding and excessive workload.

Vital statistics



6.9% of 16-64 year olds in Cornwall had no qualifications in 2023, slightly worse than the national average of 6.2% in England.



30.6% of people in Cornwall had a level 4 or higher qualification – such as a degree, postgraduate qualification, higher national certificate or diploma -nationally 33.8%.



In Cornwall, 6.6% of people reported an apprenticeship as their highest level of qualification. This was slightly higher than in England (5.3%).



Cornwall has 238 primary schools with 41,784 students for the school year 2024/25.



Cornwall has 51 secondary schools with 33,934 students for the school year 2024/25.



One in three secondary school pupils (31.7%) are missing out on 10% of their sessions. This is significantly higher than the 25% nationally.



Cornwall is 142nd out of 149 local authorities for school income per pupil.



Cornwall is 151st out of 151 local authorities for average gross salary of teachers.



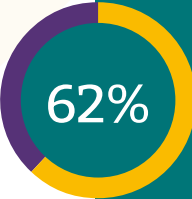
Cornwall Council's Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller Strategy 2024–34 reported that levels of both temporary and permanent exclusions are high, and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children leave school at a much earlier age.

Vital Signs community survey

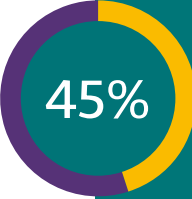
Slight improvements were seen in school performance and skills development in 2025, but higher education opportunities and literacy levels continued to lag behind.



Only half of respondents (52%) agreed that local schools provided a good level of education (55% in the 2022 survey).



However, 62% felt they had opportunities to learn new skills and gain qualifications.



45% felt that higher education opportunities in Cornwall were insufficient, compared to 33% in 2022.

‘There is a lack of opportunities for young people to learn and progress.’
‘There is limited access to further education and skills training for rural communities.’

Case study: Black Voices Cornwall

Black Voices Cornwall is committed to an anti-racist Cornwall and inclusion across the county. Through education, advocacy and community support, they help shape fairer policies, offer anti-racism training, and celebrate Cornwall's cultural diversity with events and workshops.

Thanks to grants from CCF's Cornwall Club and Business Club, they've been able to run cultural events that bring people together, raise awareness, and celebrate different backgrounds. These events have created welcoming spaces where people feel seen, heard and valued, with powerful feedback showing the difference they make.



“No charity runs on good faith alone and it is at times when we require the support of our local stakeholders that CCF proudly steps forward to make our work possible.”
Abi Tahela, Black Voices Cornwall

Community consultation - listening and learning

“We’ve seen a huge increase in children that aren’t able to access education, lots of social isolation. It’s echoed across the county.”
– Bodmin community consultation

“There are some children where even in year 8 or 9 they have only just had their first time at the beach.”
– Bodmin community consultation

“We have a high level of young carers, hidden young carers who don’t realise they are until they say something. It’s normalised for them, they don’t know any different.”
– Bodmin community consultation

“64% of children in my school are on Pupil Premium which is huge, easily three times the national average. Whilst 50% have special educational needs.”
– Penzance community consultation

“There is no way into CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) as the waiting list is too long. Children are out of school because there are no provisions for them.”
– Penzance community consultation

“Children are not being toilet trained when they are going to school and part of our remit at reception is to toilet train children as they are still in their nappies.”
– Penzance community consultation

7. Arts, Culture and Heritage

Arts, culture and heritage are thriving in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, with distinctive Celtic roots and folklore.

Cornwall's creative sector is growing particularly in digital media, film, music, performing and visual arts. **10,870** people are employed in creative related occupations.

However, whilst Cornwall has many festivals and celebrates its arts, culture and history (including its own language), access and affordability is a barrier for many. **72%** of our survey respondents stated that travelling to arts, culture and heritage events is difficult and close to two thirds of the respondents (**64%**) cannot afford to attend as many of these types of events as they would like.

Addressing barriers to finance, access to markets at local, national and international level and improving

business performance/productivity represent the greatest opportunities to increase the contribution that the creative industries can make to the economy of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Revival of the Cornish language, Kernewek, is part of a broader cultural movement in Cornwall, with Cornish-language films, music and literature being produced. Although it remains a critically endangered language, Kernewek has been recognised internationally for its successful ground-up revival. Gorsedh Kernow have an annual Hoyer an Gof Publishers Awards with a class dedicated to publications in the Cornish language. Since 2023, Cornish language films are available on BBC iPlayer.

Vital statistics



Creative Census 2024 revealed **10,870** people were employed in creative-related occupations across the county, with **60%** of respondents being sole traders or freelancers.



Cornwall has **13,000** listed buildings, **1,437** scheduled monuments, **517** historic ports and **145** conservation areas.



The Cornish Mining World heritage site covers nearly **20,000** hectares and is made up of **10** distinct areas across Cornwall and West Devon.



There are over **80** museums in Cornwall and countless other cultural attractions.



There are over **250** festivals in Cornwall, including literature, food, cider, music, oysters, beer, and fish festivals as well as village feast and celebration days.



The Cornwall International Male Choral Festival, the world's largest festival of its kind, takes place biennially. In 2024 it featured over **50** international choirs, hosted **50** concerts and attracted **30,000** attendees.



The Hall for Cornwall is the largest performance venue in Cornwall, playing host to more than **300** musicals, operas, musical arts, ballets and other shows throughout the year.



Krowji, home to Creative Kernow, is Cornwall's **largest** creative hub, providing studios, workspaces, meeting rooms, a café and other services for a diverse range of creative businesses.



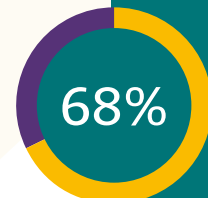
Kresen Kernow ("Cornwall Centre") is home to the **world's largest** collection of documents, books, maps and photographs related to Cornwall's history.

Vital Signs community survey

Cultural appreciation remained consistent in 2025, but affordability and transport barriers worsened, limiting access to arts and cultural events.



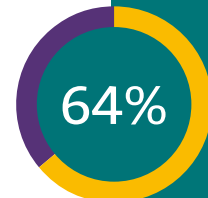
Half of respondents (**55%**) agreed that Cornwall has a wide range of cultural and sporting facilities.



68% believe Cornwall effectively celebrates its history and culture.



More people stated finding it difficult to travel to cultural events, **72%** compared to **67%** in 2022.



64% said they could not afford to attend as many cultural events as they would like, a significant increase from 2022 (56%).

'Our cultural heritage is under threat due to lack of funding.'

'We need more support for local artists and heritage events to keep traditions alive.'

Case study: KBSK Performing Arts CIC

KBSK Performing Arts CIC is a lively community space in Bodmin that uses creativity to tackle local issues. Set up by Adie Dove, winner of the BBC Sports Personality of the Year 'Unsung Hero' South West Award, the organisation supports young people aged 3-18 through dance, the arts and wellbeing activities, while also offering help for families.

Thanks to the Karenza Fund and the Sedel-Collings Foundation, KBSK has created "The Space". This is a safe, welcoming place for young people and their families. Beyond youth clubs and dance, their support includes food parcels, vouchers, advice on benefits and help with energy bills or debt. They also run a "Food Project" that shares surplus supermarket food with families who need it most.



"As a teacher I have seen the powerful impact art, dance and creativity can have on children's overall wellbeing and mental health."

Adie Dove, Founder

Community consultation - listening and learning

"There is a wealth of talent on the peninsula, it's a very creative community and a lot of people have stayed here because of that."
– **Millbrook community consultation**

"When people can access the arts it's life changing but at the moment it's difficult to find ways of encouraging people to access it while they're still struggling and in crisis."
– **Millbrook community consultation**

"Where I came from the dream of being a dancer was bizarre, as it was just not accessible. For many families the arts today are still not accessible. Many young people haven't been able to unlock their creative genius."
– **Bodmin community consultation**

8. Environment

Cornwall is one of the top-rated places to live in the UK in terms of the environment around us and access to nature, wildlife and natural resources.

With over 400 miles of coast, Cornwall has one of the most varied and beautiful coastlines in the UK, with over 300 beaches.

In 2024, Earth experienced its first year with global temperatures exceeding 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Each of the past 10 years (2015-2024) were among the 10 warmest years on record, with 2024 being the warmest, and Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are not immune to climate change. Local ecosystems are highly fragile and have degraded over the last 50 years at a dramatic rate, and that is accelerating due to climate change. A poor surrounding environment affects all life, human and non-human, in multiple ways. Taking positive pro-environmental action is good for us (in terms of mental and physical health) and the natural systems we rely on.

Air quality in Cornwall is generally good, but some areas don't meet national standards, leading to the declaration of Air Quality Management Areas. Water pollution remains a concern, with Cornwall recording the highest number of incidents in England.

Sewage overflows, exacerbated by heavy rainfall, frequently impact beaches. Flooding is another challenge due to rising sea levels and storms, with several towns at high risk. Soil erosion, linked to farming practices and climate change, has increased, leading to calls for better land management. Biodiversity is in decline, but conservation efforts, including beaver reintroductions and the Forest for Cornwall project, offer hope.

Cornwall has become one of the leading areas for renewable energy and has wind farms, solar energy sites and the UK's first geothermal development site. However, waste management remains a challenge, with low recycling rates and increasing fly-tipping incidents.

Cornwall Voluntary Sector Forum, with organisations in the Climate and Environment Alliance, developed The Green Footsteps Guide, a practical toolkit to help VCSE organisations across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly improve their sustainability and build resilience to the impacts of climate change.

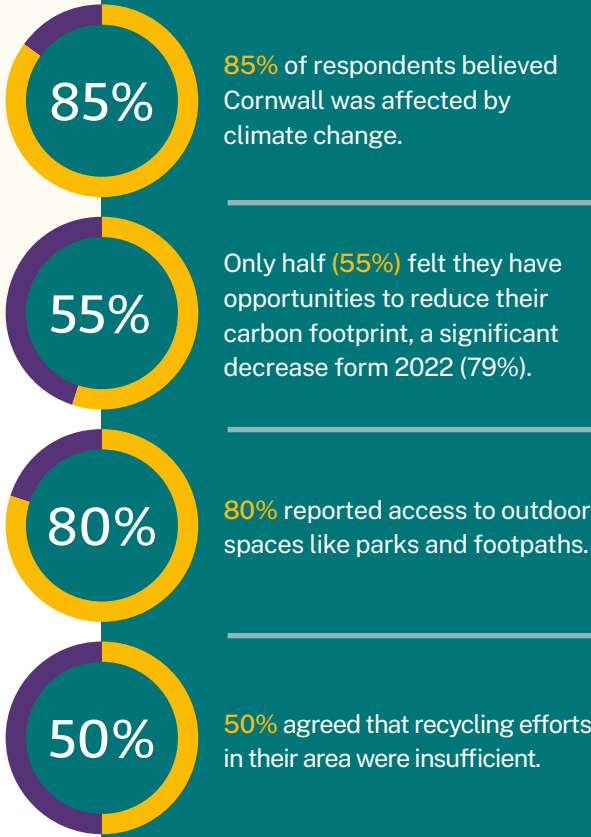
Vital statistics

-  Cornwall National Landscape covers almost a third of Cornwall – an area bigger than Dartmoor National Park.
-  12.7m passengers travelled on the bus network in Cornwall in 2024, an increase of over 2.7% from 2023.
-  Cornwall currently has over 408 publicly accessible electric vehicle (EV) charging points.
-  Road traffic generates 875,000 tonnes of greenhouse gases per year. This is 93% of Cornish transport emissions.

-  Cornwall is currently generating 40% of its electricity supply from renewables.
-  Cornwall has seen more water pollution incidents than any other local authority area in England.
-  The Environment Agency has said there will be more and worse environmental incidents, such as flooding, water shortages and pollution.
-  In Cornwall nearly half of terrestrial mammals and three-fifths of butterflies are found in fewer places over the last 30 years.

Vital Signs community survey

Awareness and motivation to address environmental challenges increased in 2025, but action on climate and ecological impact still lag behind what might be required to slow the evidenced decline.



‘We need more efforts to protect our natural environment from overdevelopment.’

‘Climate change and erosion are serious concerns for Cornwall’s coastline.’

Case study: Beach Guardian CIC

Beach Guardian CIC is a passionate, community-led organisation tackling plastic pollution in Cornwall. Founded by Rob and his daughter Emily, a marine biologist, they’ve held hundreds of beach cleans, inspired thousands of volunteer hours, reached over 10,000 school pupils and connected with millions of people online.

With funding from the Worval Foundation, Cornwall Glass Fund, North Cornwall Fund, Cornwall’s Social Enterprise Fund and the Marine Environment Fund they’ve run workshops, beach cleans and wellbeing activities, as well as creating their ‘Mission Centre’ in Trevone Bay. This repurposed space is now their base for running beach cleans, hosting workshops and working with local groups to build stronger communities and protect the environment.



“Beach Guardian completely changed our outlook on life after a chance encounter on holiday and still has an impact today.”

Beach clean participant

Community consultation - listening and learning

- “People we work with in poverty are dealing with their immediate problems so many see climate change as a faraway problem.”
– Penzance community consultation
- “There are those who stand up for climate change and know the issues that are going on but because of the deprivation they are in it is an inaccessible endeavour.”
– Penzance community consultation
- “It is now cheaper to drive every day than use public transport. I am very aware of my emissions but I need to get to work.”
– Millbrook community consultation
- “We have it all on our doorstep, in terms of accessing green spaces and nature but often people who need to access it the most can’t because of the barriers that they’re facing.”
– Millbrook community consultation
- “We’re not only destroying the environment but we’re not preparing the younger generations for what they need to do to repair.”
– Millbrook community consultation
- “We need to be investing in sustainable futures.”
– Millbrook community consultation

About Cornwall Community Foundation

Here at Cornwall Community Foundation (CCF) we want Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to be a great place to live for everyone - a place where people work together to address disadvantage and build strong, resilient communities.

Since 2003 we have awarded more than £22m in small grants to grassroots, front-line, volunteer-led organisations that are making a positive impact in their area, helping to overcome the challenges of disadvantage, exclusion and poverty for all.

This work wouldn't be possible without our generous donors.

There are many ways to support CCF.

Speak to us about how we can help you set up your own CCF Fund to support causes that you are passionate about, or if you would like information on leaving CCF a gift in your will.

Join one of our regular giving supporter groups:

- Friends of the Foundation
- The Business Club
- The Cornwall Club

Make a one-off donation online at www.cornwallcommunityfoundation.com

If you are involved in a community group in your area, please contact us for more information about the grants we have available and please help us spread the word to other groups you may know.

"I have always been inspired by giving back to the county I love. It is sad that we live in this beautiful county but that so many people are disadvantaged and struggling in their communities. Cornwall Community Foundation is about giving for Cornwall. It brings together people who want to support Cornwall with the communities that need help."

Jane Hartley DL,
The Albert Van den Bergh and Jane Hartley Fund



"The extraordinary impact we have made across our first 20 years has only been possible thanks to the magnificent generosity of our fund holders, donors and supporters. On behalf of Cornwall Community Foundation, I would like to say a huge 'thank you'. You really have changed lives."

Colonel Sir Edward Bolitho KCVO OBE,
Lord Lieutenant of Cornwall



"The CCF is one of the most significant bodies in Cornwall which has had an almost incalculable effect on our local economy and brought comfort and help to so many men, women and children across the county who would otherwise be impoverished, in hardship and lacking opportunity."

Michael Galsworthy CVO CBE,
Co-Founder of CCF



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Community
Foundation**

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