

SOCIAL RESEARCH NUMBER: 44/2023

PUBLICATION DATE: 04/04/2023

What factors are linked to people feeling safe in their local area?

Future Generations Indicator 25

This report is based on National Survey interviews carried out in 2021-22. It provides an update of [previous analysis based on the 2018-19 results](#). The National Survey for Wales is a continuous, large-scale, random sample survey covering people across Wales. Prior to the start of the Covid-19 (coronavirus) pandemic in March 2020, the survey was carried out face-to-face in people's homes; since April 2020, it has been carried out by telephone instead (with an online section for some respondents). Due to the difference in mode and possible changes because of the pandemic, care should be taken when making direct comparisons with results from previous years.

This report outlines some factors linked to whether people felt safe in their local area. The [National Survey for Wales](#) measures whether a person feels safe in their local area based on their responses to a series of four questions concerning safety in the local area after dark.

Key findings

Holding other factors constant¹, the factors below were found to be linked with people feeling safe in their local area after dark.

- Being male.
- Being under 65 years of age.
- Not having religious beliefs.
- Having a very high level of life satisfaction.
- Being satisfied with the services and facilities available in the local area.
- Not having a limiting long-term illness.
- Not having a litter problem in the area.
- Not having a graffiti problem in the area.
- Feeling that people in the local area treat each other with respect and consideration.
- Having access to a car or van.

¹ For this analysis, we have controlled for a range of factors so that even if they are related (e.g. general health and age), the link between each factor and the percentage of people feeling safe in their local area can be explored independently.

- Living in the Powys, Gwynedd or Ceredigion; compared with living in Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen or Newport.

Other factors included in our analysis and found not to be linked to people feeling safe in their local area are listed in Section 5. As with all analysis of this type, we are unable to attribute cause and effect or to allow for factors not measured in the survey.

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1. Background

[The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) focuses on improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales. To achieve this, the Act requires public bodies in Wales to think about long-term issues and targets, work better with communities and stakeholders, and to take a more joined-up and cohesive approach to decision-making. To ensure that this vision is achieved, the Act put in place seven well-being goals² (Figure 1).

The Act requires the Welsh Government to set [national indicators](#) measuring achievement against the well-being goals. The [National Survey for Wales](#) measures progress against 15 of the 46 national indicators. The survey in 2021-22 involved telephone interviews with a random sample of over 12,000 people across Wales.

This report focuses on [National Indicator 25](#): 'Percentage of people feeling safe at home, walking in the local area, and when travelling'.

2. Questions used in the National Survey

Information relating to National Indicator 25 was collected by asking National Survey respondents how safe they feel: at home after dark; walking alone in their local area after dark; travelling by car after dark; and travelling by public transport after dark. Each of these elements of community safety were answered using a four-point scale ranging from '1 = very safe' to '4 = very unsafe'. For the analysis in this report, 'very' or 'fairly' safe responses were combined to form a single measure of 'feel safe'.³

Overall, 66% of adults felt safe in their local area. This is consistent with the results found in 2020-21, but has decreased from 2018-19, where 71% of people felt safe in their local area.

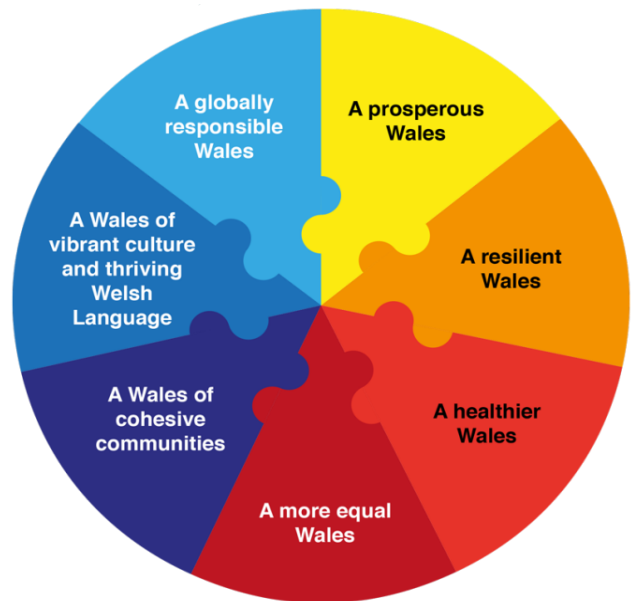


Figure 1. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: seven well-being goals².

² Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: The Essentials, which can be viewed [online](#).

³ Respondents who answered 'very unsafe' and 'a bit unsafe' to the community safety questions were also combined to form a single group of 'feels unsafe'.

3. Method of analysis

To get a clear understanding of how particular factors contribute to whether people felt safe in their local area, we used a statistical technique⁴ to explore the link⁵ between each factor and feeling safe in the local area, whilst holding all other factors constant. Holding other factors constant (also referred to as controlling for other factors) is important because it allows us to look at each predicting factor independently (i.e. ensuring that the effect we are measuring is not influenced by external factors). We can then get a much clearer idea of how one single factor links to feeling safe in the local area, without the influence of other factors.

The complexity of relationships between factors

To understand these results, we cannot always be sure about what factors are linked to, and which are affected by, feeling safe in the local area. For some factors the relationship is clear based on prior knowledge while for other factors, this relationship is not as obvious⁶.

Interpreting the results

All the factors presented in the charts in this report are statistically significant predictors of people feeling safe in their local area as tested by our chosen regression model. In this report, we use 'predictive margins' – presented as percentages (%) – to show the probability of a relationship between each factor (whilst holding other factors constant) and the dependent variable (people feeling safe in their local area). The results show within a particular factor (e.g. sex) the likelihood of one 'average' group of people with a shared characteristic (e.g. males) feeling safe in their local area, compared with another 'average' group of people with a different shared characteristic (e.g. females). Error bars on the charts show the 95% confidence interval of the predictive margins for each group. Overlapping error bars mean that while a factor is a significant predictor of people feeling safe in their local area, it is not entirely clear which group within the factor is the most predictive.

⁴ This technique is known as logistic regression. More information about the methods used in this report can be found in the accompanying [regression methodology report and technical report](#).

⁵ While this analysis can tell us about the likelihood of relationships between factors, it cannot tell us about causal relationships (e.g. it would be incorrect to say that feeling unsafe in their local area causes people to feel their local area has no sense of community).

⁶ This relationship can be even more complex, as there could be other factors which we haven't considered (and are not available from the National Survey) which may be linked to feeling safe in the local area *and* feeling satisfied with the local area.

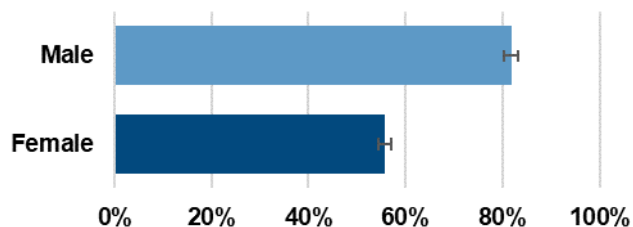
4. Main factors linked to feeling safe in the local area

Overall, 66% of National Survey respondents felt safe in their local area. The figures below show all the individual factors (whilst holding other factors constant) which were found to have an association with people feeling safe in their local area. Within each factor, the group with the highest probability (percentage) of feeling safe in their local area is highlighted in light blue. Also, the explanatory factors can be grouped into themes shown by the sub-heading titles.

Demography

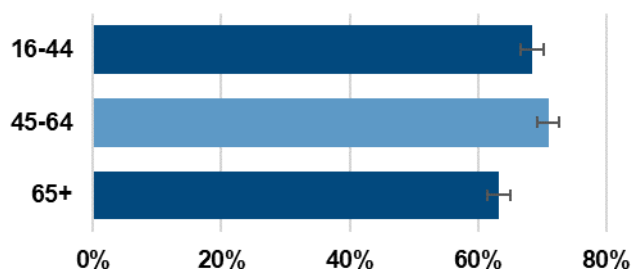
Sex

Men were more likely to feel safe in their local area after dark (at home, when walking alone, and when travelling), compared with women.



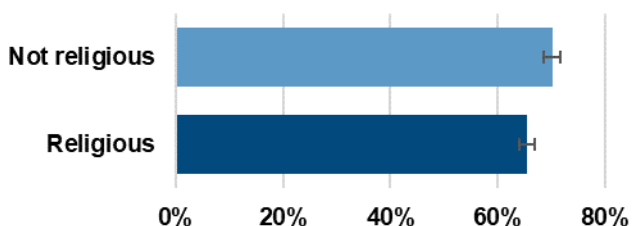
Age

People aged 65 years or older were the least likely to feel safe in their local area, compared to people aged between 16 and 44, as well as those aged between 45 and 64.



Religious Beliefs

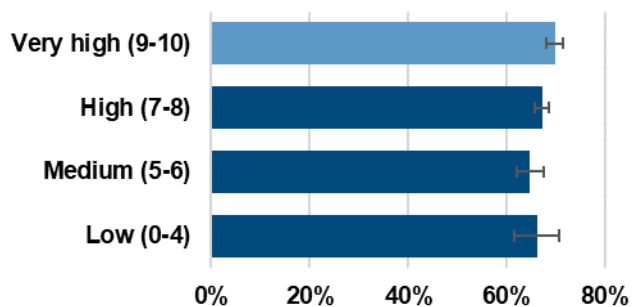
Non-religious people were more likely to feel safe in their local area after dark, when compared to those following any demonination of Christianity.



Well-being

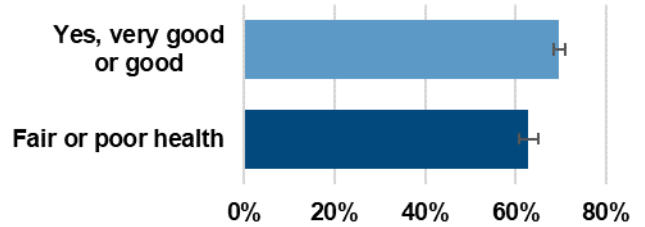
Overall life satisfaction

People with very high life satisfaction were more likely to feel safe in their local area after dark than those with a medium level of life satisfaction.



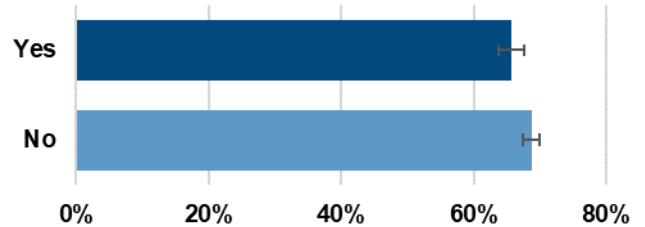
General health

Those in very good or good health were more likely to feel safe in their local area after dark than those with fair, poor or very poor health.



Whether has a limiting long-term illness

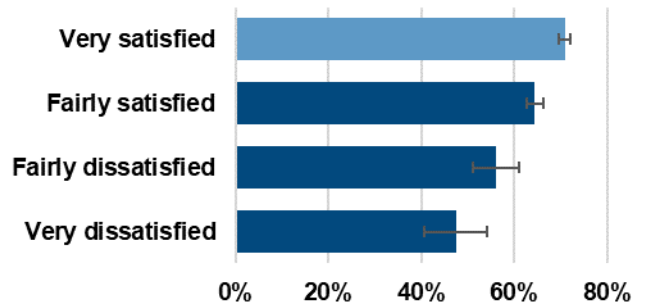
Similarly, those without a limiting long-term illness were more likely to feel safe in their local area after dark.



Area Facilities

Overall satisfaction with local area

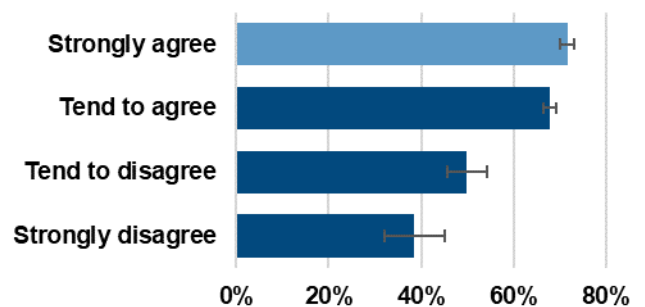
People who were very satisfied with their local area were the most likely to feel safe after dark in their local area.



Community Cohesion

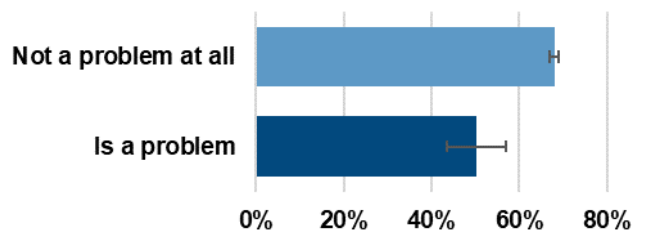
Whether people treat each other with respect in the local area

People who strongly agreed that people treated each other with respect in their local area were the most likely to feel safe in their local area after dark.



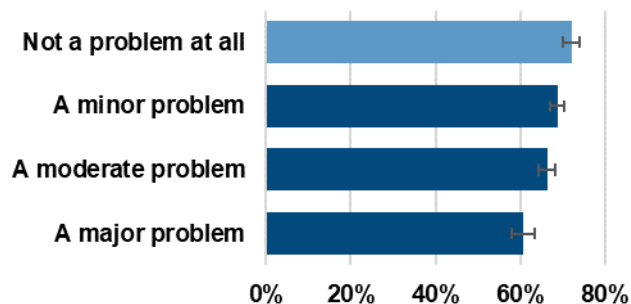
Whether views graffiti as a problem in the local area

People who did not feel that graffiti or vandalism was a problem in their local area were the most likely to feel safe in their local area after dark.



How much of a problem littering is in the local area

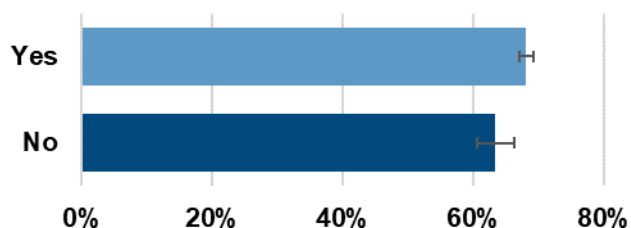
People who viewed littering as 'Not a problem at all' were more likely to feel safe in their local area after dark, compared those who felt littering was either 'A moderate problem' or 'A major problem'.



Transport

Has access to a car or van

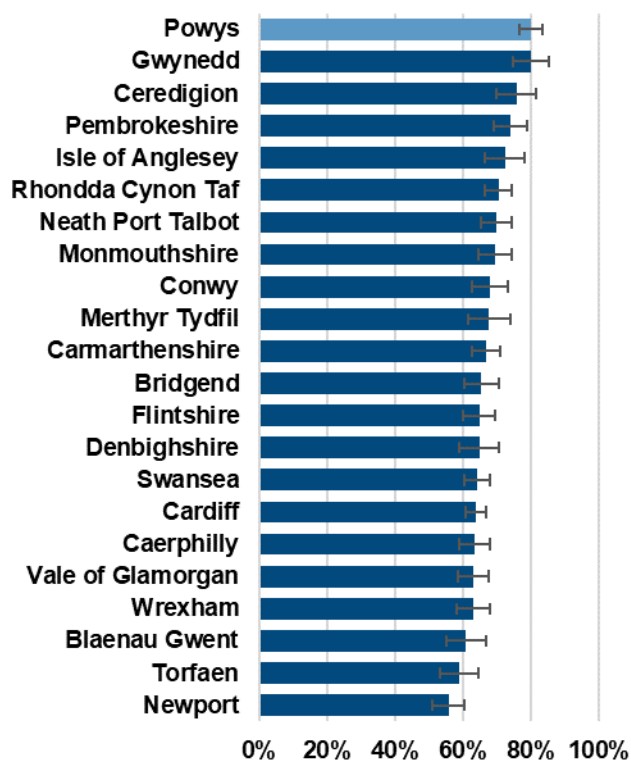
People who have access to a car or van are more likely to feel safe in their local area after dark.



Local Authority

Local authority

People living in Powys, Gwynedd or Ceredigion were the most likely to feel safe in their local area after dark, while those in Newport, Torfaen or Blaenau Gwent were the least likely to feel safe.



5. Factors not linked to feeling safe in the local area

In this analysis, other factors were included in our regression model, but we did not find a link between the following factors and people feeling safe in their local area:

- Marital Status.
- Ethnicity.
- Urban/Rural classification.
- Whether views dog fouling as a problem in the local area.
- Whether views fly-tipping as a problem in the local area.
- Frequency of going for walks longer than 10 minutes.
- Whether feels a sense of belonging to the local area.
- Whether believes people from different backgrounds in the local area get along well.
- Whether in material deprivation.
- Living in a safe region, according to the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

6. Analysis of individual questions

Feeling unsafe walking alone at night

Overall, 25% of people reported that they felt either 'a bit' or 'very' unsafe when walking alone in their local area after dark. Table 1 provides a summary of all the factors linked to this individual measure of overall safety in local area. See Appendix A for a detailed breakdown of each of these factors.

Table 1: Summary of factors found to be linked to people feeling unsafe when walking alone in their local area after dark.

Theme	Factor	Most likely to feel unsafe walking alone in local area
Demographic factors	Sex	Females
	Age	65+
Area Facilities	Overall satisfaction with local area	Very dissatisfied
Geographic Factors	Urban/Rural classification	Urban
Community Cohesion	How much of a problem littering is in the local area	A major problem
	Whether graffiti is a problem in the local area	Is a problem
	Whether people treat each other with respect in the local area	Strongly disagree
Safety	Area safety (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation)	Most deprived 20%

Feeling unsafe at home after dark

Overall, 4% of people reported that they felt either ‘a bit’ or ‘very’ unsafe at home after dark. Table 2 provides a summary of all the factors linked to this individual measure of overall safety in local area. See Appendix B for a detailed breakdown of each of these factors.

Table 2: Summary of factors found to be linked to people feeling unsafe when at home after dark.

Theme	Factor	Most likely to feel unsafe at home
Demographic factors	Sex	Females
Area Facilities	Overall satisfaction with local area	Very dissatisfied
Geographic Factors	Urban/Rural classification	Urban
Well-being	Overall life satisfaction	Low (0-4)
Community Cohesion	How much of a problem littering is in the local area	A major problem
	Whether graffiti is a problem in the local area	Is a problem
	Whether people treat each other with respect in the local area	Strongly disagree
	Whether feels people from different backgrounds get along	Strongly disagree

Feeling unsafe travelling by public transport after dark

Overall, 24% of people reported that they felt either 'a bit' or 'very' unsafe using public transport after dark. Table 3 provides a summary of all the factors linked to this individual measure of overall safety in local area. See Appendix C for a detailed breakdown of each of these factors.

Table 3: Summary of factors found to be linked to people feeling unsafe using public transport after dark.

Theme	Factor	Most likely to feel unsafe on public transport
Demographic factors	Sex	Females
	Age	65+
	Religion	Religious
Area Facilities	Overall satisfaction with local area	Very dissatisfied
Geographic Factors	Urban/Rural classification	Urban
Well-being	Overall life satisfaction	Low (0-4)
	Has a limiting long-term illness	Has a limiting long-term illness
Community Cohesion	How much of a problem littering is in the local area	A major problem
	Whether graffiti is a problem in the local area	Is a problem
	Whether people treat each other with respect in the local area	Strongly disagree
Transport	Whether owns/has access to a car or van	No access to a car or van

Feeling unsafe travelling by car after dark

Overall, 3% of people reported that they felt either 'a bit' or 'very' unsafe travelling by car after dark. Table 4 provides a summary of all the factors linked to this individual measure of overall safety in local area. See Appendix D for a detailed breakdown of each of these factors.

Table 4: Summary of factors found to be linked to people feeling unsafe travelling by car after dark.

Theme	Factor	Most likely to feel unsafe travelling by car
Demographic factors	Sex Age Marital Status	Females 65+ Widowed
Area Facilities	Overall satisfaction with local area	Very dissatisfied
Well-being	General health	In fair or poor health
Community Cohesion	How much of a problem fly-tipping is in the local area Whether people treat each other with respect in the local area	A major problem Strongly disagree
Economic factors	Whether in material deprivation	In material deprivation

7. Summary and recommendations for further research

In summary, we have provided an analysis of factors (and overall themes) linked to Future Generations National Indicator 25: 'Percentage of people feeling safe at home, walking in the local area, and when travelling'. Overall, five central themes emerged from our analysis:

1. Demography.
2. Well-being.
3. Area Facilities.
4. Community cohesion.
5. Local authority.

The relationship between particular factors and people feeling safe in their local area is likely to be more complex than suggested in this analysis and influenced by factors not measured in the National Survey. However, many of the related factors first discussed in the earlier [2018-19](#) report remain true following analysis of the 2021-22 National Survey results. Further research could include more small-scale investigations involving qualitative⁷ or mixed-methods⁸ approaches.

⁷ [Qualitative research](#) is often used to understand people's underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations to uncover trends in people's thoughts and opinions to provide a better understanding of a particular issue. Qualitative data collection methods are often small-scale and collect non-numeric data by using techniques such as interviews and focus groups. On the other hand, *quantitative* research seeks to understand a problem by collecting numerical data which can be used in statistical analysis, often to produce generalised results for a large sample of a population (e.g. attitudes, behaviours, and opinions). For example, the National Survey for Wales predominantly collects and analyses information in this way.

⁸ [Mixed-methods](#) is an approach to research which involves the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data within the same study. As policy makers, practitioners, and others in applied areas strive to produce well-informed research based on multiple forms of evidence (such as the multi-faceted well-being of communities and future generations), mixed-methods research can be a good way to explore these complex social situations.

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.

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Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

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