



Inclusive Parliament

Facilities Review - Playback

April 2026



Executive summary



- **Strong engagement and quality evidence-base**
 - The survey achieved a solid response rate (242 responses) with over 4,000 verbatim comments, demonstrating high engagement and a willingness from staff to provide constructive, experience-led feedback.
- **Universal call for single-occupancy facilities**
 - Demand for more single-occupancy options is consistent across demographics, locations and facility types, making it the clearest shared priority regardless of identity, role or need.
- **Core facilities are working well day-to-day**
 - Overall cleanliness and basic access to facilities score strongly, with consistency across most demographic groups, indicating that core operational cleaning and baseline provision are effective and should be maintained.
- **Experience varies significantly by location**
 - Confidence in accessibility, proximity, privacy and sensory comfort fluctuates notably between buildings, suggesting that inclusion is not experienced as an estate-wide standard but as a location-dependent outcome.
- **Single-occupancy facilities are under pressure**
 - Single-occupancy toilets, changing places and showers are serving multiple functions: privacy, accessibility and dignity, which may be creating competition for a limited provision and a heightened emotional impact if access fails.
- **Interim stance is understood but not felt as inclusive**
 - While most respondents understand the interim stance, confidence that it delivers fair, suitable and dignified outcomes is far weaker, particularly for trans, non-binary, disabled and neurodivergent staff.
- **Design can drive inclusion just much as policy**
 - Feedback consistently shows that physical design, layout and availability of facilities have a greater impact on inclusion and dignity than communications or guidance alone.
- **Clear opportunity for targeted, high-impact investment**
 - Investment in single-occupancy provision, improved privacy, better sensory environments and clearer wayfinding offers a practical route to improving inclusion, confidence and consistency across the estate

Report objectives, scope and sampling

Optima has enabled us to identify:

- Who is using facilities today at Holyrood
- The employee experience of the provision of facilities available
- Any safety or accessibility concerns with onsite facilities
- Examples of anonymised verbatim lived experience
- Equality monitoring data across respondents

Which means you will be able to:

- Provide evidence on any barriers in the workplace
- Align impact analysis to protected characteristic groups
- Establish a dataset to support confident decision making
- Assess and baseline your current provision of facilities
- Make prioritised, high-impact improvements to the workplace

Total number
of responses 242

Days live 14

Verbatim
comments 4,114

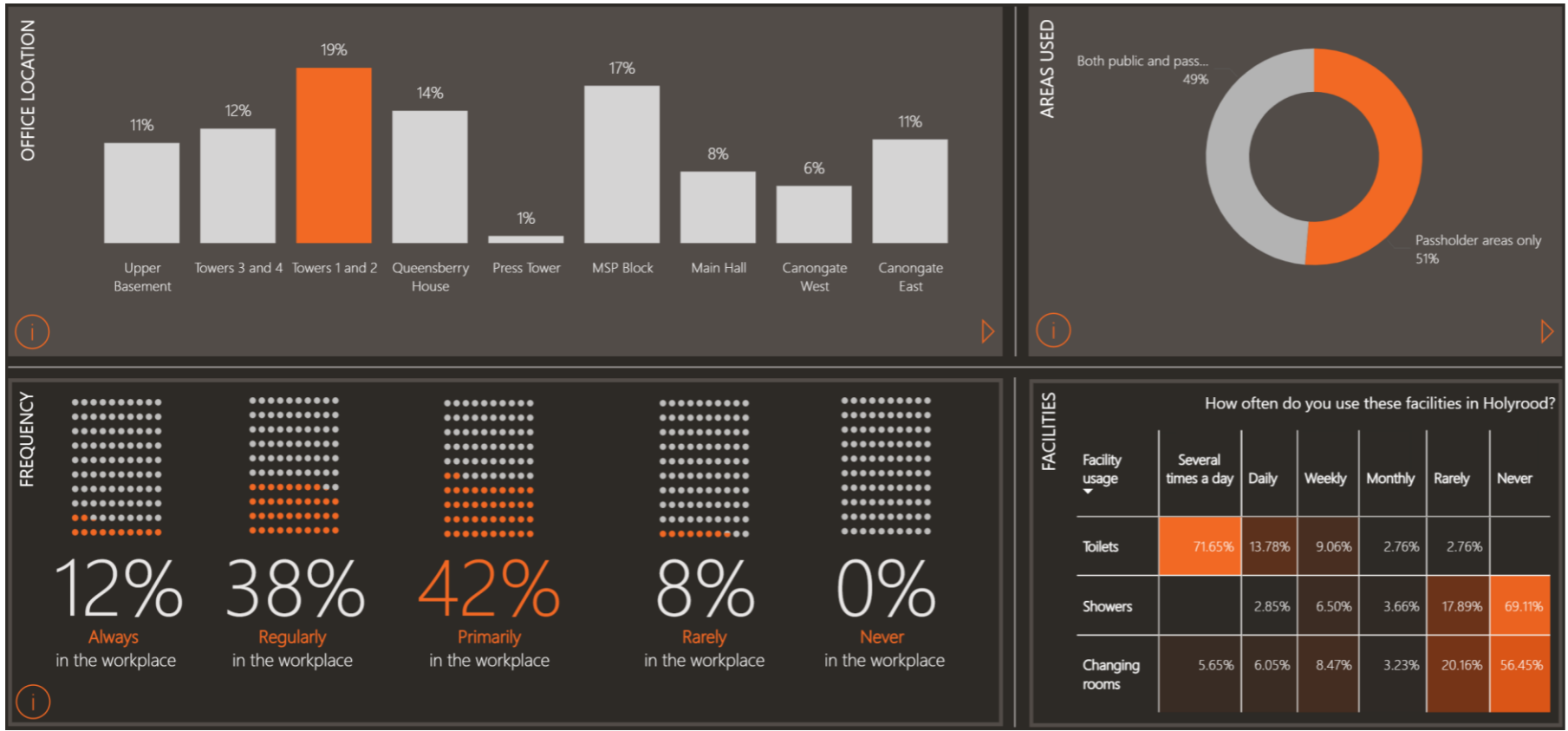




01

About how you use the
building (routing)

About how you use the building (routing)



Key insights

- Toilets are the most frequently used facility, with 72% of respondents using them several times a day. Showers and changing rooms are used far less often, with the majority of respondents reporting infrequent or no use of these facilities.

What it is telling us

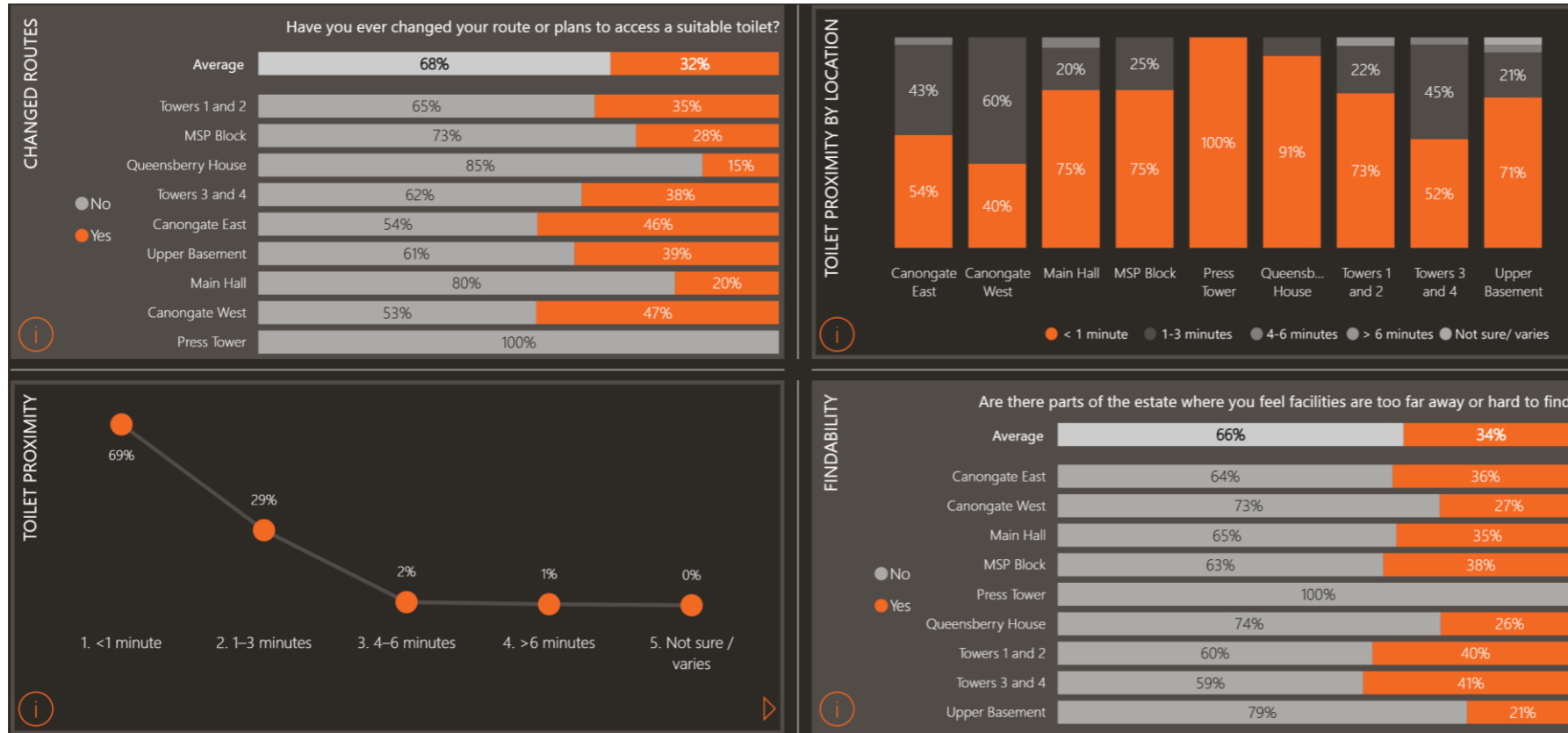
- Low reported use of showers and changing rooms may reflect limited need, but could also indicate barriers to access, awareness, suitability or confidence, raising questions about whether under-use reflects choice or constraint.



02

Proximity

Proximity



Key insights

- Around one-third of respondents (32%) report having changed their route or plans at least once to access a suitable toilet.
- The likelihood of changing routes varies significantly by location, ranging from 15% in Queensberry House to 47% in Canongate West, with higher levels seen in Canongate East and Upper Basement. For disabled employees, 56% will change their route to find a suitable toilet on average. For neurodiverse employees this is 46%.
- Toilet proximity varies across the estate in some locations. Nearly all respondents (97%) report toilets within 1-3 minutes or less, and a small minority show slightly longer or more variable journeys. This statistic changes very little based on demographics.
- Over a third of respondents (34% on average) report that there are parts of the estate where facilities feel too far away or hard to find, with higher concern reported in Towers 1-4 and the MSP Block.

What it is telling us

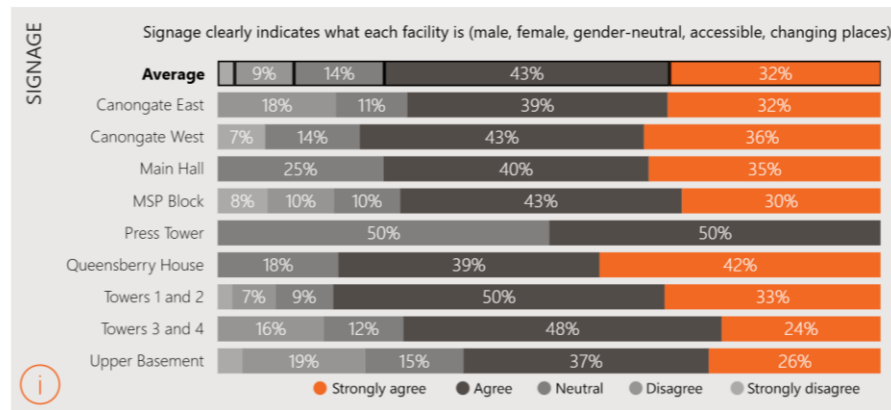
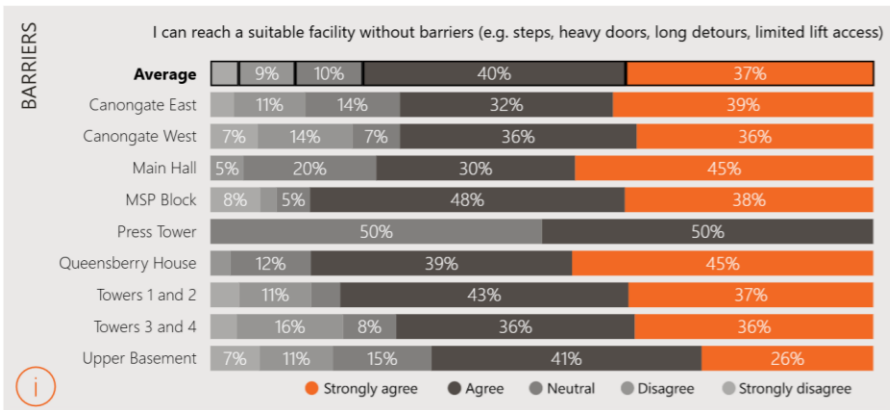
- The fact that a minority change routes despite generally short travel times suggests that proximity alone doesn't guarantee suitability. Availability, privacy or accessibility of facilities may also be driving behaviours.
- Perceptions that facilities are hard to find or too far away could suggest potential wayfinding gaps, especially in larger or more complex parts of the estate with lower footfall.



03

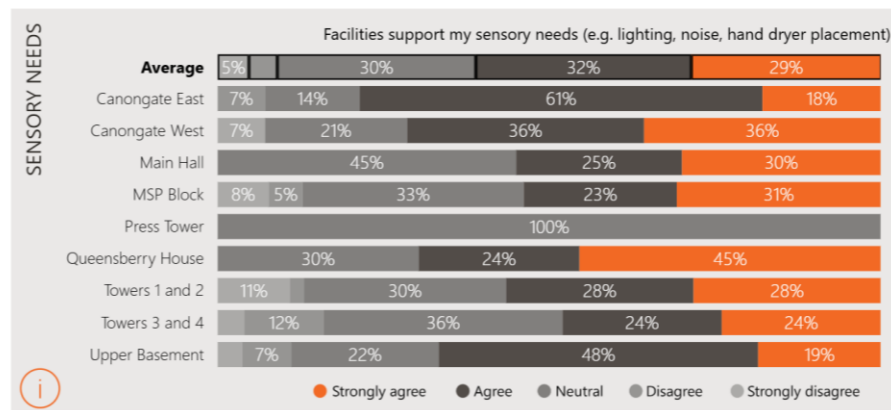
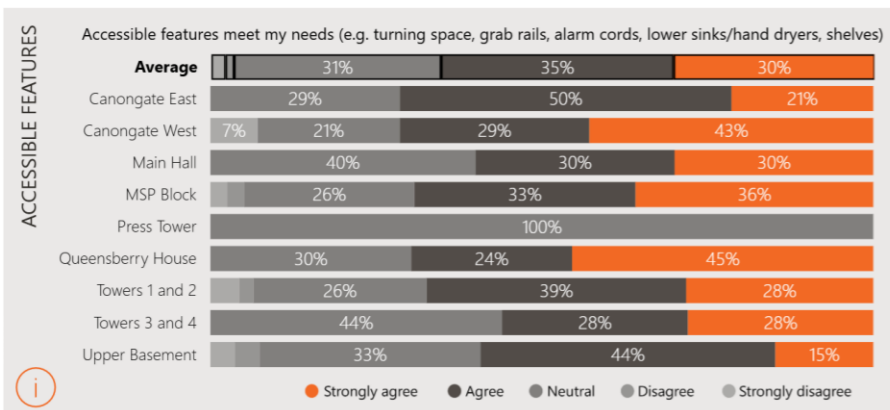
Accessibility

Accessibility



Key insights

- The majority of respondents (77%) agree that they can reach suitable facilities without barriers, but levels of agreement vary by building, with lower confidence reported in areas such as the Upper Basement and Towers 3 and 4.
- Signage clarity is generally rated positively overall, but responses cluster around “agree” rather than “strongly agree”, indicating moderate confidence rather than certainty.
- Support for sensory needs is the lowest scoring metric in this category with over a third (39%) not feeling supported, with great variation between building areas with the Press Tower, Towers 3 and 4 and the MSP block being the least supportive areas of the campus. For neurodiverse employees, 62% feel unsupported with their sensory needs with verbatim feedback referencing hand dryer noise, and the brightness of lights.



What it is telling us

- Variation by location indicates that accessibility is experienced inconsistently across the estate, rather than being a consistent baseline standard.
- Higher neutrality around accessible features and sensory needs may reflect uncertainty and lack of awareness rather than a lack of appropriate facilities.



04

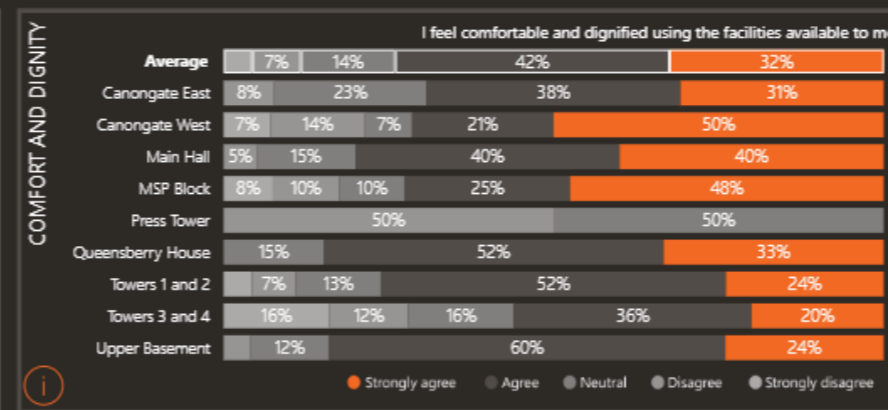
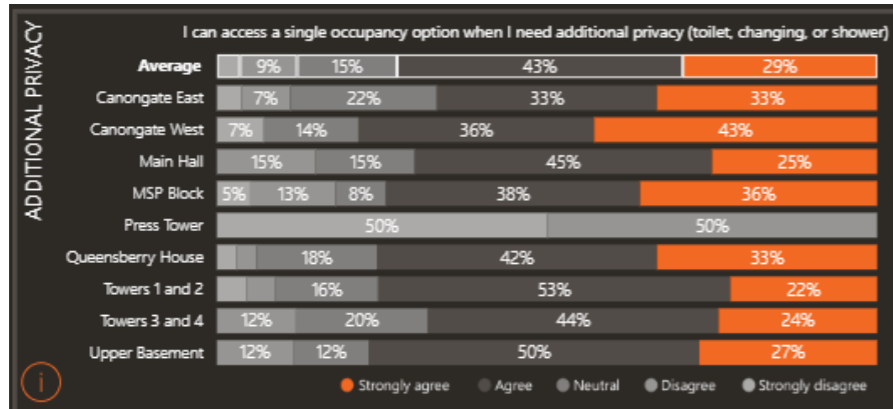
Cleanliness and
maintenance



05

Privacy and dignity

Privacy and dignity



Key insights

- The majority of respondents (72%) agree that they can access a single-occupancy option when additional privacy is needed.
- Confidence in access to single-occupancy facilities varies by location, with lower confidence reported in areas such as Canongate East, Main Hall and Towers 3 and 4.
- Overall comfort and dignity scores are broadly positive with 74% in agreement, but again show variation by building, with some locations showing notably higher neutrality. There is no variation noted between sexes for this metric with an 80% male and 81% female score for feeling comfortable and dignified when using facilities. For trans employees this figure is 40% and for Non-binary it is only 17%.
- Free-text responses and the word cloud emphasise toilets, single-occupancy use, gender, comfort, dignity and accessibility, indicating these are the most salient aspects of experience.

What it is telling us

- Location-based variation indicates that access to privacy may vary across the estate, rather than a consistent standard.
- Free-text comments suggest that single-occupancy facilities are doing multiple jobs (privacy, accessibility, dignity). With limited availability of these facilities, this may create pressure and potential conflict between user needs.



06

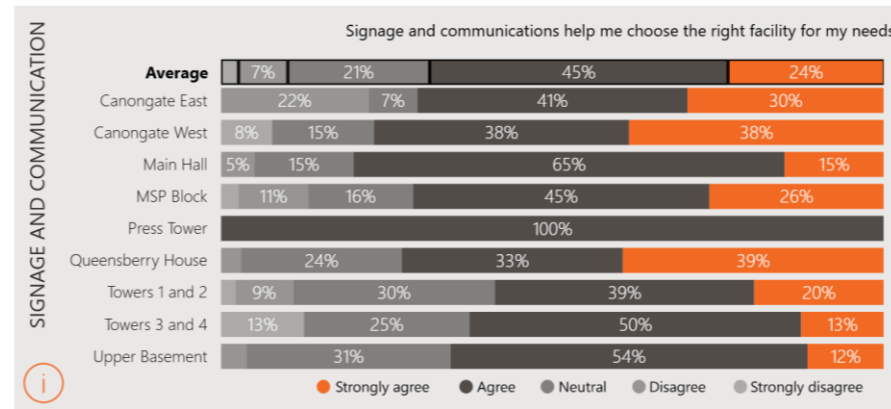
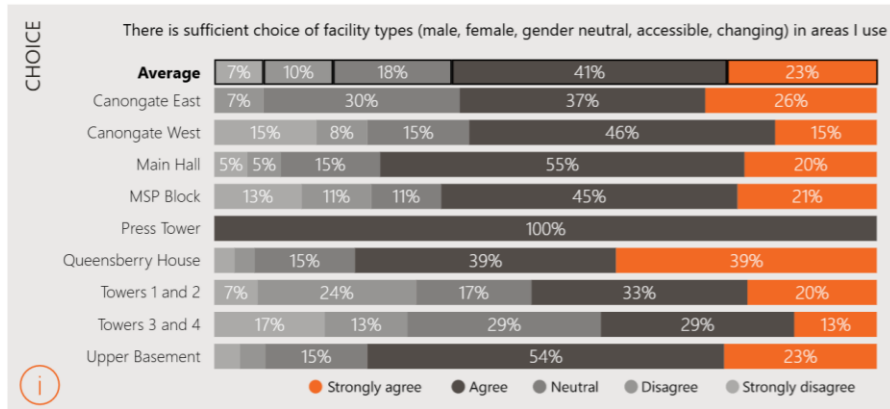
Safety



07

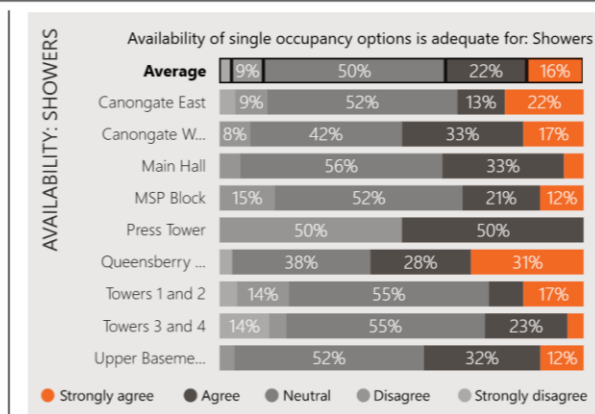
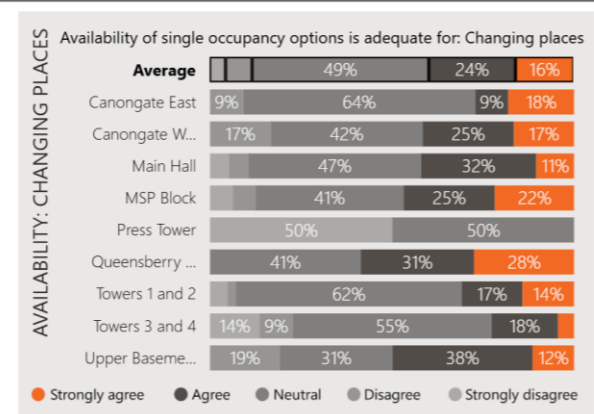
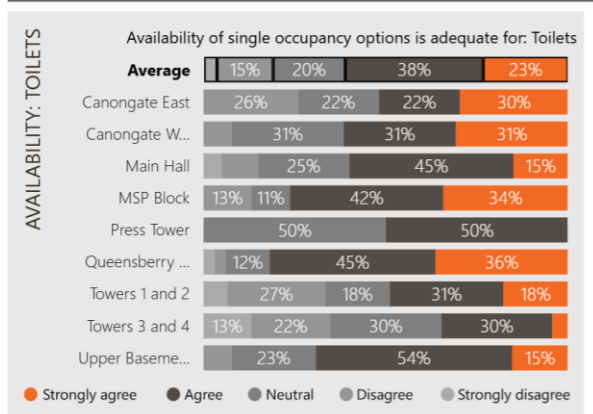
Inclusion and choice

Inclusion and choice



Key insights

- Overall perceptions of sufficient choice of facility types are mixed, with responses clustering around neutral or moderate agreement rather than strong agreement.
- Confidence in having sufficient choice varies by location, with lower positive responses in areas such as Towers 1 and 2 and Towers 3 and 4.
- Views on the availability of single-occupancy options vary by facility type:
 - Toilets show moderate confidence overall (61%), but with notable disagreement in some buildings.
 - Changing places receive lower positive scores for availability (40%) and higher neutrality.
 - Showers have the lowest confidence overall (38%), with many respondents unsure or disagreeing that availability is adequate.



What it is telling us

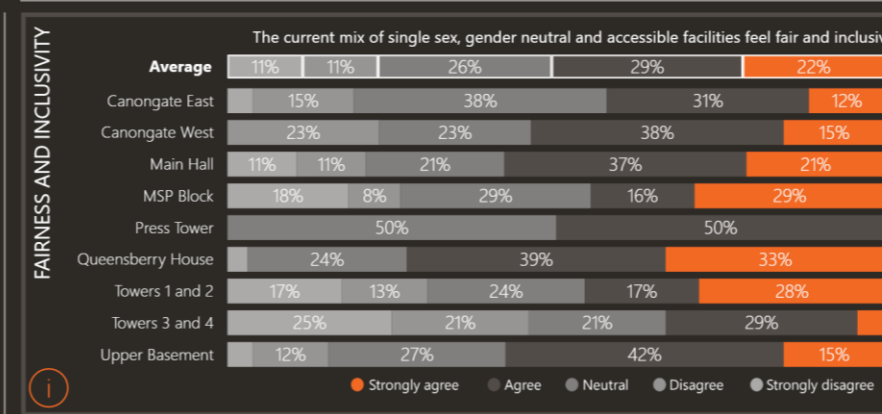
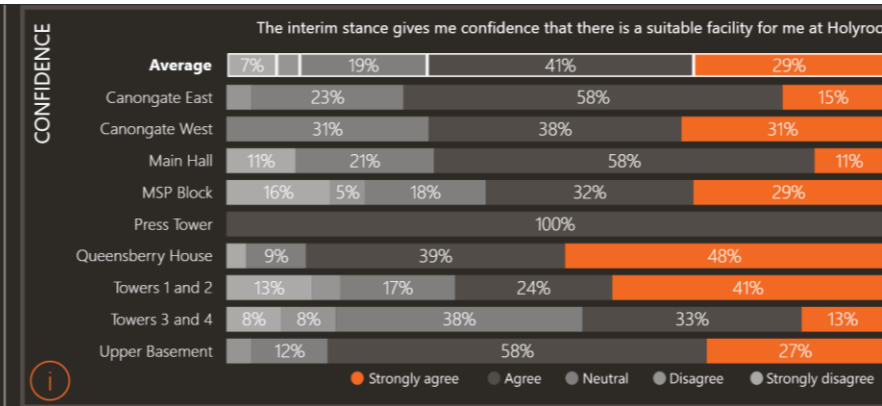
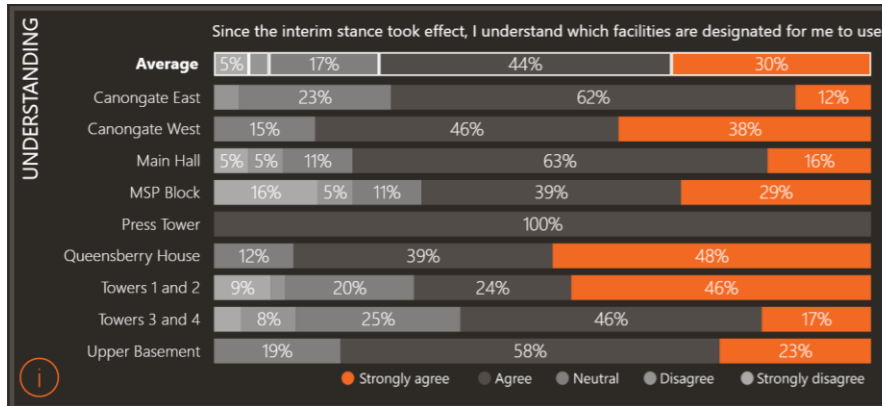
- Variation by building indicates that choice and inclusion are perceived to be highly location-dependent, rather than a consistent estate-wide experience.
- Lower confidence in signage and communications suggests that information could be sufficient at a basic level, but may not always support confident, informed decision-making.
- The weaker scores for single-occupancy changing places and showers may point to smaller volume, but impactful negative experiences, for users who rely on these facilities for dignity, privacy or accessibility.



08

SCPB's Interim stance

SCPb's Interim stance



Key insights

- Most respondents (74%) report a reasonable understanding of which facilities they are designated to use under the interim stance. There is small variation between sexes with 75% of males and 83% of females understanding the stance. The 26% who don't understand the stance has a higher proportion of employees who are trans, non-binary, disabled and neurodivergent.
- Levels of understanding vary by building, with lower confidence reported in areas such as the MSP Block (68%) and Towers 3 and 4 (63%).
- Confidence that the interim stance ensures a suitable facility is available is broadly positive overall but varies across locations.
- Views on whether the current mix of facilities feels fair and inclusive are more mixed than for understanding or confidence, with higher neutrality and disagreement.
- Free-text responses and the word cloud are dominated by diversity, equity and inclusion themes, including gender, neutrality, trans experience, single-occupancy facilities, dignity, accessibility and sex-based spaces.

What it is telling us

- Lower confidence that a suitable facility is available among some survey respondents suggests that policy clarity may not always translate into practical confidence, particularly for those with specific privacy, accessibility or identity-related needs.
- The strength of the language in free-text feedback indicates that the interim stance is experienced as a personal and identity-linked issue, not just an operational one. This verbatim commentary is sourced from both individuals directly impacted by the stance and from employees who are not.



09

Improvements and
priorities

Improvements and priorities



IMPROVEMENT AREAS	Improvement	Priority	Average rank (1 = Very Important, 5 = Less Important)	No. of times appears in top 5
	More single occupancy options	👍	2.02	64
	Enhanced privacy (cubicle design/locks/partitions)	👍	2.37	68
	Better signage/wayfinding (including digital maps)	👎	2.93	55
	Cleanliness/maintenance responsiveness	👎	2.55	49
	More facilities within a shorter walk	👎	2.22	37
	Education or improved communications	👎	2.97	39
	Other (Add your own)	👎	1.41	22
	Provision (e.g. menstrual products, shelves, baby changing change)	👎	3.16	31
	Accessibility upgrades (space, alarms, fixtures)	👎	3.40	25
Safety (lighting, routes, sightlines)	👎	3.15	20	

OTHER (FREETEXT)

📌

BEST PRACTICE

📌

Key insights

- More **single-occupancy options** and **enhanced privacy** (cubicle design, locks, partitions) **rank as the highest-priority improvement areas**, with the lowest (best) average importance scores and the most frequent appearance in respondents' top five priorities.
- These improvement areas **are consistently in the top 3 across all demographic groups in Holyrood**, the only group where this isn't the case is by age, where **older generations favour cleanliness/maintenance and more facilities within a shorter walk**.
- Wayfinding and signage, cleanliness and maintenance responsiveness, and having facilities within a shorter walk also **feature strongly as priority improvements**.
- Education or improved communications **appears as lower-priority items relative to physical changes**, despite appearing frequently in employees' top five.

What it is telling us

- The prominence of single-occupancy and privacy-related improvements **indicates that dignity, autonomy and conflict-free use are central concerns for all employees**, but particularly for those in certain protected characteristic groups.
- Verbatim feedback suggests that **inclusion is being experienced through physical design, not just policy intent** and lower prioritisation of education or communications relative to physical changes implies that **users may not see information alone as sufficient to resolve their concerns**.

Summary



What's working today?

- **Strong core cleaning provision:**
Overall cleanliness is consistently rated positively across the estate, with high agreement across demographics, reinforcing that day-to-day cleaning activity is effective and valued.
- **Baseline access to facilities without barriers:**
Most respondents agree they can reach suitable facilities, suggesting a generally functional baseline of physical access across Holyrood.
- **Generally positive feelings of safety:**
A large majority feel safe travelling to and from facilities, particularly during core hours, indicating that security presence and estate design largely supports personal safety.
- **Availability of single-occupancy options in principle:** Most respondents can access single-occupancy facilities when needed, highlighting that these options already play a crucial role in supporting privacy and dignity today.
- **Examples of good accessible design:** Well designed toilets, choice of paper towels, and layouts that support accessibility and independence are repeatedly highlighted as positive features worth retaining.



What needs more attention?

- **Provision and pressure on single-occupancy solutions:**
Demand is perceived to outweigh supply [as these facilities support a variety of needs] including privacy, accessibility, dignity.
- **The impact and understanding of the interim stance:**
While awareness exists, fairness and inclusivity scores are weaker.
- **Inconsistent experience by location and demographic:**
Accessibility, privacy, dignity, sensory support and choice vary across buildings and protected characteristic groups, undermining consistency of experience.
- **Sensory environment:**
Noise (hand dryers), lighting and visual stimuli are repeatedly cited as problematic, particularly by neurodivergent and disabled respondents, indicating unmet needs beyond basic compliance.
- **Maintenance of showers and changing rooms:**
These score weakest overall in the cleanliness and maintenance category, with issues around drainage, ventilation and upkeep.
- **Wayfinding confidence gaps:**
Signage is broadly understood but does not consistently give users confidence to choose the right facility, particularly where accessibility features are not visible until entry.



Where are the opportunities?

- **Investment into single-occupancy solutions:**
Expanding single-occupancy toilets, changing places and showers is the clearest, highest-impact opportunity to improve dignity, reduce potential for conflict and support multiple user needs simultaneously.
- **Upgrading privacy through physical design:**
Improved cubicle layouts, door locks, partitions and layouts can significantly enhance dignity without requiring wholesale estate redesign.
- **Physical and digital wayfinding:**
Clearer, more informative signage (including visibility of accessibility features) and potential digital tools could support confident, informed decision-making
- **Targeted improvements to sensory environments:**
Quieter hand dryers, alternative hand drying options or adjustable lighting where feasible would disproportionately benefit neurodivergent and disabled users.
- **Estate-wide consistency standards:**
Using high-performing areas as benchmarks to reduce location-based inequality in access, privacy, safety and inclusion.
- **Reframing inclusion through design, not just policy:**
The data consistently shows that lived experience is shaped more by physical provision than by communications alone, positioning facilities investment as a tangible route to inclusive outcomes.

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