



Scotland's belonging divide: Mid Dunbartonshire ranks highest in the UK for life satisfaction

- Scotland is home to both the highest-ranking constituencies in the UK for life satisfaction and purpose – and some of the weakest outcomes for loneliness and belonging
- Mid Dunbartonshire ranks top in the UK for life satisfaction, while East Renfrewshire leads for feeling life is worthwhile
- Glasgow constituencies are among the most lonely and least connected places in Britain
- All ten constituencies most likely to feel less connected to Britain since Covid are in Scotland

London, UK, 1 May 2026 – Scotland contains some of the UK's strongest communities for a sense of belonging, but also some of its most disconnected places, according to new research from the Belonging Forum.

The findings, based on new MRP analysis from the *2026 Belonging Barometer*, which is a nationally representative survey of 10,001 UK adults conducted by Opinium, point to a *"a tale of two Scotlands."*

At a national level, Scotland performs broadly in line with, or slightly above, UK averages on key measures of social connection. Around 11% of Scots say they have no close friends, in line with the UK average, and 70% report being satisfied with their friendships, compared with 68% nationally. However, 65% say they are satisfied with life overall, slightly below the UK average of 67%.

Beneath these averages, however, the data reveals wide geographic disparities.

Mid Dunbartonshire ranks highest in the UK for life satisfaction, with 74.6% of residents saying they are satisfied with their lives. East Renfrewshire follows closely behind at 74.5%.

These areas also perform strongly on everyday social connection. Mid Dunbartonshire has the highest rate in the UK for spending time in cafés at 49%, followed by East Renfrewshire at 46.7% – far above the UK average of 38%. Residents also have the strongest familiarity with their neighbours at 61% and 62% respectively, compared to 51% of Scotland nationally.

East Renfrewshire residents also have the strongest area for a sense of belonging in Scotland – by which we mean the experience of meaningful connections to people, to communities, to the natural world, to a sense of purpose and to social, political and economic decision-making. Half of residents say they feel they strongly belong, higher than the Scotland-wide average of 42%.

Mid Dunbartonshire and Na h-Eileanan an Iar are the least lonely constituencies in Scotland – with half of residents reporting they rarely feel lonely.

Mid Dunbartonshire also stands out for perceptions of representation. Around one in five residents (21%) say their local council represents them well, compared with 15% across Scotland, while nearly a third (32%) feel well represented by their MP, versus 22% nationally.

In contrast, other parts of Scotland – particularly post-industrial urban areas – report significantly weaker outcomes.

Glenrothes and Mid Fife has the highest proportion of people with no close friends in the UK, at 13%.

Glenrothes and Mid Fife residents are also the least likely in Scotland to feel well represented, with just 13% saying their local council represents them well and 17% saying the same of their MP.

Glasgow North East, Glasgow North and Dundee rank among the weakest areas for connection to neighbours and local communities. In Glasgow

North, 47.6% say they do not feel strongly connected to their neighbours, with Dundee close behind at 47.4%. The neighbouring constituency of Glasgow North East ranks in the weakest 10 places in the country for feeling strongly connected to your street (49.5% vs 40% of the UK).

Loneliness is also concentrated in these areas. 29% of people in Scotland overall say they feel lonely often or always, rising to 37% in Glasgow North and 35% in Glasgow North East – among the highest levels in the UK.

The data also highlights a significant divide in how safe people feel. While most people in Scotland report feeling safe during the day and at home, confidence drops sharply after dark. Around 68% feel safe walking alone at night in East Renfrewshire and Mid Dunbartonshire, compared with around 52% in parts of Glasgow.

Patterns of social behaviour also vary across the country. Edinburgh West ranks among the top areas in the UK for spending time in pubs and bars (38% vs 29% of the population), while rural areas such as Orkney and Shetland lead the country for walking and hiking – with 44.3% citing it as a hobby compared to 35% of the UK population.

One of the most striking findings is Scotland’s relationship with national identity since the pandemic. The ten constituencies most likely to say they feel less connected to Britain since Covid are all in Scotland, led by Lothian East, with several others across west and central Scotland close behind.

Top 10 highest percentages for feeling less connected to modern Britain since 2020

1	Lothian East (Lab, Douglas Alexander)	52.9%
	East Lothian, Scotland	

2	West Dunbartonshire (Lab, Douglas McAllister)	47.0%
	Glasgow City; West Dunbartonshire, Scotland	
3	Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Lab, Lillian Jones)	46.8%
	East Ayrshire, Scotland	
4	Paisley and Renfrewshire South (Lab, Johanna Baxter)	46.8%
	Renfrewshire, Scotland	
5	North Ayrshire and Arran (Lab, Irene Campbell)	46.8%
	North Ayrshire, Scotland	
6	Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Lab, Torcuil Crichton)	46.8%
	Na h-Eileanan an Iar, Scotland	
7	Dundee Central (SNP, Chris Law)	46.7%
	Dundee City, Scotland	
8	Central Ayrshire (Lab, Alan Gemmell)	46.6%
	North Ayrshire; South Ayrshire, Scotland	
9	Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock (Lab, Elaine Stewart)	46.6%
	East Ayrshire; South Ayrshire, Scotland	
10	Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Lab, Alison Taylor)	46.6%

	Glasgow City; Renfrewshire, Scotland	
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Taken together, the findings point to a country with strong foundations for belonging in some areas, but deep and persistent challenges in others. Areas with higher levels of belonging tend to be more affluent, with access to green space, well-used high streets and strong local services that support everyday connection.

By contrast, lower levels of belonging are more common in post-industrial and economically challenged areas, underlining how local conditions shape people's sense of connection.

Kim Samuel, Founder of the Belonging Forum, said:

"Scotland stands out for having both some of the strongest and weakest outcomes for belonging in the UK. Places like Mid Dunbartonshire and East Renfrewshire show what is possible when strong communities, local amenities and quality of life come together.

"But the data also highlights real challenges in parts of urban Scotland, where people are more likely to feel lonely, less connected to those around them, and less safe in their daily lives.

"This paints a tale of two Scotland's - one where belonging is strong and thriving, and another where too many people feel disconnected from those around them. The priority now must be to close that gap by investing in safer neighbourhoods, stronger local networks and the shared spaces that bring people together."

The *2026 Belonging Barometer* is the Belonging Forum's third annual report examining belonging in the UK, exploring people's connections to others, to the places they live, to institutions, and to meaning and purpose in everyday life.

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NOTES TO EDITOR

For media inquiries and interviews, or further information, please contact: press@belongingforum.com

About the Belonging Barometer:

- The research was carried out by Opinium on behalf of the Belonging Forum and surveyed a nationally representative sample of 10,001 UK adults. The survey was conducted between 1st and 17th December 2025.
- The polling analysed figures from the general population and is broken down by demographics including gender, age, socioeconomic status, and working status.
- The full findings of the third edition of the Belonging Barometer can be viewed [here](#).

About the Belonging Forum

The Belonging Forum is a global non-profit advancing the right to belong – a birthright that connects us to one another, to the places we call home, to the systems that shape our lives, and to a shared sense of purpose.

We bring together research, advocacy, and action to ensure belonging is embedded in policies, institutions, and everyday life. Through collaboration with thought leaders, community builders, and changemakers around the world, we turn ideas into impact and build a world where everyone can flourish.

The Belonging Forum was founded by Kim Samuel – activist, author, educator, and leading voice in the global movement for belonging.