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

Future Generations Indicator 25

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This report outlines some factors linked to adults feeling safe in different situations in their local area, based on results from [the National Survey for Wales](#). The National Survey asks about people's experience of safety based on four individual factors: feeling safe at home, walking, travelling by car, and travelling by public transport.

This report is based on National Survey interviews carried out in **2018-19**. It provides an update of [previous analysis based on the 2013-14 results](#).

## Key findings

Holding other factors constant<sup>1</sup>, the strongest predictors of people **feeling safe in their local area** are below.

- Being **male**, compared with female.
- Being **under 75**.
- Not being in **material deprivation** (a measure of poverty and its effects).
- Having a **sense of belonging** to the local area.
- Feeling that people from different backgrounds **get on well together** in the local area.
- Being **dissatisfied with the level of traffic and noise pollution** in the local area.

We found 9 factors included in our analysis and found **not** to be linked to people feeling safe in their local area, including: having a long-term limiting condition; marital status; mental well-being; and satisfaction with the local area as a place to live. 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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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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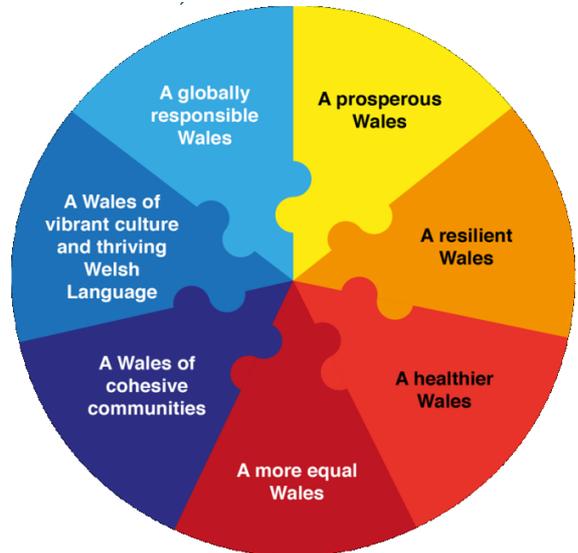
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# 1. Background

[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 puts in place seven well-being goals<sup>2</sup> (**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 45 national indicators. The survey involves face-to-face interviews with 12,000 people across Wales each year.

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



*Figure 1. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: seven well-being goals<sup>3</sup>.*

## 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’.<sup>3</sup>

National indicator 25 is a measure of the proportion of people who agree that they ‘feel safe’ in all four of these statements, and that is what is reported against in this report. However, we found that a substantial proportion of people responded ‘Don’t know’ to the questions about travelling by public transport at night (which might, for example, be because they don’t use public transport at night). In light of this, we will commission further research to determine the best methodological approach to take when calculating the overall measure of safety. Any change in methodology will be discussed in future outputs as well as any change in results or change over time.

**Overall, 71% of adults felt safe (at home, walking in the local area, and travelling).**

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

<sup>3</sup> 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

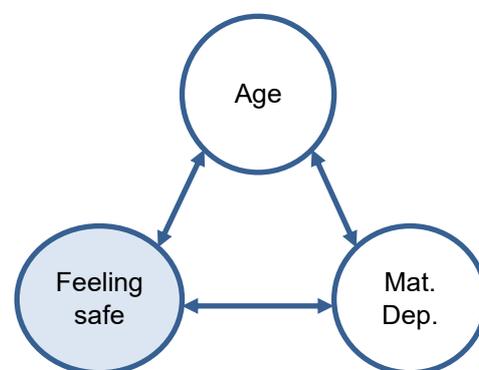
To get a clear understanding of how each individual factor contributes to whether people feel safe, we used a **statistical technique<sup>4</sup> to explore the link<sup>5</sup> between particular factors and people feeling safe in their local area, whilst holding all other factors constant**. Holding other factors constant (also known 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). For example, we could examine the link between two separate factors (age and material deprivation) and people feeling safe in their local area. We might know that age (e.g. being under 75) is linked to people feeling safe in their local area; however, there is also a link between age and material deprivation (see **Figure 2**). This can make it difficult to say whether people feeling safe is linked to age or material deprivation. To look at the effect of one factor (e.g. age) on people feeling safe in their local area, we would need to control for the effects of all other factors. We can then get a much clearer idea of how one single factor links to people feeling safe in their local area, without the influence of other factors.

#### **Complex relationships between factors**

To understand these results, we cannot always be sure about what factors are *linked to*, and which are *affected by*, people feeling safe in their local area. For some factors this relationship is clear based on prior knowledge. For instance, being under 75 might be linked to people feeling safe; however, we know that feeling safe is not linked to changes in age. For other factors, the relationship is not as obvious.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Interpreting the results**

All of 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. females) people feeling safe in their local area, compared with another 'average' group of people with a different shared characteristic (e.g. males). 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.



**Figure 2** The importance of holding other factors constant in statistical analysis.

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<sup>4</sup> 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](#).

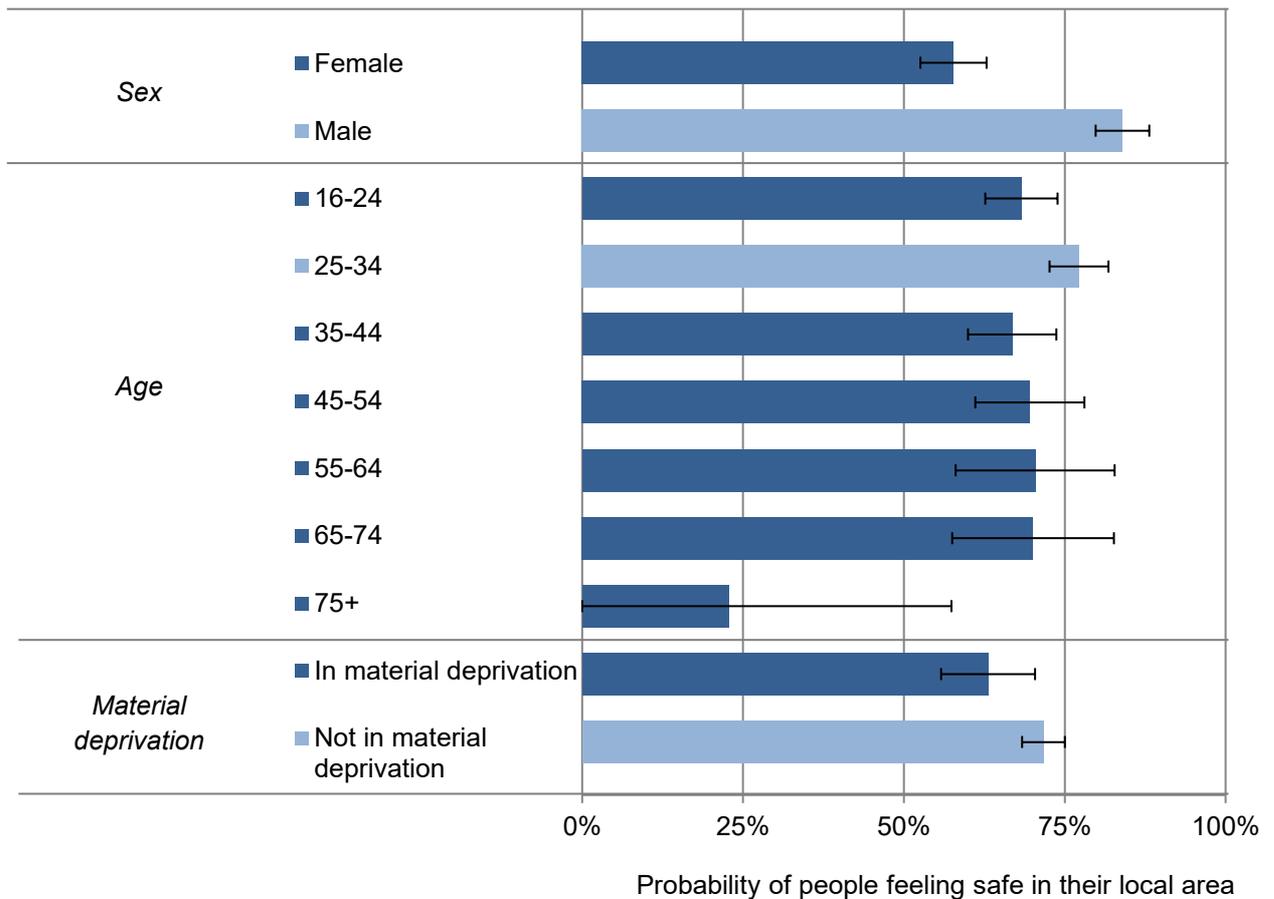
<sup>5</sup> While this analysis can tell us about the *likelihood* of relationships between factors, it cannot tell us about causal relationships (e.g. it would be incorrect to say that not being in material deprivation causes people to feel safe in their local area).

<sup>6</sup> 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 *and* not being in material deprivation.

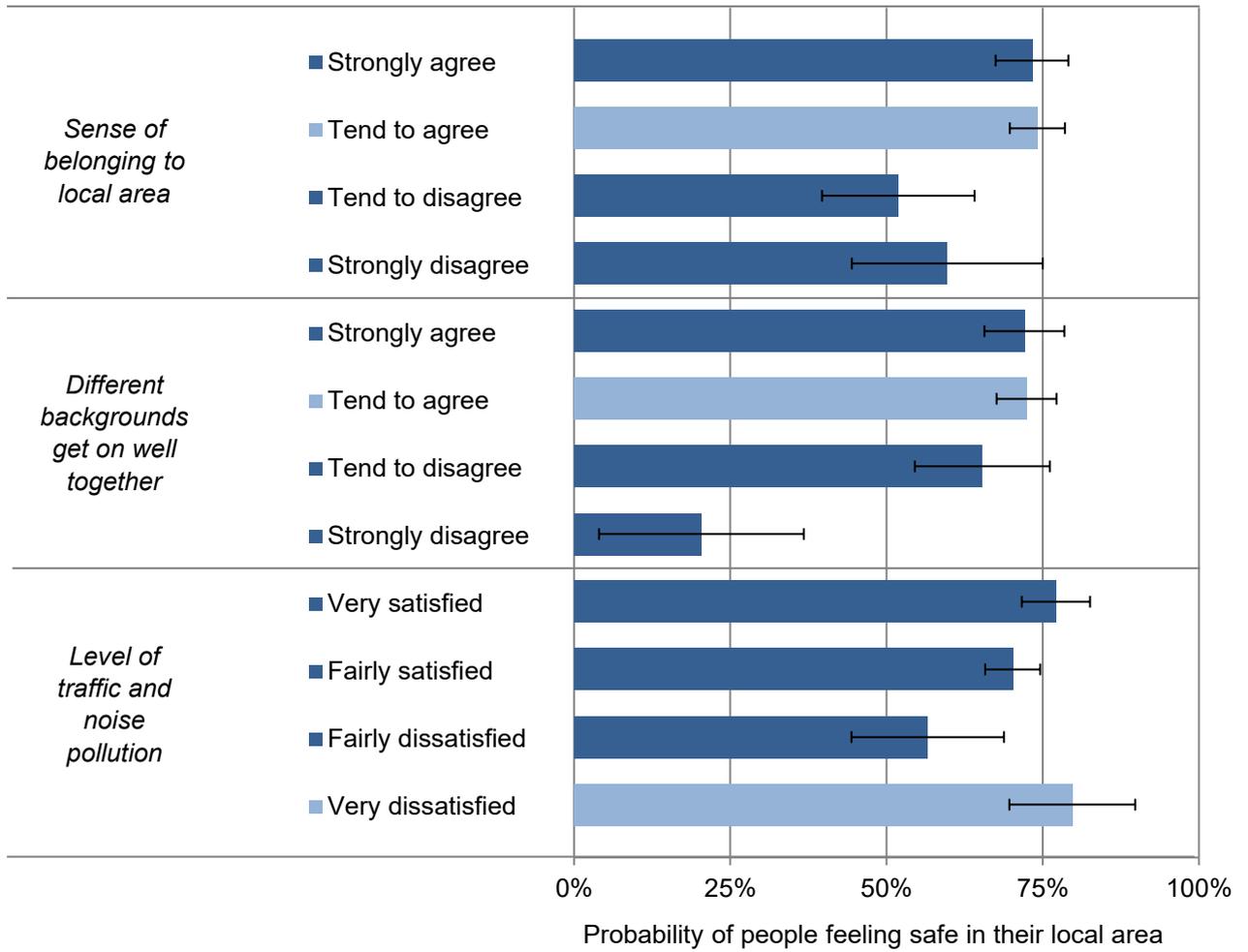
#### 4. Main factors linked to people feeling safe in their local area

Overall, **71%** of people **felt safe in their local area**. Figure 3.1 shows all the individual factors (whilst **holding other factors constant**) which were found to have an association with the likelihood of people feeling safe at home, when walking around their local area alone, and when travelling by car or public transport. Within each factor, the group characteristic with the highest probability (%) of feeling safe in their local area is highlighted in light blue. The following sections provide a more in-depth analysis of each individual factor.

**Figure 3.1** Main factors linked with the likelihood of people feeling safe in their local area.



**Figure 3.1 (continued)** Main factors linked with the likelihood of people feeling safe in their local area.



## 4.1 Analysis

Holding all other factors constant, the following factors were found to be linked to whether people feel safe at home, when walking around their local area alone, and when travelling by car or public transport.

Individual factors which share a similar characteristic are grouped into **themes** (e.g. demographic factors).

Factors **not** found to be linked to people feeling safe in the local area are listed in [Section 4.2](#).

### 4.1.1 Demographic factors

#### Sex

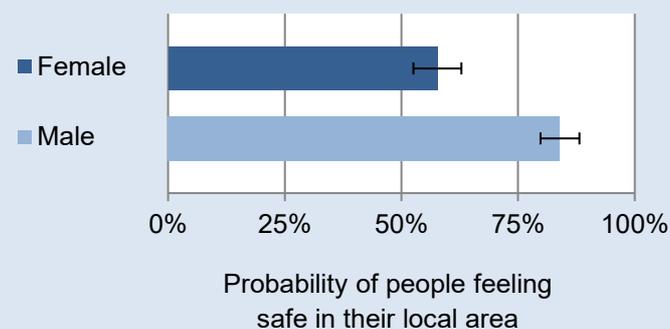
**Men were found to be more likely to feel safe in their local area** after dark (at home, when walking alone, and when travelling), compared with women.

See [Figure 4.1](#).

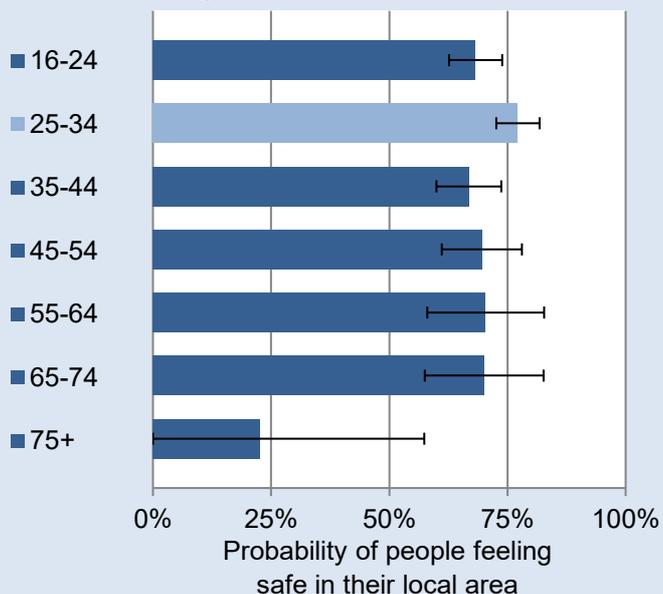
#### Age

**Older people aged 75+** were the age group least likely to feel safe in the local area. See [Figure 4.2](#).

**Figure 4.1** The relationship between feeling safe in local area and sex.



**Figure 4.2** The relationship between feeling safe in local area and age.

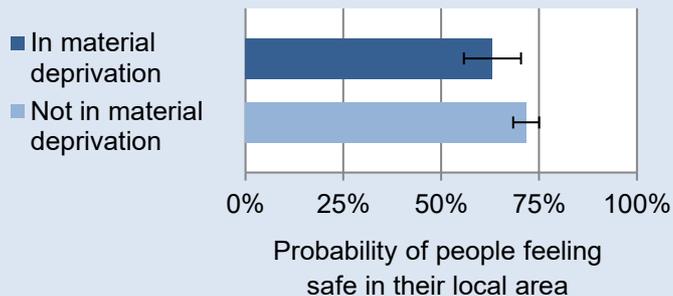


## 4.1.2 Socio-economic factors

### Material deprivation

People who were **not in material deprivation** were found to be more likely to feel safe in their local area, compared with those who were in material deprivation. See **Figure 4.3**.

**Figure 4.3** The relationship between feeling safe in local area and material deprivation.

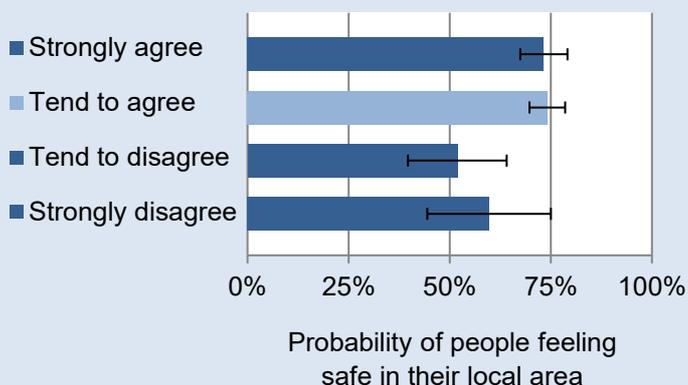


## 4.1.3 Community cohesion

### Sense of belonging to local area

Overall, people who agreed that they felt a **sense of belonging** to the local area were more likely to feel safe in their local area, compared with people who did not. See **Figure 4.4**.

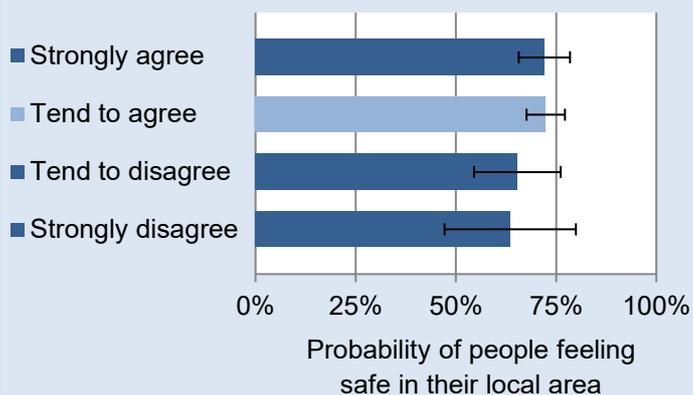
**Figure 4.4** The relationship between feeling safe in local area and sense of belonging to local area.



### People from different backgrounds get on well together

People who agreed that people from **different backgrounds get on well together** in their local area were found to be more likely to feel safe in the local area, compared to those who did not. See **Figure 4.5**.

**Figure 4.5** The relationship between feeling safe in local area and view on community cohesion (different backgrounds getting on).

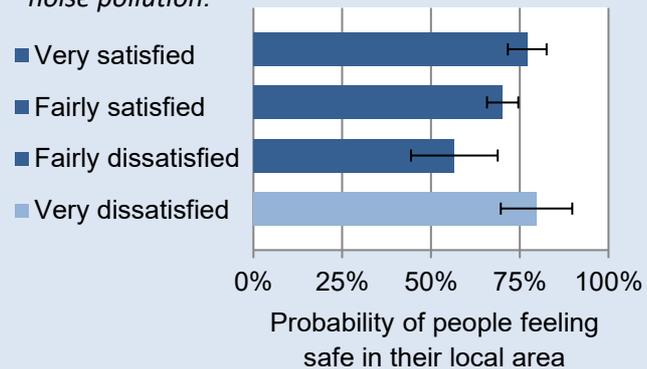


#### 4.1.4 Local area characteristics

##### **View on level of traffic and noise pollution in the local area**

People who were **'very dissatisfied' with the level of traffic and noise pollution** were the most likely to feel safe in the local area, and people who were 'fairly dissatisfied' were the least likely. See **Figure 4.6**.

**Figure 4.6** The relationship between feeling safe in local area and view on level of traffic and noise pollution.



#### 4.2 Factors not linked to people feeling safe in their 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 the local area<sup>7</sup>:

- Having a long-standing illness, disability, or infirmity.
- Marital status.
- Mental well-being.
- Overall satisfaction with local area as a place to live.
- Whether people in the local community treat each other with respect.
- View on pollution and litter in the local area.
- Access to a car.
- Living in a rural or urban area.
- Feeling safe walking in local green spaces.

#### 5. Analysis of individual questions

The National Indicator for the percentage of people who feel safe/unsafe in their local area is a single measure which consists of four individual questions relating to feelings of safety when: 1) **walking alone in local area after dark**; 2) **travelling by car after dark**; 3) **at home after dark**; and 4) **travelling by public transport after dark**. We also looked at factors linked to each of these four questions separately to see whether the factors were the same as when the questions are combined to form a single measure. For these individual questions, we have looked at factors linked to people feeling *unsafe* in various situations as it was felt that this produced more direct and relevant messages for policy.

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<sup>7</sup> Ethnicity, religion and local authority area were also considered in this report. However, these factors were not compatible with the technique used and were removed from later stages of analysis.

## 5.1 Feeling unsafe walking alone in the local area

Overall, 19% of people reported that they did not feel safe 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 in local area
Demographic factors	Sex	Females
Sense of community	<i>Overall satisfaction with local area</i>	Dissatisfied with local area
Local area characteristics	<i>Area classification</i>	Urban areas
	<i>Feeling of safety walking alone in local green spaces</i>	Don't feel safe in local green spaces
General health	<i>Whether has 'good' or 'very good' general health</i>	No

## 5.2 Feeling unsafe travelling by car after dark

Overall, 3% reported that they did not feel safe when travelling by car 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 travelling by car after dark.**

Theme	Factor	Most likely to feel unsafe travelling by car
Demographic factors	Age	Older
Socio-economic factors	<i>Material deprivation</i>	In material deprivation
Local area characteristics	<i>Feeling of safety walking alone in local green spaces</i>	Don't feel safe in local green spaces
Police region	<i>Police region that the participant currently lives in</i>	Dyfed Powys

### 5.3 Feeling unsafe at home after dark

Overall, 3% reported that they did not feel safe when at home after dark. [Table 4](#) 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 when at home after dark.**

Theme	Factor	Most likely to feel unsafe at home after dark
Demographic factors	<i>Gender</i>	Females
Socio-economic factors	<i>Material deprivation</i>	In material deprivation
Sense of community	<i>Whether feels sense of belonging to local area</i>	Don't feel sense of belonging
Local area characteristics	<i>View on traffic and noise pollution in local area</i>	Dissatisfied with traffic and noise pollution
	<i>Feeling of safety walking alone in local green spaces</i>	Don't feel safe in local green spaces

### 5.4 Feeling unsafe travelling by public transport after dark

Overall, 21% reported that they did not feel safe when travelling by public transport after dark. [Table 5](#) 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 when travelling by public transport after dark.**

Theme	Factor	Most likely to feel unsafe at home after dark
Demographic factors	<i>Gender</i>	Females
Local area characteristics	<i>Feeling of safety walking alone in local green spaces</i>	Not safe
General health	<i>Whether has 'good' or 'very good' general health</i>	No

## 6. Summary and recommendations for further research

In summary, we have provided an analysis of factors linked to **Future Generations National indicator 25: 'Percentage of people feeling safe at home, walking in the local area, and when travelling'**.

Overall, four central themes<sup>8</sup> emerged from our analysis of factors linked to feeling safe in the local area:

1. Demographic factors.
2. Socio-economic factors.
3. Community cohesion.
4. Local area characteristics.

In addition, two further themes emerged from analysis of individual questions about safety: general health was linked to feeling unsafe walking after dark and travelling by public transport after dark; and police region was linked to feeling unsafe travelling in a car after dark.

The relationship between particular factors and community safety could be more complex than suggested in this analysis, and the results could **vary** between and within different areas. Therefore, further research could include more small-scale investigations involving more diverse approaches (such as qualitative<sup>9</sup> or mixed-methods<sup>10</sup> research).

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<sup>8</sup> In total, we looked at factors linked to **7 National Indicators for Well-being** as part of a project using data from the 2018-19 National Survey for Wales. As some factors were found to be linked to more than one National Indicator, we have provided a separate document which highlights the similarities and differences between the individual factors, and overall themes, found to be linked to all National Indicators. This document is available online: Hafferty, C. (2019). *Key themes linked to a selection of National Indicators for Well-being in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR Report. Available at: <https://gov.wales/national-survey-wales-april-2018-march-2019>.

<sup>9</sup> **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.

<sup>10</sup> **'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 an important and sophisticated 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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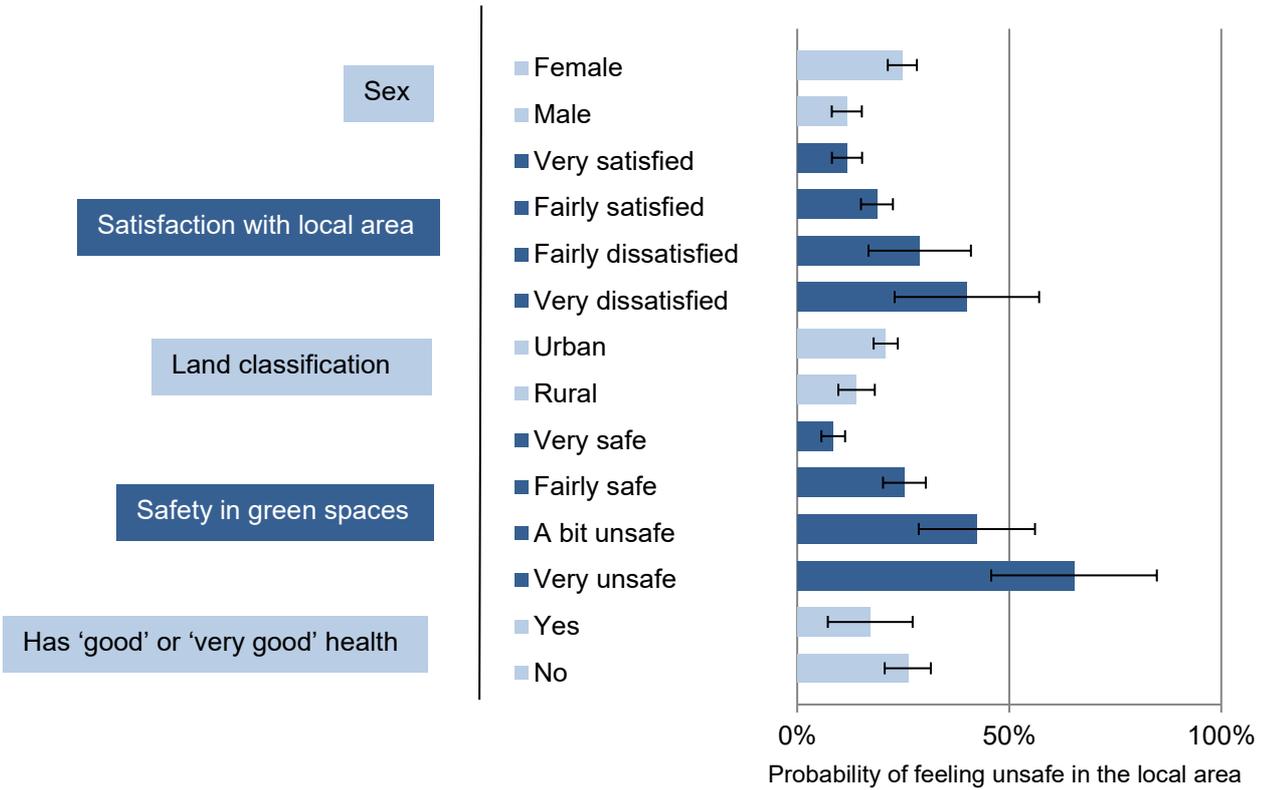
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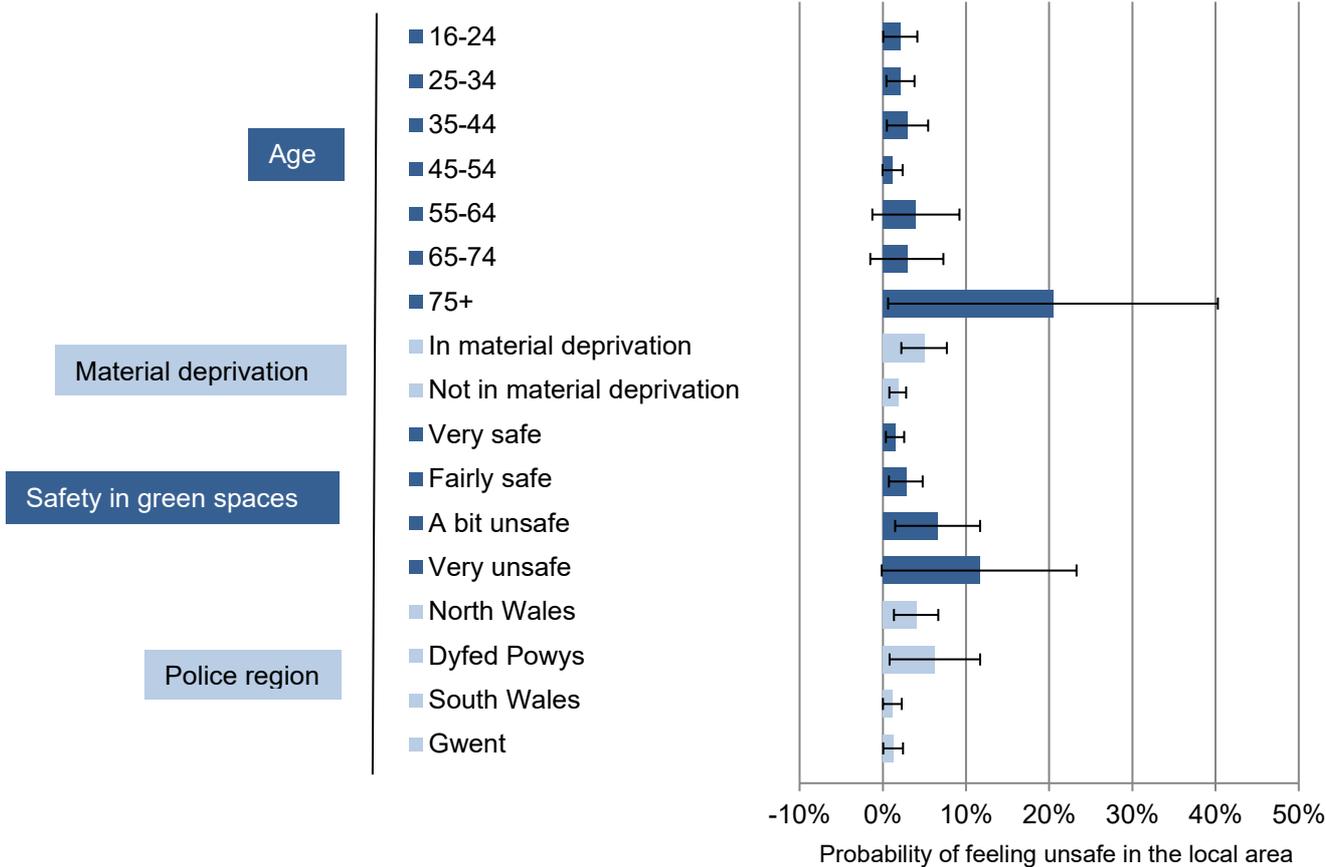
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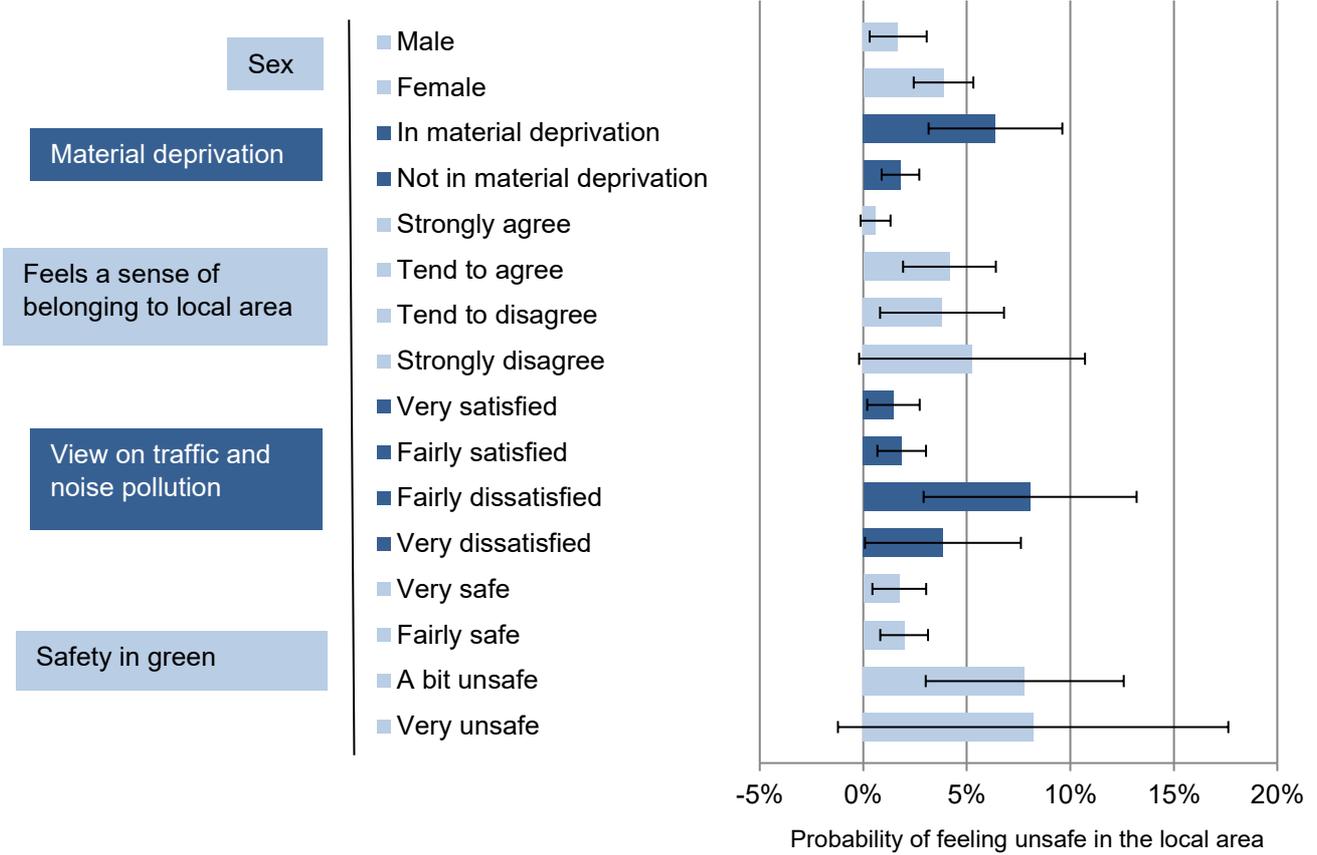
**Appendix A** – Main factors linked to feeling unsafe *walking alone in the local area after dark*.



**Appendix B – Main factors linked to feeling unsafe *travelling by car in the local area after dark.***



**Appendix C – Main factors linked to feeling unsafe *at home after dark*.**



**Appendix D – Main factors linked to feeling unsafe when travelling by public transport after dark.**

