

## The Highland Council

### Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities Committee – 01 October 2014

Agenda Item	11
Report No	CPE 32/14

#### Annual Highland Council Survey of Performance and Attitudes: Analysis of attitudes to Prejudice and Discrimination

#### Report by Head of Policy and Reform

##### Summary

This report updates Members on public attitudes to prejudice and discrimination in Highland. This information results from an analysis of responses to questions about equality and diversity included in the Council's Citizen's Panel Survey 2014.

## 1. Background

1.1 The Council's 2014 Public Performance and Attitudes Survey<sup>i</sup> was completed by the Citizen's Panel during June. The analysis has been carried out by the UHI Centre for Remote and Rural Studies and a full report will be presented to the Council meeting on 30 October. This report summarises the results of a number of questions in the Community Life section of the survey which asks questions on attitudes to discrimination and prejudice.

1.2 Since 2011, the Council's public performance survey has included a number of attitudinal questions to gain an understanding of public attitudes towards equality and diversity. The questions are based on a number contained in the 2011 [Scottish Social Attitudes survey](#)<sup>ii</sup> which is carried out every 4 years and therefore allows for some comparisons at national level. The pattern of responses to equivalent questions between the two surveys is broadly similar. Generally, responses in Highland in 2011 were slightly less positive about diversity but views in Highland in subsequent years appear to have become increasingly accepting of diversity.

We have an interest in understanding public attitudes towards equalities and diversity in Highland. The Council Programme, 'Working Together for the Highlands' includes a cross-cutting commitment to advancing equality across its themes. This is carried forward in our equality plan, 'A Fairer Highland' which demonstrates how we meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty in the Equality Act 2010 and supports our aims of tackling discrimination and supporting equality of opportunity.

## 2. The Equalities section of the survey

2.1 The introduction to this section of the survey explains that as a public body, the Council has a duty to give regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected

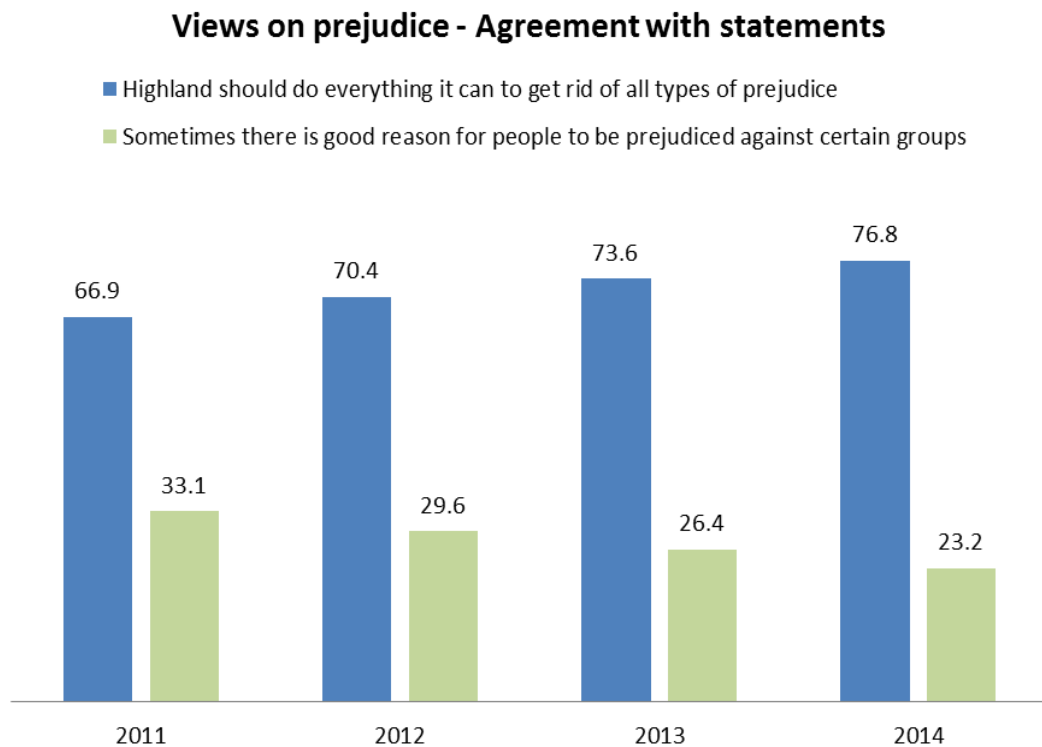
- characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

2.2 The questions in this section ask about views to equality and diversity in relation to: prejudice, accepting communities, and diverse communities

### 3. Public Performance Survey: Views on Prejudice

3.1 Those surveyed were asked: “Which of the two statements comes closest to your own view?” (Question 58)

- a) Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice, or
- b) Sometimes there is good reason for people to be prejudiced against certain groups



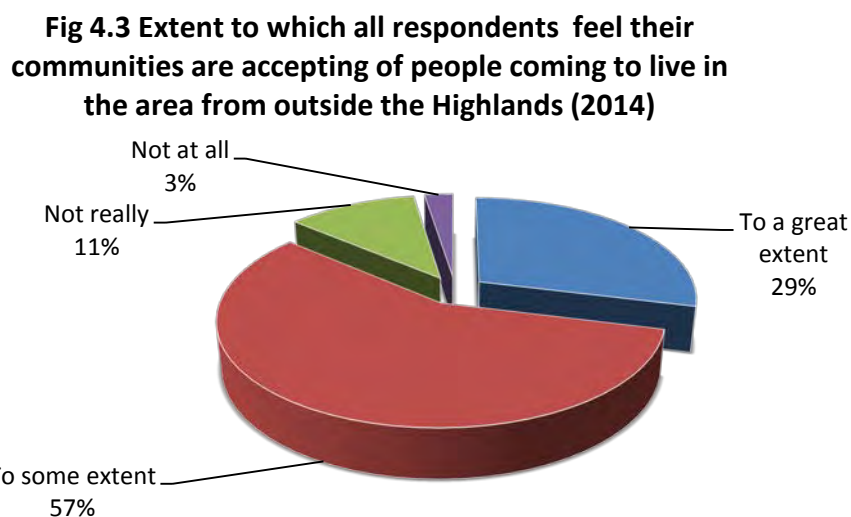
**Figure 1**

In response to this question, we have seen a steady, positive trend each year as shown in Figure 1. When we first asked this question in 2011, 67% of respondents to the Council survey felt that Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice. This compared to 72% of respondents to the same question in the Scottish Social Attitudes survey that year. Now, in 2014, 77% respondents in Highland agree with the statement.

3.2 The highest levels of support for the statement that “Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice” are found amongst respondents who are: unemployed (89%); aged 16-24 (84%); have school aged children (82%); students (81%); or are aged 25-44 (80%).

## 4 Public Performance Survey: Accepting Communities

4.1 In response to the question “To what extent do you feel your community is accepting of people coming to live here from outside the Highlands?” (question 32) results have been consistent. In 2014, 2013 and 2012, some 86% of respondents believe their communities are accepting of such people to some degree (85% in 2011).



**Figure 2**

## 5 Public Performance Survey: Diverse communities

5.1 Respondents were asked whether they would prefer to live in an area “with lots of different kinds of people”, or “where most people are similar to you” (question 59). Again the results have been consistent in 2014, 2013 and 2012 with 52% saying they would prefer to live in an area with lots of different kinds of people. This compares with 47% saying this in 2011 and when a majority said they would prefer to live in an area where people were similar to them.

The 2014 survey results show again that age seems to matter in the responses. Some 68% of those aged 65+ chose “where most people are similar to you”. By contrast in each of the other age groups the majority opinion was: “with lots of different kinds of people” (63% of those aged 25-44; 57% of those aged 45-64; and 56% of those aged 16-24).

## 6 Conclusion

6.1 There continues to be a welcome trend towards more positive attitudes about diversity in Highland. In 2014, less than a quarter (23%) of respondents felt that sometimes prejudice against certain groups can be justified. While this is a sizeable minority, the percentage feeling this way has dropped significantly from a third (33%) in 2011.

It is generally perceived by 89% of respondents that Highland communities are welcoming and accepting of people coming to live in the area and this view

has remained consistent in recent years as has people's opinion about whether they prefer to live in an area "*where most people are similar to you*" or "*with lots of different kinds of people*."

Capturing trends in changing attitudes to prejudice and diversity in Highland will help us improve our understanding of different experiences and views of different groups within the community, and identify areas for service improvement. Such evidence will support the Council's Fairer Highland Plan and the commitment to ensure that people are treated fairly and with respect as well as a measure of progress for our Equality Outcomes and associated actions.

#### **4. Implications**

- 4.1 Resource - there are no resource implications arising from this report.
- 4.2 Legal Implications – this report contributes to the Council's work to meet the legal requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 4.3 Equalities Implications – this report includes actions from the Council's A Fairer Highland Plan which aims to address inequalities and discrimination. It contributes to the duty to gather and use evidence on equalities matters.
- 4.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever – there are no known climate change implications arising from this report.
- 4.5 Risk Implications – equal opportunities is considered as part of the Council's approach to risk management as an issue affecting all services. Failure to demonstrate that the Council meets the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty could result in legal action and reputational risk for the Council.
- 4.6 Gaelic – there are no known Gaelic implications arising from this report.
- 4.7 Rural implications – generally, there are no differences reported between views in rural and urban areas. Because the number of respondents at ward level is relatively low, any responses about people's views at that level can only be indicative.

#### **Recommendation:**

Members are asked to note, in particular, the positive direction with regard to views on prejudice where there has been a 10% increase in the proportion of respondents who feel that Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice.

Designation: Head of Policy and Reform

Date: 02 September 2014

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Background Papers:

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<sup>i</sup> Macleod, D., Macpherson, C. & de Lima, P. (July 2014) The Highland Council's Annual Survey of Performance and Attitudes 2014, Draft Report

<sup>ii</sup> Ormston, R., Curtice, J., McConville, S., & Reid, S., Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2010: Attitudes to Discrimination and Positive Action, Scottish Centre for Social Research