



Ceredigion Safe Zone Consultation Feedback Report

**Safe Zones
consultation**

Closing date:
10 August 2020

 Cyngor Sir
CEREDIGION
County Council

www.ceredigion.gov.uk/safezones

 Caru-Love
Ceredigion

August 2020



2,065

Responses received
(Consultation ended 10th Aug)



64%

Agree or strongly agree in principle with the safe Zones
(27% disagree or strongly disagree)

51%

Agree or strongly agree that the safe zones enable people to visit towns safely
(38% disagree or strongly disagree)



37%

Think the safe zones have a **good or very good** impact on town centre businesses
(26% said bad or very bad)

52%

Think the impact on disabled people, Blue Badge Holders and the elderly is **bad or very bad**
(9% said good or very good)



52%

Think they have a **good or very good** impact on the atmosphere in towns
(27% said bad or very bad)

46%

Think they have a **good or very good** impact on the environment
(15% said bad or very bad)



14%

Agree or strongly agree that they provide opportunities to promote the Welsh language
(33% disagreed and 29% didn't know)

Key themes from the written comments

FRIENDLY,
RELAXED
ATMOSPHERE
IN TOWNS

PROVIDES
OPPORTUNITY
TO DEVELOP
TOWNS

ACCESS FOR
DISABLED /
BLUE BADGE
HOLDERS

ACCESS &
PARKING FOR
RESIDENTS IN
THE SAFE
ZONES

TOURISTS /
VISITORS NOT
SOCIAL
DISTANCING

SOME
BUSINESSES
NEGATIVELY
AFFECTED

Consultation undertaken between 31st July and 10th August 2020

The survey was available online via the Council's website and advertised through social media

A total of 2,065 responses were received

The full results and the equalities monitoring information are contained on the following pages

Background

Between 31st July and 10th August 2020, Ceredigion County Council consulted with residents on the safe zones established in its towns.

The safe zones were established in Aberaeron, Aberystwyth, Cardigan and New Quay in July to help prevent the spread of Covid-19 after the lockdown was lifted. Some roads have been closed to traffic, pavements de-cluttered and visitors asked to park away from town centres, all with the purpose of allowing the public to move around safely within the zone and also facilitate traders and businesses to make more use of the outside space under agreement with the Council.

The survey was made available online via the Council’s website and advertised through social media.

Response Rate

There were a total of 2,065 responses to the survey. The large number of responses, and in particular, the volume of written comments to support each answer, reflects the impact that safe zones have on the four towns. The paragraphs that follow provide a summary of the findings.

Main Findings

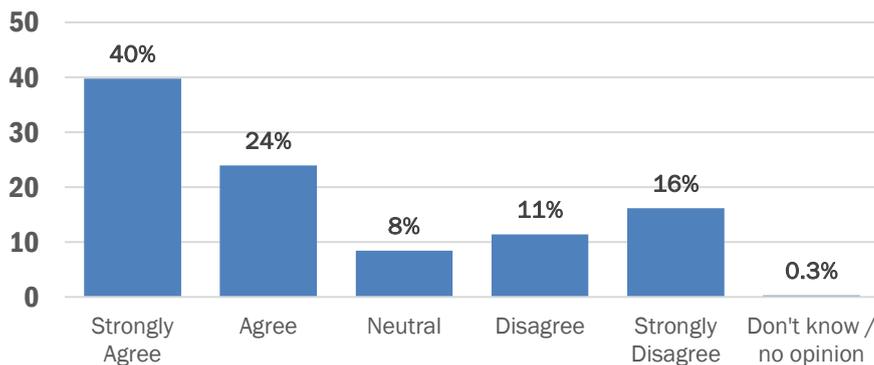
Q1: To what extent would you agree with the principle of the creation of town centre “safe zones” to enable social distancing?

Overall, the majority of respondents (64%) agreed or strongly agreed with the principle of creating the safe zones to allow people to socially distance. The largest proportion, 40%, strongly agreed with the move and was supported by a number of written comments highlighting the benefits of less traffic making it safer for pedestrians and creating a more ‘welcoming’ atmosphere. However, over a quarter (27%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with their introduction. The two main reasons provided in the written comments were access for disabled people and a concern that people were not adhering to the social distancing rules once inside the safe zones resulting in local people feeling unsafe.

Q1. Creating Safe Zones

To what extent would you agree or disagree with the principle of the creation of town centre safe zones to enable social distancing?

▼ Percentage



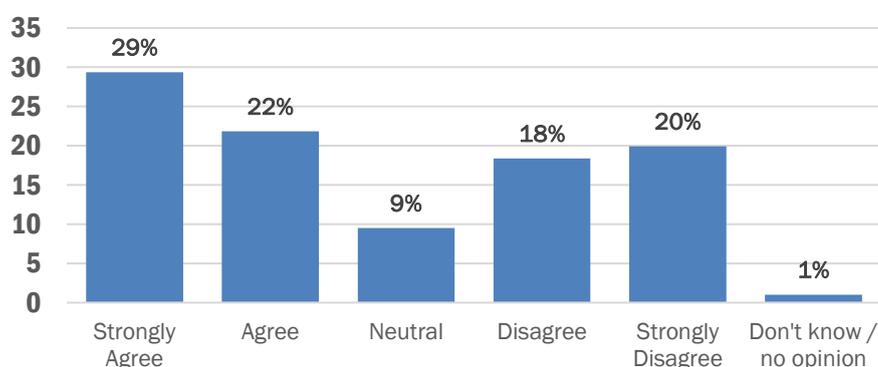
Q2: To what extent do you agree that the town centre “safe zones” have enabled people to visit the town safely?

A smaller majority of 51% agreed or strongly agreed that the safe zones had enabled people to visit the towns safely. There were 38% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with this view, and who were more vocal in the written comments than those agreeing. Their concerns were similar to the first question - access for disabled people was frequently mentioned, as was ensuring there is adequate parking if they cannot access town centres. Again, the biggest concern was that people, particularly tourists and visitors, were not adhering to social distancing rules within the safe zones. A further 10% of responses were either 'neutral' or didn't know.

Q2. Enabled People to Visit Safely

To what extent would you agree that the town centre safe zones have enabled people to visit the town safely?

▼ Percentage



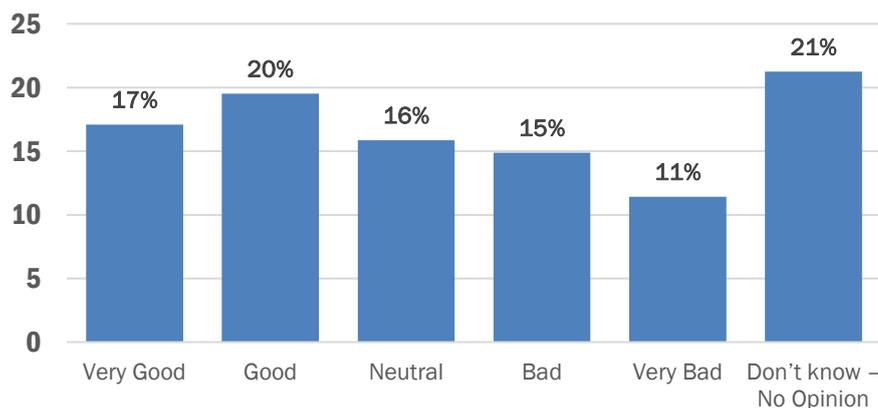
Q3: What effect have the “safe zones” had on town centre businesses?

Overall, 37% said the effect of the safe zones was either good or very good on town centre businesses. Respondents cited the beneficial impact on cafes, food establishments and tourism that were able to take advantage of outside seating combined with the influx of visitors during the holiday season. Conversely, there were just over a quarter, (26%) who said the effect was either bad or very bad. A further 37% said they either didn't know or provided a 'neutral' response. This is reflected in the written comments where many respondents thought it was beneficial for some businesses but not for others, and largely depended on the type of business and its location.

Q3. Effect on Town Centre Businesses

What effect have the safe zones had on town centre businesses?

▼ Percentage



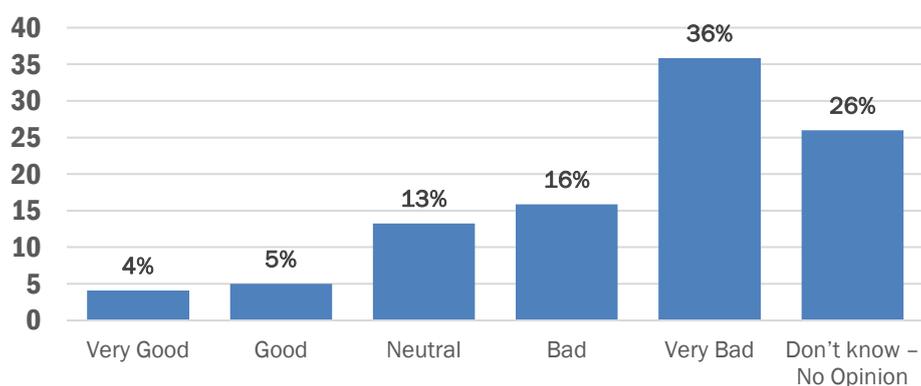
Q4: What effect have the “safe zones” had on disabled people, Blue Badge holders and the elderly?

A majority of 52% said the effect on disabled people, Blue Badge holders and the elderly had been bad or very bad, and was supported by a large number of comments. The majority of concerns were around general access for the disabled, parking availability for Blue Badge holders and confusion over the safe zones amongst the elderly. There were a large number of comments that did not specify a specific reason, but made a general comment that the effect had been negative on these groups. Only 9% said the effect had been good or very good, and there was over a quarter (26%) who had no opinion or didn't know.

Q4. Disabled People, Blue Badge Holders and Elderly

What effect have the safe zones had on disabled people, Blue Badge holders and the elderly?

▼ Percentage



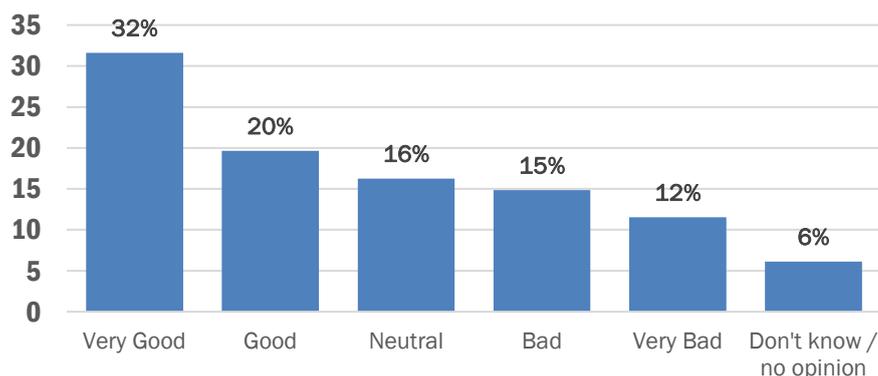
Q5: Overall, what effect have the safe zones had on the atmosphere in the town?

Regarding the general atmosphere and 'vibe' in the towns, a majority of 52% said the effect had been good or very good with the largest proportion of respondents (32%) stating it had been very good. The written comments in support of this view were that it had created a more relaxed, welcoming and 'continental' atmosphere to the towns which people enjoyed. They also highlighted the lack of cars polluting the air and the safety with which they could browse the shops. However, there were also 27% who thought the effect had been bad, and these made up the majority of the written comments. The main issues raised were that locals feel less safe due to the large influx of tourists and visitors to the area who are not observing social distancing measures, and there is a feeling that the safe zones were created for the benefit of tourism rather than local people.

Q5. Effect on the Atmosphere

Overall, what effect have the safe zones had on the atmosphere in the town?

▼ Percentage



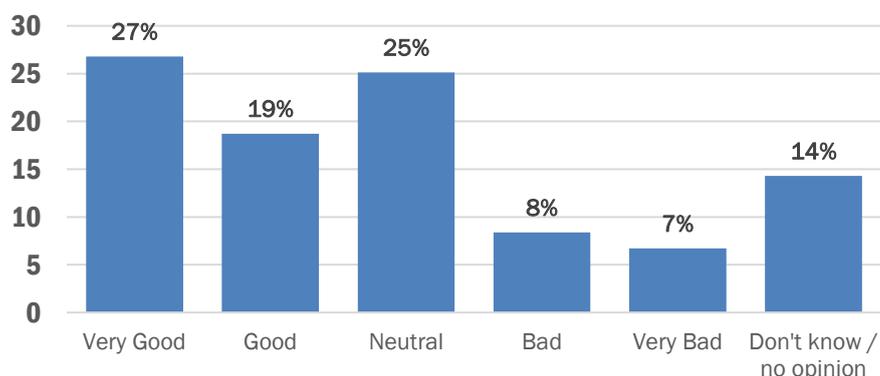
Q6: Overall, what effect have the safe zones had on the environment in the town?

46% of respondents felt that the safe zones had a good or very good impact on the environment, compared to just 15% who said it was bad or very bad. Exactly one quarter (25%) provided a 'neutral' response and a further 14% didn't know or had no opinion. Of the written comments received to this question, many highlighted the positive impacts of having less cars in the towns, in particular less air and noise pollution. However, there were an equal number of concerns that an increase in litter and overflowing bins was a by-product of the safe zones combined with an increase in visitors and reopening of the tourism industry.

Q6. Effect on the Environment

Overall, what effect have the safe zones had on the environment in the town?

▼ Percentage



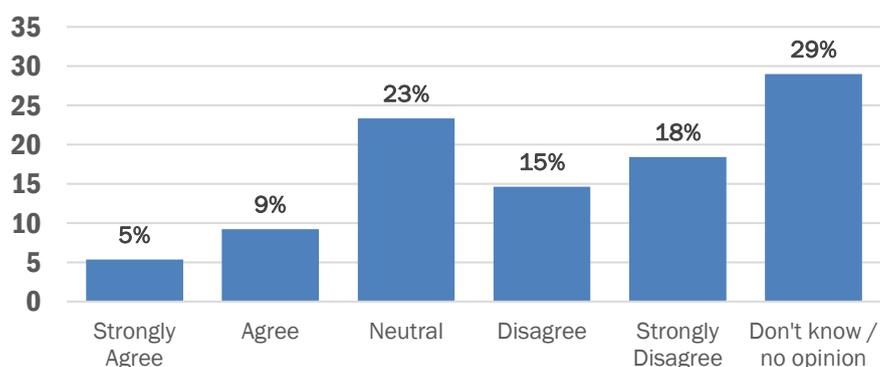
Q7. Does the town centre safe zone provide opportunities to promote and facilitate the Welsh language?

The largest proportion of respondents (29%) said they didn't know or had no opinion followed by a further 23% who provided a 'neutral' response. Of those who did have a view, 14% said they agreed that the safe zones did provide opportunities to promote and facilitate the Welsh language, and 33% disagreed. There were no written responses to this question, instead a separate question on how the opportunities to promote and use Welsh was included as question 8.

Q7. Welsh Language

Does the town centre safe zone provide opportunities to promote and facilitate the Welsh language?

▼ Percentage



Q8. Do you have any comments as to how safe zones might affect people’s opportunity to use the Welsh language? Please highlight any positive or adverse effects for us to address.

Following question 7, respondents were invited to provide written suggestions as to how the safe zones might affect people’s opportunity to use Welsh. A total of 697 comments were provided. A large number of respondents questioned the value of including this question in the survey, suggesting that opportunities to use the Welsh language were unrelated to the safe zones and maintaining social distancing. For those who did provide comments on the positive and adverse effects, the main themes were that:

- Less traffic provides more opportunities for people to stop and converse in town using Welsh, and also creates opportunities for non-Welsh speakers to hear it in daily use.
- The peak holiday season means a large increase in tourists who do not speak Welsh and therefore reduces the opportunities to use Welsh.
- Difficulty accessing the town for the elderly could mean fewer opportunities for Welsh to be used in town.

A selection of the comments received is contained in the table below.

Sample Comments	
Positive effects	Adverse effects
“Part of visiting Wales is the exposure to an alternative culture. The employment of signage in both official languages should be strongly encouraged.”	“Too many bi-lingual signs can be a disincentive. Subtle and visual graphics are more successful. It’s great to hear locals talking Welsh on the street restaurant and bar facilities, and this is our strongest opportunity to influence visitors with a spoken language.”
“It’s easier to have a conversation without the traffic noise. More outside space allows groups to meet which could involve Welsh language practice groups who have been struggling to meet until now.”	“By attracting tourists who do not speak Welsh and have no desire to communicate in Welsh it reduces any Welsh communication.”
“I am learning Welsh (a beginner) and would definitely like more Informal opportunities to hear Welsh spoken by first language speakers and to feel there is time to try to find the words too. The feeling of unhurried safety created by the safe zone will support this!”	“A lot of the older generation are the main users of the Welsh language but they are finding it too difficult to access the town to meet people and so the language isn’t being used. It is cutting the older generation off from society.”
“They may offer more opportunities for people to greet each other in Welsh, to stop and chat more safely, and for older Welsh-speaking people to hear each other more easily in the quieter environment.”	“These zones seem to be in place for visitors more than locals. These people don’t necessarily use the Welsh language.”
“The increased opportunity to sit and talk in public space will facilitate the practice of the language and the promotion of the language as others listen to it being spoken.”	“Certainly the majority of visitors in the safe zones are not, and would have no need, to use Welsh in their transactions.”

Q9: Do you have any further views on how the “safe zones” could be improved?

The final question was open-ended and offered respondents the opportunity to provide any additional feedback not captured in the previous eight questions. There were a total of 1,191 comments provided on a broad range of issues relating to the safe zones and maintain safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Those with a concern or complaint were the most vocal in responding to this question. The main themes raised were:

- Access and parking availability for local residents.
- Access to safe zones for the disabled and Blue Badge holders.
- Creates opportunities for developing the towns in the future, such as considering longer-term pedestrianisation of some towns.
- Concern that many tourists and visitors are not social distancing.
- Some businesses report being impacted negatively as customers are unable to access their shop and instead are choosing to shop elsewhere.
- Reducing the size of the safe zones to provide better access for the elderly and for local residents.
- Safe zone barriers are considered unsightly and could be replaced with other, more friendly, street furniture.
- Concern that local views haven't been listened to and that the needs of tourists have been prioritised.
- An increase in litter and overflowing bins and the need to increase street-cleaning.

A selection of the comments received is contained in the table below.

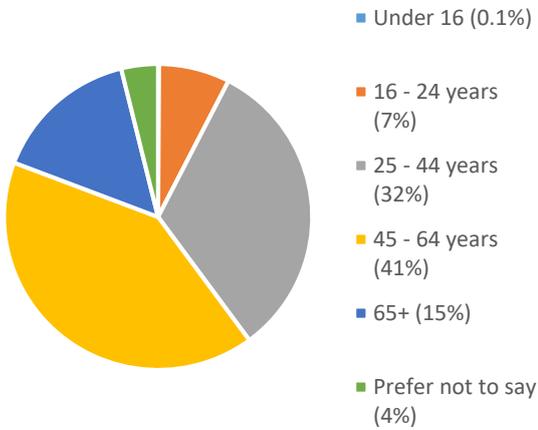
Sample Comments	
<p>“It would be nice to use more attractive street furniture to block roads etc. Can cycle storage be installed to encourage people to cycle to town? Safe zones should be made permanent in the summer months, car free towns are an excellent improvement on the enjoyment of our towns.”</p>	<p>“As pointed out in my first comment, I feel that people tend to be more blasé within the safe zones about keeping their distance. This therefore contradicts the purpose of the safe zones, and I would prefer not to have them.”</p>
<p>“Really enjoyed our visit to Cardigan this week. We ventured into town on three separate occasions. A lovely, almost carnival atmosphere with music and outdoor dining spaces. Made social distancing easier (although not always possible as there were so very many in the street/road). Without safe zones, social distancing would have been impossible. Could be a fantastic opportunity for local young talent to showcase outside the guildhall, or outdoor book readings, circus skills, local artists, clowns etc. - all could promote the Welsh language and local talent, and could attract more families to the town. We very much enjoyed our visit and felt very safe. Diolch yn fawr.”</p>	<p>“Yes, please give more thought to the disabled elderly and Visually impaired Allowing them to live independently, safe and to consider their wellbeing. In order to prevent them becoming housebound. And by..... Paying particular attention to the government's guidelines as regards street furniture, signs, bollards etc.”</p>

<p>"Make it permanent - from what I saw today. I wasn't really for it, because it meant having to park outside of town to just pop in for a couple if things, but having been to town today, I think it's great, and I enjoyed walking through town instead of the usual rushing back to my car. If it does become permanent, it would be lovely to have block paving down the main streets, as it really did have the cosmopolitan feel in town today. Many people we spoke to thought it had the feel of being abroad! So many people were sitting outside the cafes eating lunch and drinking coffees - it was lovely to see."</p>	<p>"This should have been discussed with local residents before doing anything. The hordes of holidaymakers around town make it very difficult to social distance as they are literally everywhere!"</p>
<p>"This is the opportunity to take transformational action to turn around the decline of what is a gem of the Welsh coast. Let's seize the chance to make real changes to move forward and embark on a new and daring journey to make our coast a market leader. Tidy it up."</p>	<p>"I think great dark gate street, pier street and outside medina has a great feel to it. I see the benefits of closing the streets to enable people to social distance. I think it's a great opportunity for the future of Aberystwyth, however I do think it would be more difficult come the winter. Although I must acknowledge it is a nuisance for work."</p>
<p>"Consider discretionary access for those physically disabled. Consider discretionary access for those who live in the town and street-park outside their homes."</p>	<p>"This survey is very late should have been done before implementation. Access for disabled or mobility is limited. Gaining access to aid an elderly residence living within the zone to deliver shopping, medication etc. while fitting these tasks around a full time job has made the tasks a lot more difficult."</p>
<p>"More visual indicators for people to recognise 2 meters and more Simple and friendly signage to educate people on the rules in Wales bring 2m. I love the idea of bright coloured dots or hearts on the roads and pavements 2 m apart so people are gently visually reminded. A caring environment needs to be nurtured so visitors and locals are encouraged to be safe and caring about each other as there is a growing 'them and us' vibe which isn't good for anyone."</p>	<p>"Policing/Verbal reminder of social distancing at pinch points - new signs don't help. People are rude to us wearing masks and trying to social distance- one comment 'we don't have Covid here so why are we bothering???' They are on holiday and seem to have forgotten the last few months."</p>
<p>"Maybe not close too many of the streets so people can park closer to town, and reduce some of the parking from 30 minutes to at least an hour in some places so people actually have time to visit the shops they need."</p>	<p>"I totally agree with the idea but by taking away the spaces for parking people are going to park irresponsibly maybe blocking emergency service access or worse still not bother stopping there to visit. Excellent idea not thought through."</p>
<p>"More spaces to park for residents not far from the centre of town, and more support for the elderly and disabled through additional parking spots and mobility scooters."</p>	<p>"Temporary signage is poor and obtrusive. Too many unsightly barriers remain e.g. on the main highway opposite the bus stops."</p>

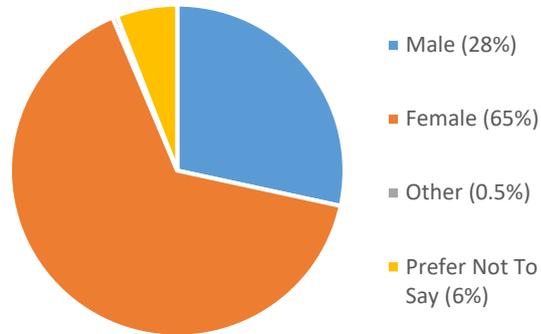
Equalities Monitoring Questions

The Council's standard demographic and equalities monitoring questions were asked as part of the survey.

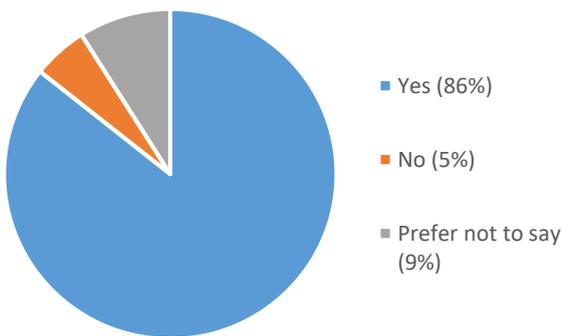
1. Age - What is your age group?



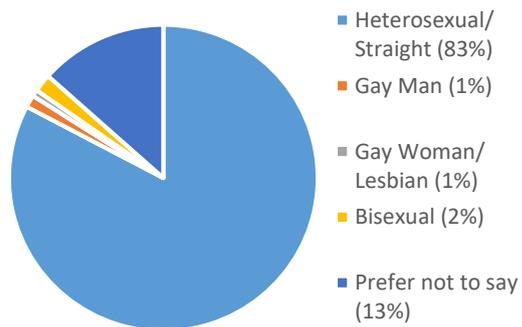
2. Gender - What is your gender?



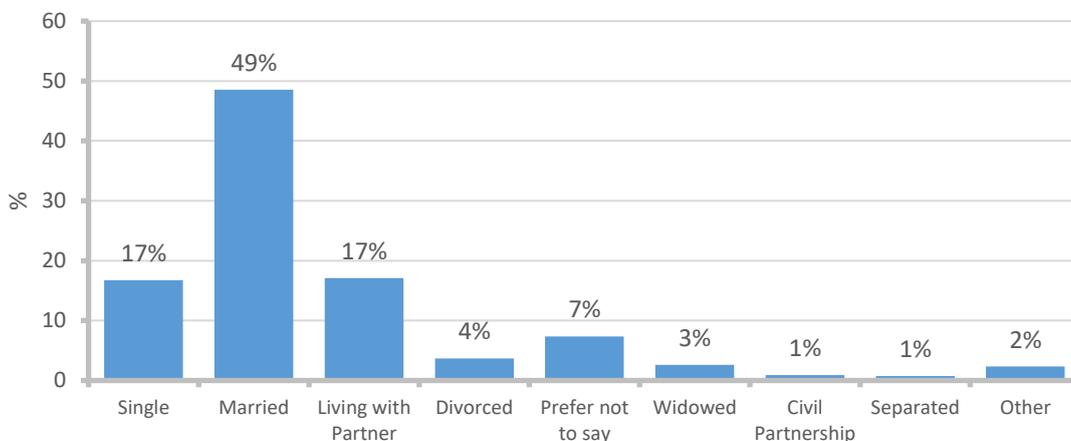
3. Transgender - is your gender the same as when it was assigned at birth?



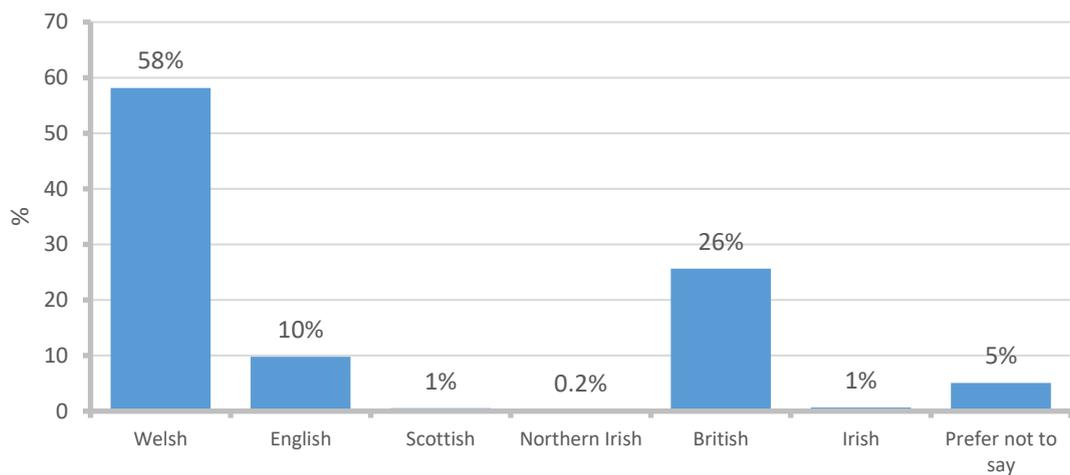
4. Sexual Orientation - Which one of the following options best describes how you think of yourself?



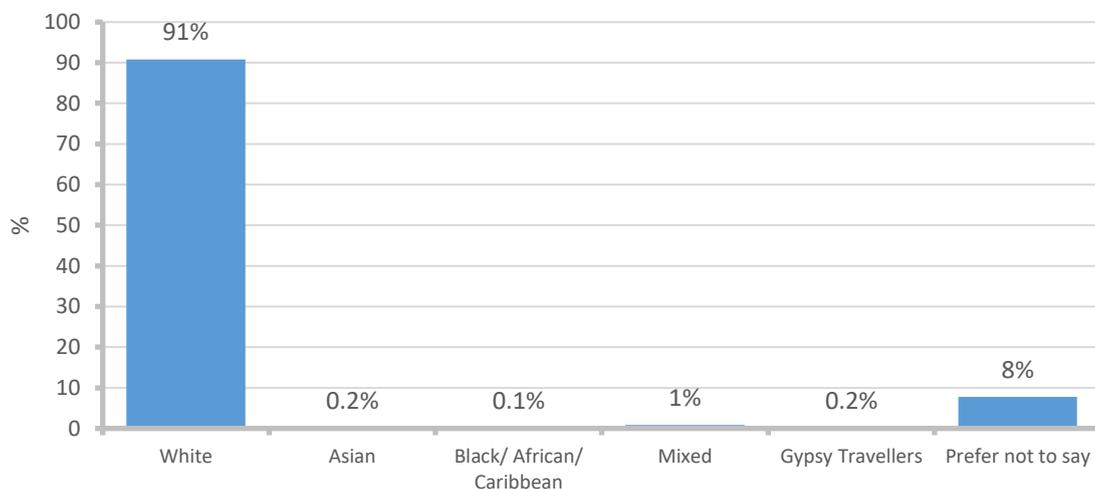
5. Partnership - Which of the following options describes your partnership status?



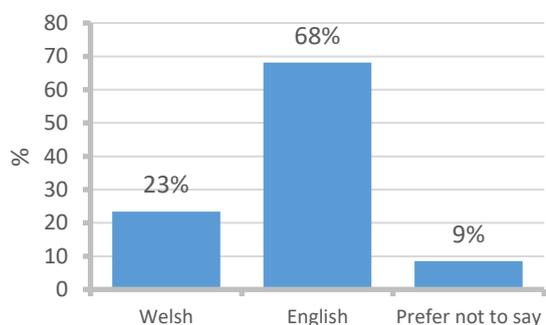
6. National identify - How would you describe your national identity?



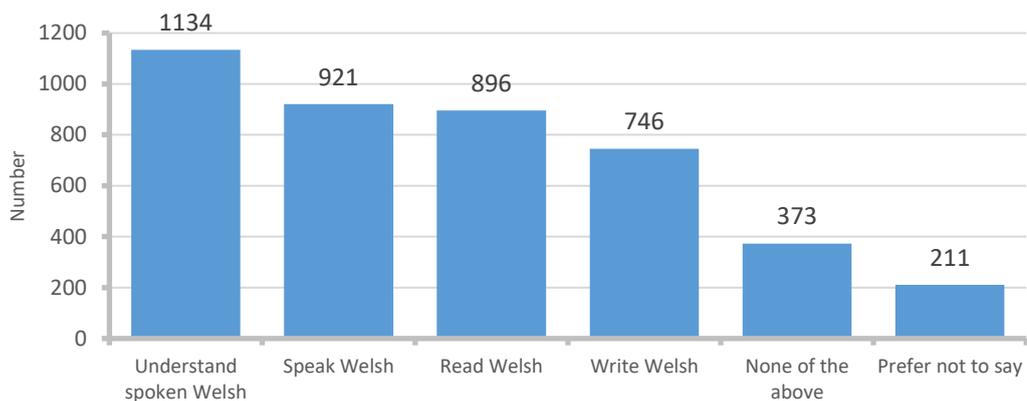
7. Race - What is your ethnic group? Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group or background.



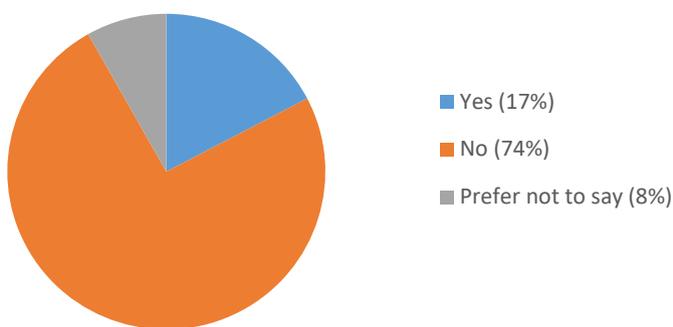
8a. Language - What is your preferred language?



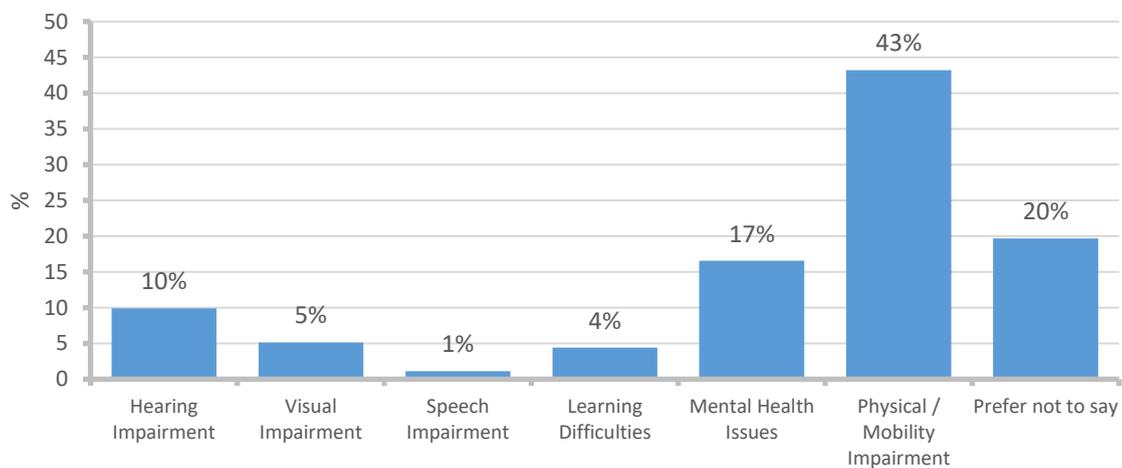
8b Language - Can you understand, speak, read or write Welsh?



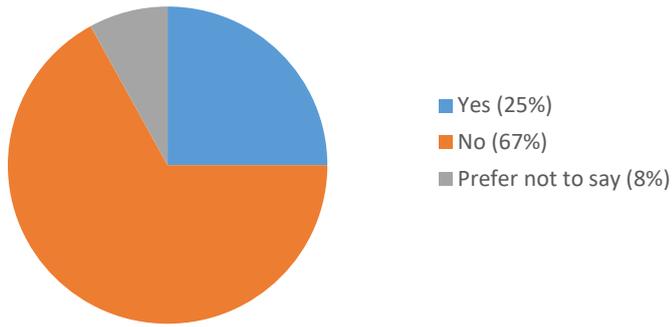
9a. Disability - Do you have a long term physical or mental health condition or illness that reduces your ability to carry out day to day activities?



9b. Disability - If you answered 'Yes' to question 22, please indicate which applies to you?



10 Caring Responsibilities - Do you look after or give help or support to family members, friends, neighbours, or others because of either: long term physical or mental ill-health / disability; or problems related to old age?



11 Religion or Belief - What is your religion?

