

**WALES
WITHOUT
VIOLENCE**

Wales Without Violence

The perspectives of children and young people

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Violence Prevention Unit





Imagine a Wales without violence.

Wales Without Violence: The perspectives of children and young people.
Authored by Dr Alex Walker, Violence Prevention Outcomes Officer,
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Background

In 2022/23, the Wales Violence Prevention Unit (VPU) and Peer Action Collective Cymru (PAC) worked together to develop Wales Without Violence: A Shared Framework for Preventing Violence among Children and Young People (henceforth, the 'Framework'). To inform this Framework, the VPU and PAC sought to explore and capture the experiences, ideas and aspirations of children and young people across Wales.

To do this, they delivered an interactive online consultation for children and young people to share their thoughts on the Framework. They also attended community engagement events, ran workshops, and hosted a pop-up shop in Cardiff.

Collectively, the VPU and PAC engaged with over 470 children and young people from across Wales for the Framework. All feedback received from children and young people was anonymous, and data collection was approved by Public Health Wales, Information Governance.

Alongside the engagement specific to the Framework, PAC interviewed an additional 600

children and young people as part of their own research programme. PAC provided feedback to the VPU on the things they had learnt from children and young people.

The insights from the children and young people have been used to inform the Framework, which was published in April 2023. However, it was felt that the information gathered from the children and young people provided unparalleled insight on the issues most affecting them, as well as the priorities for preventing violence, and deserved to be highlighted in its own right. Therefore, the VPU have produced this report to help other professionals understand the perspectives of children and young people in Wales.

The VPU and PAC felt very strongly that the Framework be developed by and for children and young people. A Wales without violence is one where everyone thrives, people are treated equally, respected and valued. It is a place where children and young people are listened to, and solutions are developed together. Further, the Framework takes a children's rights approach, whereby children and young people have the right to have a say in the issues that affect them.



Methods of engagement

To ensure the voices of children and young people were captured from across Wales, several different methods of engagement were used.



Interactive online consultation

The VPU and PAC developed an online survey tool to explore children and young people's perceptions of violence, and violence prevention, within their communities. This survey was advertised through social media, the pop-up shop and the Wales Without Violence website, and ran for six weeks.

The survey asked questions such as:

- What do you think are the most common issues faced by children and young people?
- What are the priorities for preventing violence among children and young people?
- What groups of people do you think have the power to end violence among children and young people?



Pop up shop

PAC rented a shop space in Cardiff and turned that into a pop up shop, where members of the community, particularly children and young people, could 'pop in' to learn more about the Framework, talk about their experiences of violence, the solutions, and take part in several activities. These activities included completing the interactive online consultation, writing advice to other children and young people, and writing on postcards to explain (1) what makes them feel safe and (2) what society needs to start talking about.



Community events

This included the VPU having a stall at various fresher's fairs hosted by universities across Wales which allowed for engagement with those over 18. The VPU also had a stall at South Wales' Choice of a Lifetime play, which allowed

for engagement with school-aged children and young people, primarily aged 12-14. PAC also hosted stalls at various Pride events. At these events, children and young people were asked (1) what do you think are the priorities for preventing violence? and (2) what would a Wales without violence look like for you?



Community workshops

PAC ran workshops with members of the community, particularly with diverse communities, to ensure their voices were captured within the Framework. These workshops were attended by children, young people, their families and Changemakers. Changemakers are children and young people, aged 10 to 20, who will take the learning from PAC's research and turn it into action.



Demographics

Over 470 children and young people shared their experiences with the VPU and PAC. Just under three quarters of these were aged 18-24 (figure 1) and two thirds were female (figure 2).

Figure 1: Age ranges of children and young people who took part in the consultation activities

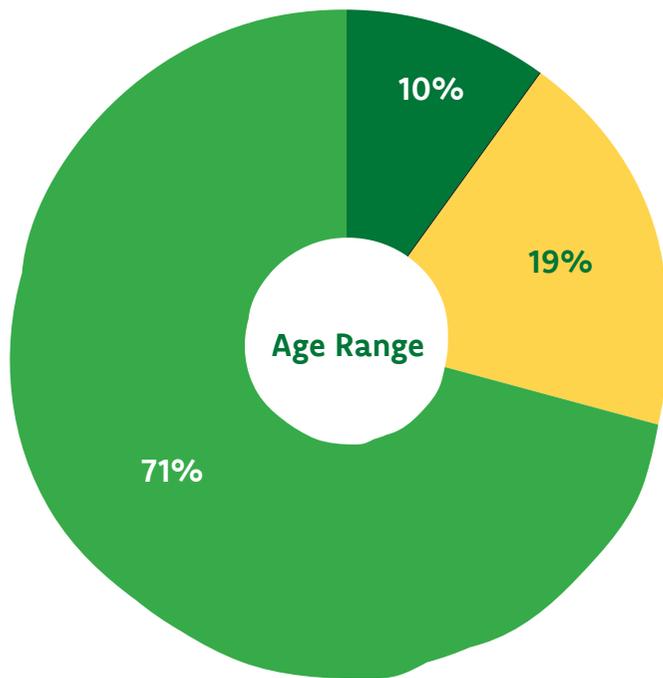
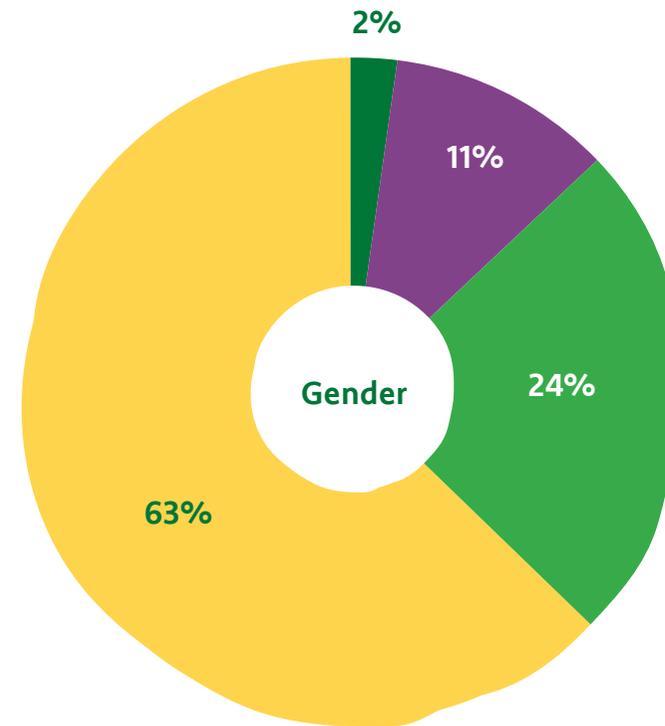


Figure 2: Gender of the children and young people who took part in the consultation activities

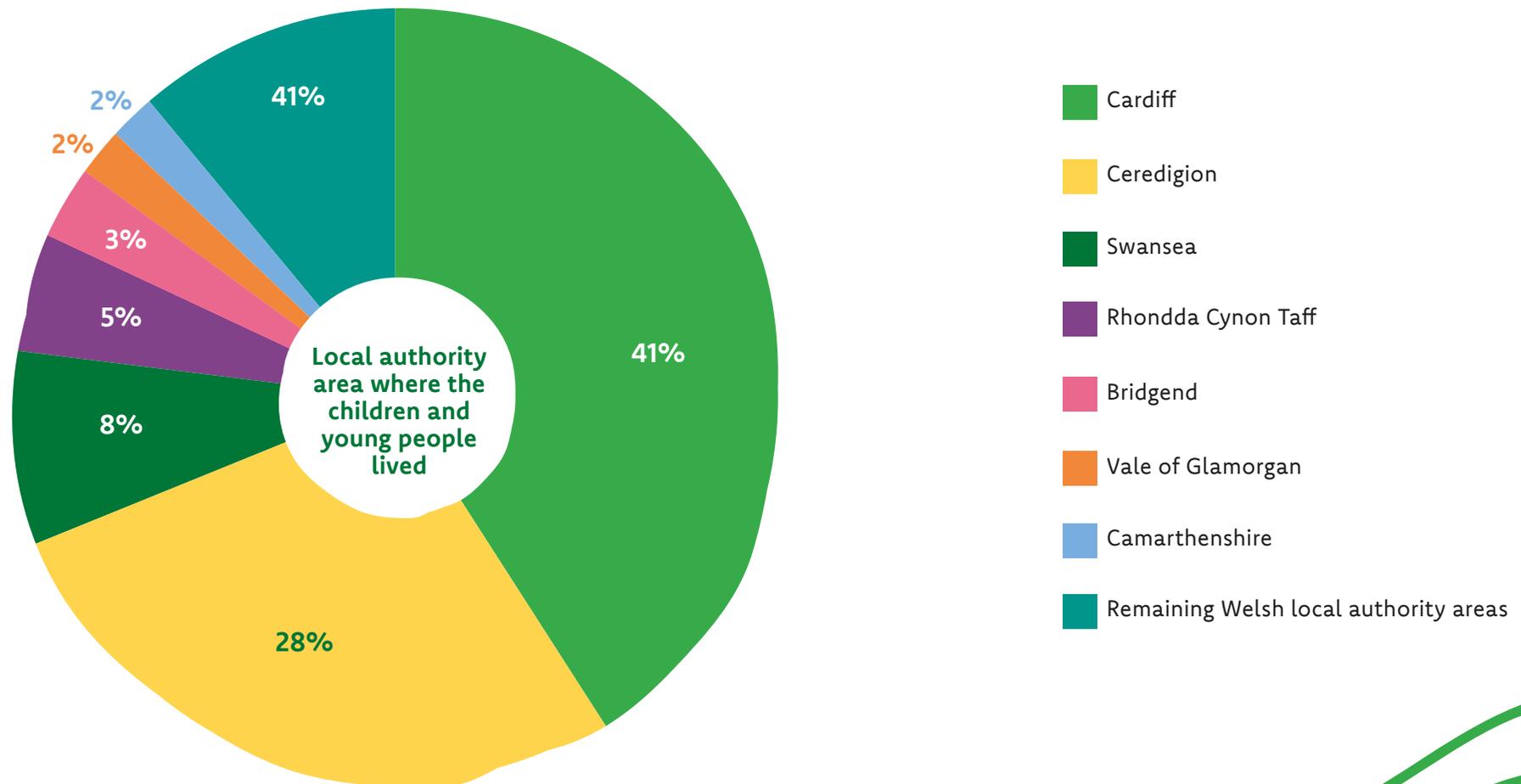


Children and young people from every local authority area in Wales responded to the survey, however, a large proportion of the children and young people lived in Cardiff or Ceredigion (figure 3).

It is important to note that these are areas where VPU/PAC conducted extra engagement events (e.g. fresher's fayres).

Please note that the number of respondents in some areas was relatively low; therefore, to protect their identity, areas with low representation have been merged.

Figure 3: Local authority area where the children and young people lived



Just over two thirds of the children and young people described their sexual identity as heterosexual (figure 4), and were predominantly White Welsh or White British (figure 5).

Figure 4: Sexual identity of the children and young people who took part in the consultation activities

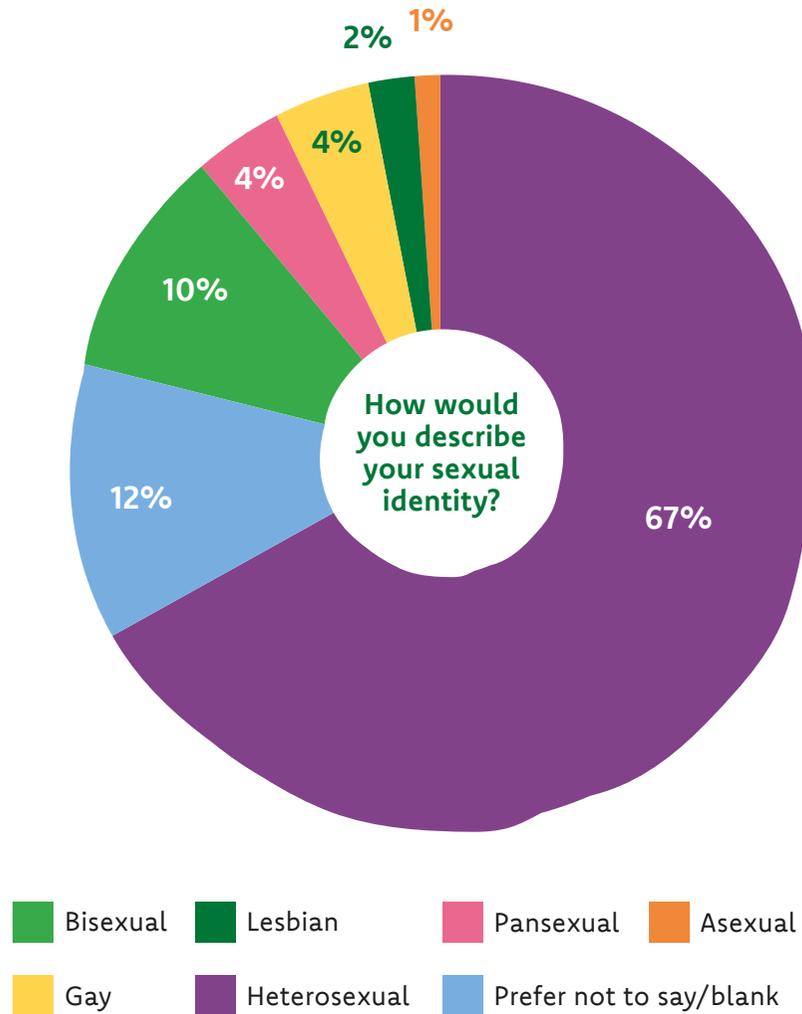
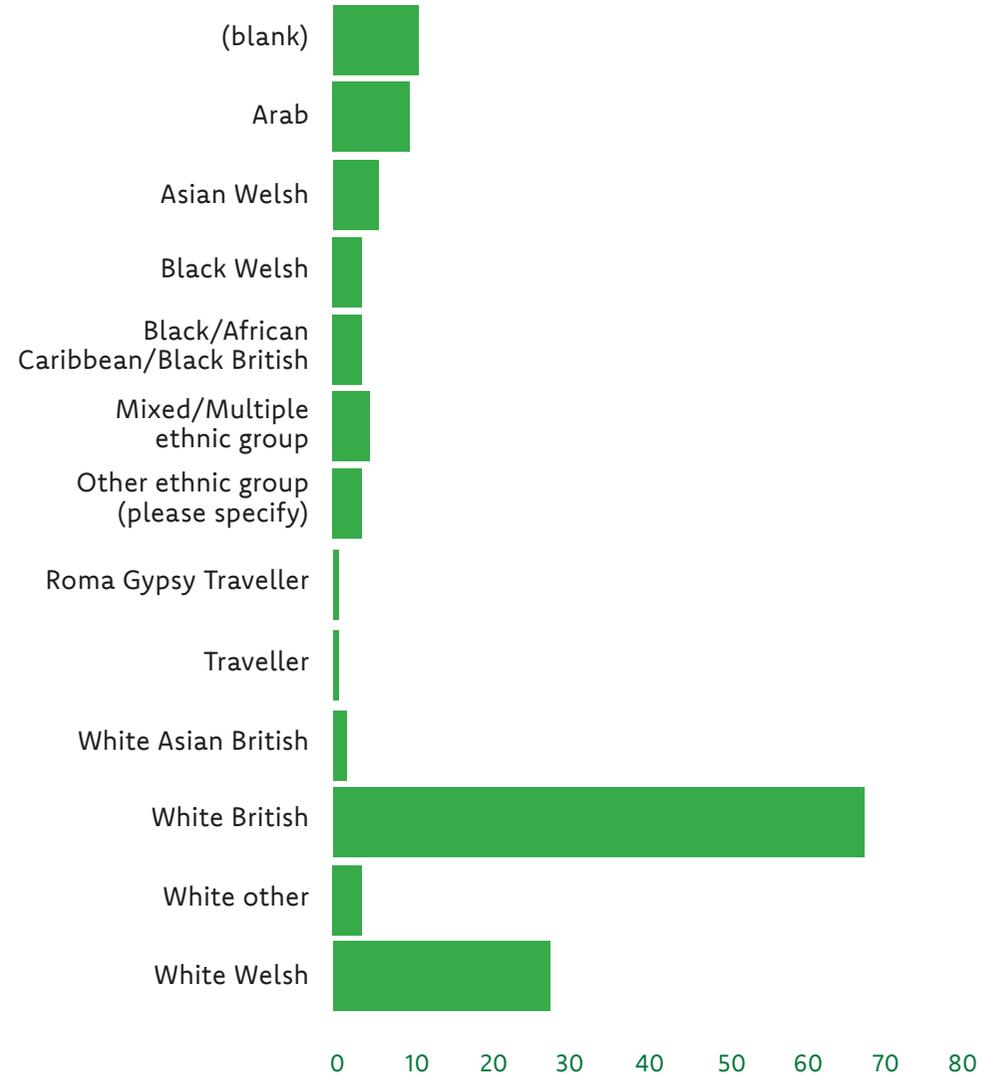


Figure 5: Ethnicity of the children and young people who took part in the consultation activities



Types of violence identified by children and young people

What do you think are the most common issues in your area in relation to violence among children and young people?

By far the most prominent answer to this question was bullying, online and offline, with **1 in 2** children and young people giving this answer. This included nasty rumours.

Other responses included:

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Physical violence |  Domestic abuse |
|  Sexual harassment |  Stalking |
|  Sexual violence |  Gang violence |
|  Knife crime |  Hate crime (trans abuse, racial abuse, homophobia) |

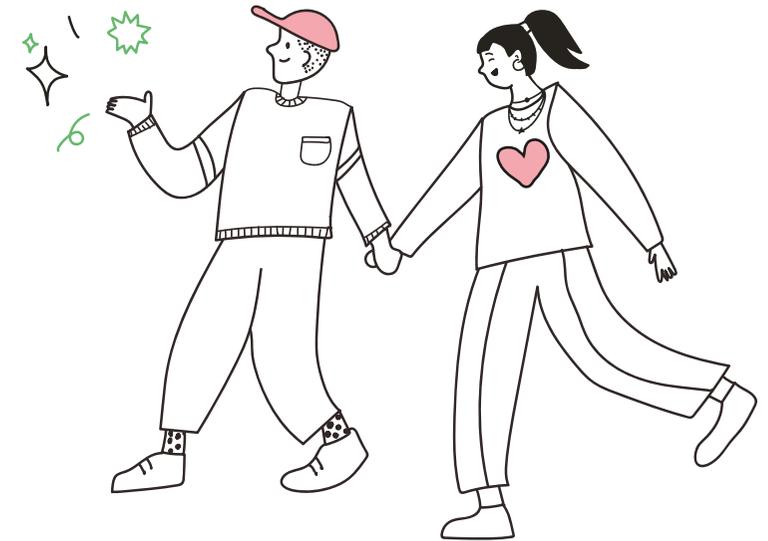
And, whilst not types of violence among children and young people, they were also concerned about drugs and theft.



Identity and violence

In your community, how do you think a child or young person's identity affects their experience of violence?

The responses from children and young people included ethnicity, poverty, and religion. Below is a full list of the things that children and young people felt affect their experiences of violence, along with supporting quotes directly from the children and young people's responses.



Sexual identity

“Gay people are the target of a lot of hate.”

Ethnicity

“Ethnic groups are the target of a lot of hate.”

Gender identity

“Women worry when dressing, walking alone and about being safe in the dark.”

Poverty

“Under privileged backgrounds are unable to afford new items and may get ridiculed as a result.”

Families

“Dysfunctional families are more likely to experience violence.”

Appearance

“Those who choose to dress differently are often bullied and harassed.”

Religion

“Those with different religious beliefs are often treated differently.”

Neurodiversity

“Children and young people who are neurodiverse can often be the victims of violence.”

What can we do as a society to make sure a young person's identity doesn't put them at a greater risk of violence?

The respondents felt that there were a few things we could do as a society to make sure their identity doesn't put them at a greater risk of violence.

The more prominent responses are below:

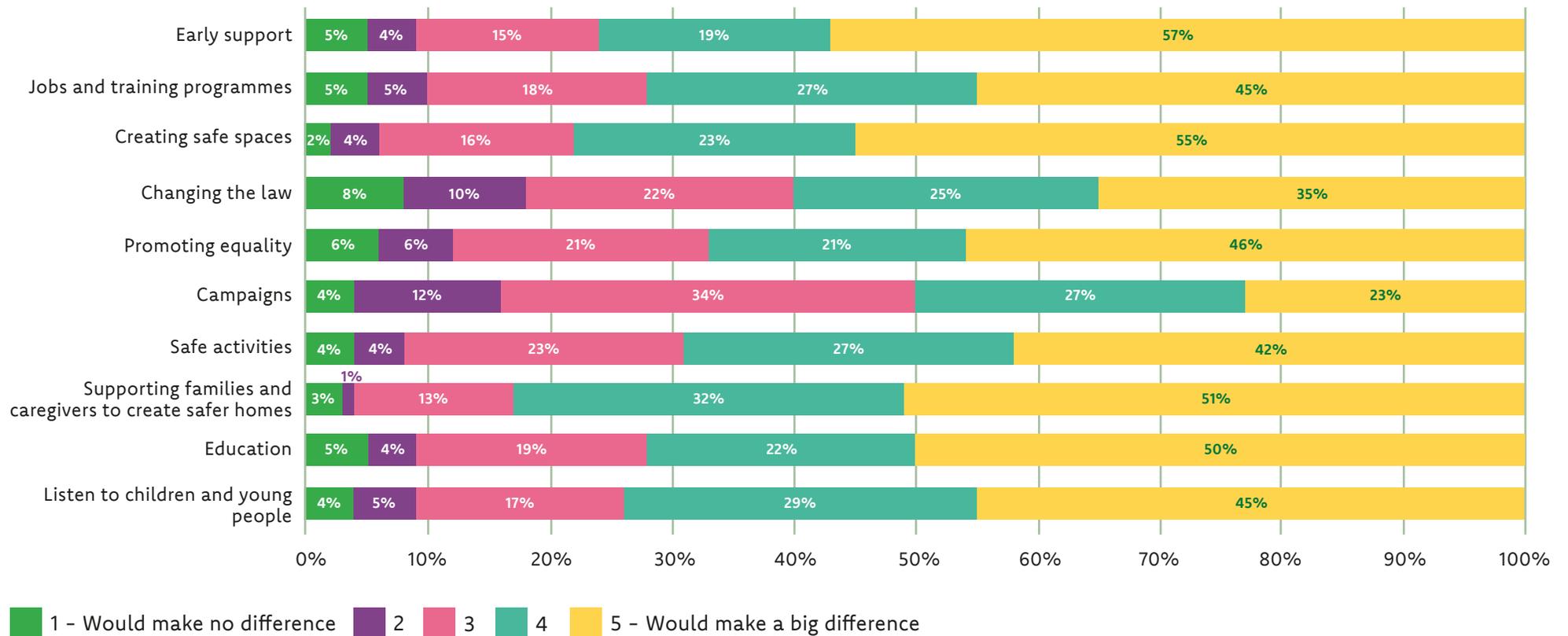


Effective activities to prevent violence

How effective do you think these changes and activities would be at reducing violence among children and young people in your community?



Figure 6: Effective changes and activities



The children and young people felt that supporting families and caregivers to create safer homes would make the largest difference in reducing violence in Wales. This was followed by creating safe spaces, listening to children and young people, and early support.



Is there anything else you think we could do as a society to help prevent violence among children and young people in your community (in school, online or at home)?

The children and young people had lots of ideas of things we could do as a society to help prevent violence among children and young people in the community. The more common suggestions are presented below:

- More youth clubs to give children and young people a positive outlet.
- More awareness on different types of violence and where to get support.
- More policing and the police actively improving their relationships with children and young people.
- Integrate different age groups so the older ones can act as buddies for the younger ones.
- Gift cards so that children and young people are able to purchase necessary items that they may not otherwise be able to afford.
- Regulate web based material to protect children and young people from the harmful content online.
- Campaigns to engage children and young people in violence prevention.
- Stricter regulations in schools to deter bullies.
- Easy access, confidential spaces where children and young people can talk about their concerns, and get free advice and support. This should be accessible to all children and young people.

Priorities for preventing violence

What are the priorities for preventing violence among children and young people in Wales?

The children and young people outlined several priorities for preventing violence among children and young people in Wales.

These priorities included having trusted adults, improved reporting systems, and better access to mental health and support services. A full list is presented below, with quotes from the children and young people.

Trusted adults: Approachable, non-judgemental adults to confide in. These adults need to be 'more approachable and easy to talk to', and should offer that child or young person 'support no matter what they have done'. It was felt that adults needed to 'be more open and less judgemental towards us [children and young people]'. It was felt that adults need to do more to gain the trust of children and young people.

Awareness: Educating children and young people children and young people about the dangers of violence, how to report concerns, where to get help, and the consequences for involvement in violence. The children and young people felt that more could be done to 'educate people in schools about the dangers', 'teach the consequences' and 'know the signs for when something is bad so that you can report it'.

Safe activities and spaces: A variety of safe activities for children and young people to participate in. They wanted 'more activities for children', 'invest in more social clubs', 'local youth clubs' and 'boxing clubs'. Safe spaces extend beyond a physical building. Additionally, some of the children and young people felt that they needed safe transport, especially 'late night safe transportation' and safety online.

Focussed activity: More focus on specific issues identified by children and young people. These specific topics included:

- Knife crime
- Safety for women and girls
- Antisocial behaviour
- Consent
- Spiking
- Car theft
- The negative influence of social media
- Alcohol, drugs and underage smoking
- Drug dealing

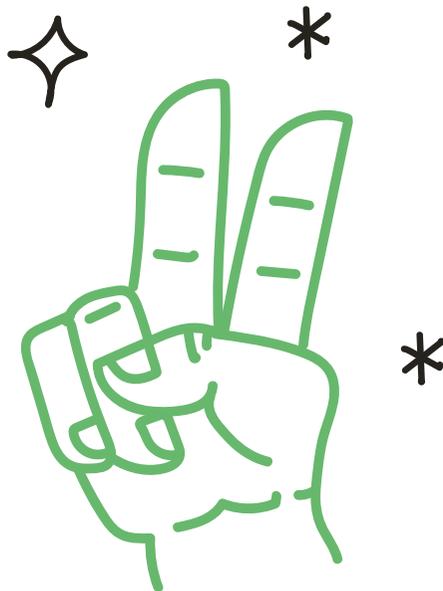


Reporting systems: Children and young people wanted easier ways to report their concerns. They suggested having simpler ways of reporting incidents that are easily accessible and well known to members of the public. The children and young people called for 'easier ways to report and for the police to treat it seriously'. They suggested having 'online police where people can report and submit evidence from their phone'. They suggested that this would help people report the violence being experienced by members of the public. 'I think there should be easier ways to report violence and more support for those who have experienced it'.

Support services: The children and young people who completed the survey felt that there needs to be more support services and 'more helplines for people who suffer and feel like they have no one to talk to'. In particular, the children and young people wanted support services to be readily available within the night time economy. Further, it was felt that young

people needed ‘better community services to bring people together’.

Mental health services: More specifically, the children and young people stated that improved mental health services should be a priority for preventing violence in Wales; ‘I think there should be more support for those struggling with mental health’. These services should be readily available and not “hey, we can book you in 2035 is that alright?”. Further, there needs to be ‘reduced stereotypes on mental health’. It was felt that ‘better mental health services would help the root cause of people wanting to be violent’ and ‘the focus should be on mental health as a lot of violence ultimately stems from poor ability to manage emotions’.



The power to make change

What groups of people (individuals, communities, organisations etc.) do you think have the power to end violence among children and young people?

The children and young people felt that everyone in society had the power to end violence among children and young people, but particularly the groups of people listed below.

Adults who work with young people	The Government	Police	School staff
Council	Youth groups	Sports coaches	Youth justice
Parents	Young people	Public bodies	White people, particularly straight white men
Ethnic minorities	Media workers	Wealthy people	Politicians
Figures in the community-religious leaders			



Do you think children and young people have the power to make change to end violence among children and young people?

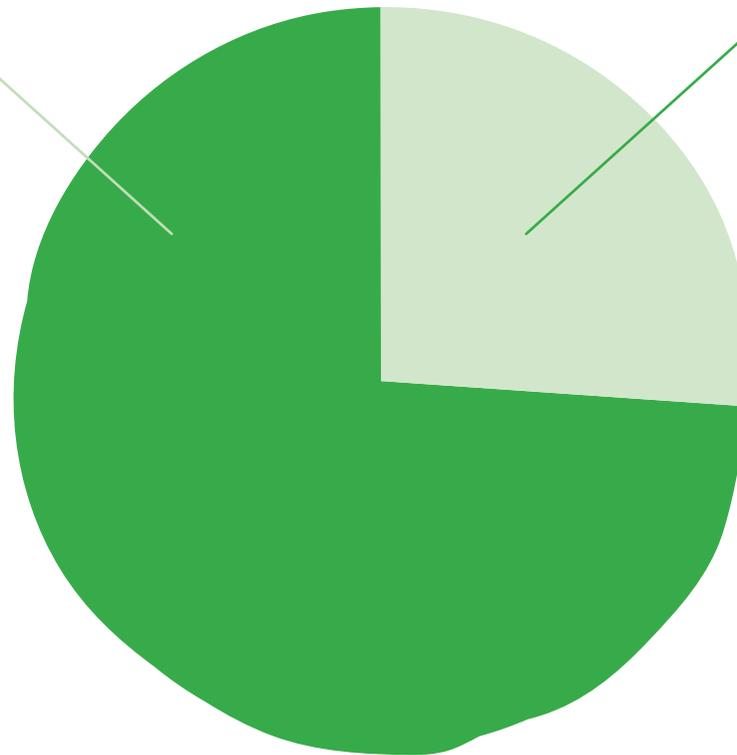


74%

of respondents said yes.

Children and young people have the power because:

- “We are the next generation.”
- “We know exactly what children and young people are going through.”
- “When we work together, with the support of adults, we can make a change.”



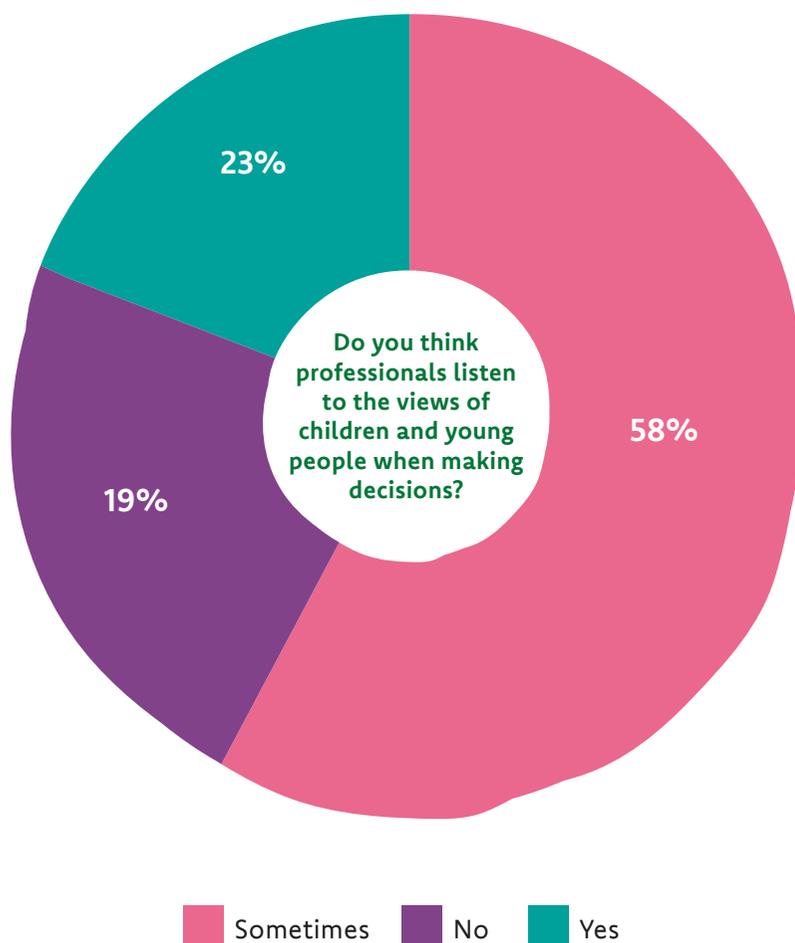
Those who said no, said:

- “We’re not old enough to make change.”
- “We aren’t given enough power.”
- “We aren’t given the opportunities to have our say.”
- “Only those well-educated have the power to make a change.”
- “We don’t have a voice.”
- “Because adults are too controlling.”
- “Because younger people are too immature.”



Do you think professionals (teachers, youth workers, police officers, social workers, and people who work in councils and government) listen to the views of children and young people when making decisions?

Figure 7: Do professionals listen to the views of children and young people?



Respondents explained that:

- “The creation of a youth parliament helps professionals listen to us”
- “Schools are good at promoting young people’s lives”
- “Some teachers are wonderful. They are supportive, kind and compassionate but others don’t seem to care”
- “Some professionals do, but not all”
- “Young people’s problems are not always taken seriously”
- “The right services to help people listen to us, do not always exist”
- “They don’t realise that young people have the power to create change”
- “Many times, the professional ignored the ideas of the young person because of their age”

A Wales without violence

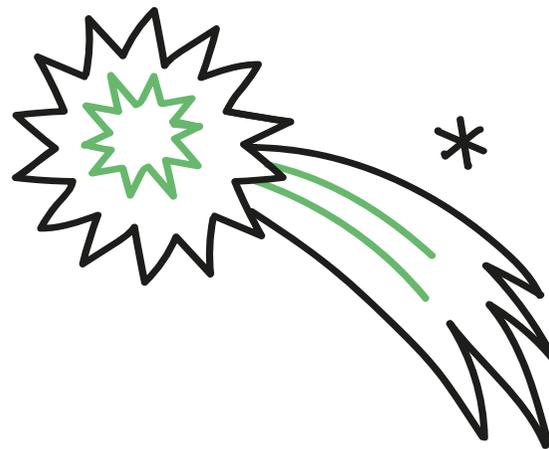
How would children and young people's lives be different if violence didn't exist?

The majority of children and young people indicated that a Wales without violence would be **PEACEFUL**, **SAFE** and **COMFORTABLE**.

In particular, they said that a Wales without violence would allow them to go outside without fear; 'I would probably go out more, and be less afraid'. In particular, a Wales without violence would allow young people to 'feel safe to walk alone at night'. One person recognised the worry that their parents sometimes experience when they are outside; 'I would feel safer. When I go out, my parents wouldn't be so worried and stressed'. A Wales without violence would allow children and young people to 'feel more comfortable in my surroundings', 'safer and less guarded' and 'everyone would be happier'. A Wales without violence would result in improved opportunities; 'my life would be better and I would progress faster'.

The children and young people recognised how a Wales without violence could become a 'friendly place', that is 'safe for everybody' and a 'safe space to talk and communicate without inflicting danger on you or anyone else'. When a young person makes a bad decision, it should not have lasting consequences; 'don't ruin your life because you made a bad choice'.

'I would travel the world fearlessly.'



Summary

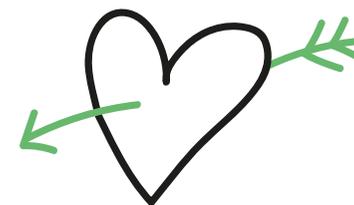
Through the consultation and engagement events that took place to support development of Wales Without Violence: A Shared Framework for Preventing Violence among Children and Young People, the VPU and PAC collected a wealth of information from children and young people across Wales in relation to their perspective of violence, and what they felt the solutions to violence were. This report summarises these findings.

Children and young people felt that bullying was the most common issue they face. They recognised many things that could result in someone being victimised more than others; including sexuality, poverty and neurodiversity. Further, the children and young people offered solutions to making society more equal, including changing the laws to protect people, promoting different identities and encouraging people to listen to one another.

To further prevent violence, the children and young people felt that offering support to families was particularly important in preventing violence, along with offering more youth clubs, support services and confidential spaces where children and young people could access unbiased advice. The children and young people recognised a lack of support from available and trusted adults whom they could turn to, and wanted safe activities and awareness/educating on specific topics (e.g. knife crime).

The children and young people recognised that everyone has the power to end violence among children and young people. Some professionals help children and young people speak up and share their experiences, while others do not.

Children and young people, in particular, need to be empowered to share their experiences and given power to influence change as they know exactly what other children and young people are experiencing, and what they want/need.



Children and young people were asked what a Wales without violence would look like for them.

Here are some of their answers:



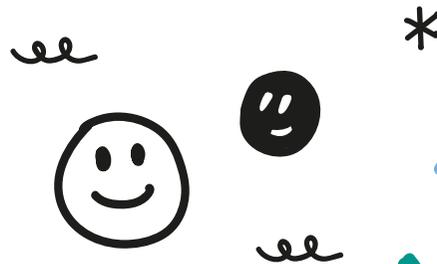
I would be happier.

I would leave the house more often.

I would feel safe to go out at night.

Children and young people would feel free to express themselves.

People would be more accepting of others.



We would have a happier and healthier society.

I would be less stressed and less fearful.

There would be peace. My mind would be at peace.

People would have fewer mental health problems.

Children and young people's lives would be more enjoyable.



I would sleep better.

Society would be closer.

There would be less reliance on the NHS.

There would be less prejudice and more equality.

We would do better at school.

People wouldn't be scared to go out and make new friends.

Children and young people would have brighter futures which they are able to fulfil.

Children and young people would feel empowered to achieve their potential.

I would feel safe in my own skin.

Children and young people wouldn't be afraid to be themselves and to pursue their dreams.

Children and young people would have greater confidence, participate more, be outdoors more and be more active and involved.

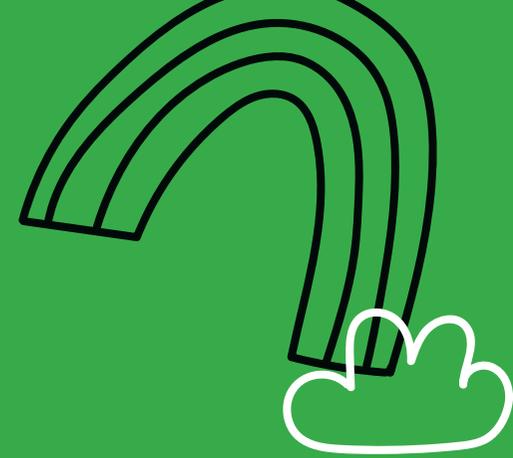
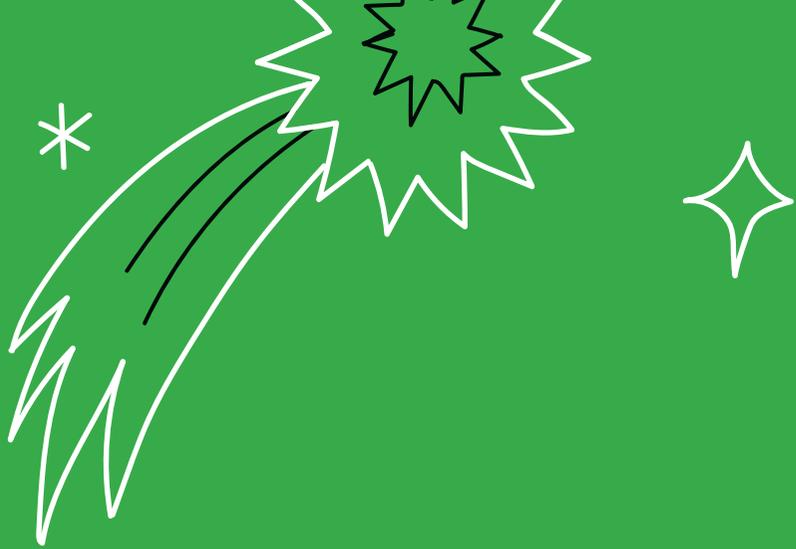
Children and young people would have less anxiety.





**A Wales without violence is
one where everyone thrives.**





WALES WITHOUT VIOLENCE

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