

REGIONAL SUMMARY

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS

FEBRUARY 2026





ABOUT THIS SUMMARY

Dear Scotland's Future is SYP's manifesto 2026-2031. It has been developed by young people, for young people and sets out the agenda for the changes they want to see over the next five years. Based on a consultation with nearly 5,000 young people across Scotland, this summary highlights the responses from young people in the Highlands and Islands.

The region of Highlands and Islands is based on the regional groupings used within the Scottish Parliament and contains the following constituencies:

- Argyll and Bute
- Caithness, Sutherland and Ross
- Na h-Eileanan an Iar
- Moray
- Orkney Islands
- Shetland Islands
- Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch

DEMOGRAPHICS

This summary is based on **249 responses**, the vast majority of which were from group responses. Therefore, it is not possible to include an accurate gender or age breakdown.

- Eight group responses were from junior or secondary schools in **Shetland totaling 167 respondents**.
- Most responses were from young people **aged 12-14**.
- One group response was from a **young carers'** group.
- Most individual respondents identified as **female**.



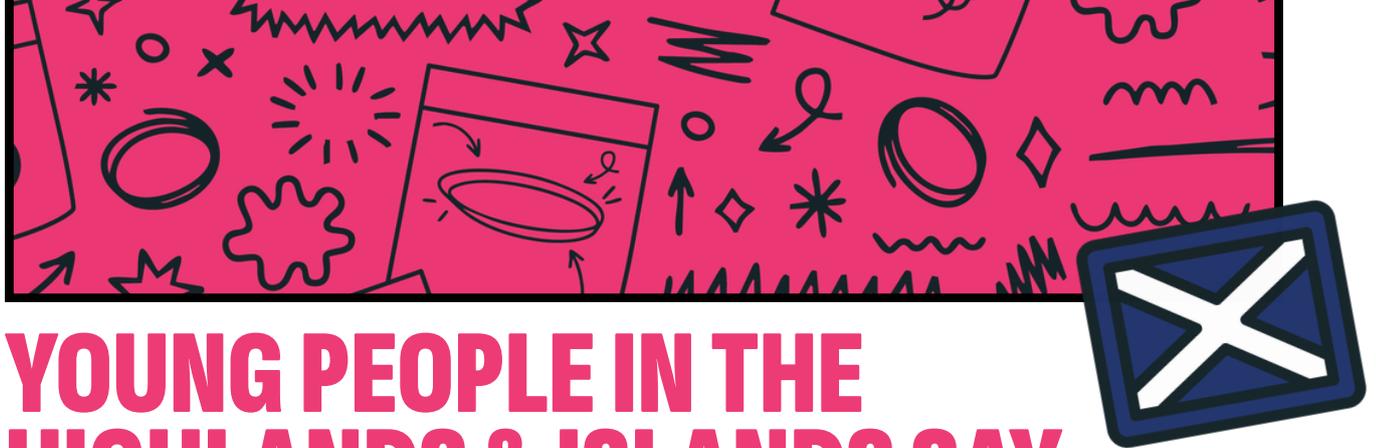


TOP 10 MOST AGREED POLICIES

The following ten policies received the highest agreement by young people in this region. Percentages were rounded to two decimal places. Note, this does not equate to being the most urgent issues for young people.

- **Barriers to accessing further and higher education - 99% agree**
Compared with 91% Scotland-wide
- **Prevention and early intervention for mental health - 99% agree**
Compared with 91% Scotland-wide
- **Accessible and affordable sports and leisure facilities - 98% agree**
Compared with 91% Scotland-wide
- **Investment in social housing - 98% agree**
Compared with 86% Scotland-wide
- **Financial education - 97% agree**
Compared with 90% Scotland-wide
- **NHS protected from privatisation - 97% agree**
Compared with 91% Scotland-wide
- **Respect the views of children and young people - 97% agree**
Compared with 83% Scotland-wide
- **Accessible and reliable public transport - 96% agree**
Compared with 91% Scotland-wide
- **Reduce time for prosecution of sexual assault crimes - 95% agree**
Compared with 90% Scotland-wide
- **Close the gender pay gap - 95% agree**
Compared with 87% Scotland-wide

Notably, the policy on *bold and urgent action on the climate emergency* was only agreed by 49% of young people, compared with 78% nationally. Disagreement with the policy was found mostly in young people in Shetland. Qualitative responses showed resentment about local windfarms providing energy for the mainland, whilst some young people found them to be noisy, ugly and perceived a negative impact on wildlife and scenery on the islands.



YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE HIGHLANDS & ISLANDS SAY...

"Living in Shetland means its more expensive to go to university, travelling is expensive."

- Young person, Shetland Islands

"Young people living particularly in the Highlands benefit very little from free bus travel as there are simply so little bus routes. Investment should be made to provide public transport routes for rural young people or expand free travel to include rail services in rural areas, which are often more reliable than bus travel."

-Young person aged 18-21, Caithness, Sutherland and Ross

"I wish teachers were more understanding [about mental health]."

-Young person, Shetland Islands

"They built all the wind- farms on our land and it powers all of down south, we get nothing out of it. They're noisy, ugly and inconvenient to locals. Why is it just us who have to take this burden on?"

-Young person, Shetland Islands

"It's important these [climate] actions hold the right people to account, not the easy ones."

-Young person aged 18-21, Orkney Islands

"Mental health services have a huge waiting list and by the point a young person can get the help they need it's to late."

-Young person aged 14-17, Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch

"[E]ssential subjects need to be implemented into mandatory classes [...] like political literacy, life skills, like how to file taxes and other important knowledge which can set young people up for a promising future."

-Young person aged 14-17, Moray



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