Perceptions of Community Safety, Violence and Neighbourhood Cohesion, and Bystander Attitudes across Merseyside

The MerVCom survey is a population-level representative household survey of adults (aged 18+ years) who are residents in Merseyside. The survey aims to better understand community feelings of safety and cohesion, and perceptions and experiences of violence (including adverse childhood experiences) across Merseyside, and relationships of these with health and wellbeing, and other outcomes. This infographic forms part of a suite of outputs from the MerVCom survey, and specifically examines residents' perceptions of community safety, cohesion and violence across Merseyside. The survey was carried out between November 2023 and April 2024. The total sample size of the survey was 5,395.
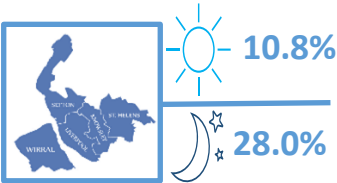
Community Safety

64.7% of participants **felt safe in Merseyside generally** during the **day**, compared to **42.9%** during the **night**

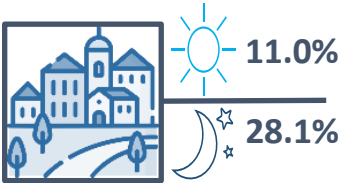### Proportions of participants feeling UNSAFE in various settings during the day and night
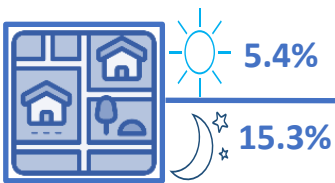
Regional and local settings

Merseyside generally
- ☀ 10.8%
- ☾ 28.0%

The nearest town centre
- ☀ 11.0%
- ☾ 28.1%

Your neighbourhood
(within a 15-minute walk from your home)
- ☀ 5.4%
- ☾ 15.3%

In the street where you live
- ☀ 3.5%
- ☾ 9.1%

Recreational and transport settings

In your nearest park
- ☀ 10.4%
- ☾ 45.9%
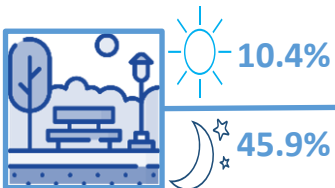
In pubs, bars and clubs
- ☀ 13.0%
- ☾ 23.2%
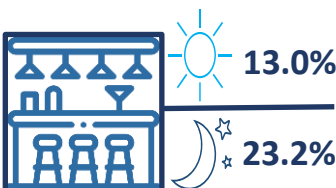
On public transport or at public transport stations
- ☀ 7.3%
- ☾ 21.1%
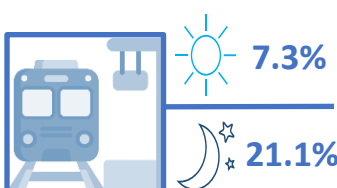
At taxi ranks
- ☀ 8.6%
- ☾ 20.3%

Private settings

In your own home
- ☀ 1.8%
- ☾ 2.9%
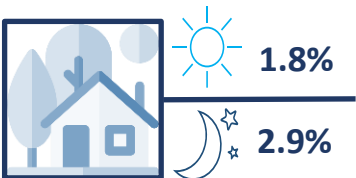
At your place of work or education
- ☀ 2.0%
- ☾ 4.4%

Perceptions of Violence

34.8% of participants thought that violence is common in their neighbourhood, and **86.3%** thought that violence is common in Merseyside generally

13.9% felt **personally** unsafe from violence in Merseyside generally

42.7% felt that **children aged 10-17 years** are unsafe from violence in Merseyside generally

37.7% felt that **young people aged 18-25 years** are unsafe from violence in Merseyside generally
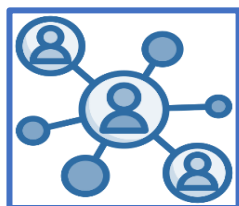
6.4% felt **personally** unsafe from violence in their neighbourhood

25.9% felt that **children aged 10-17 years** are unsafe from violence in their neighbourhood

23.3% felt that **young people aged 18-25 years** are unsafe from violence in their neighbourhood

Community Cohesion

Needs fulfilment

75.0% agreed 'I can get what I need in this neighbourhood'.

66.3% agreed 'This neighbourhood helps me fulfil my needs'.

Influence

29.4% agreed 'I have a say about what goes on in my neighbourhood'.

42.1% agreed 'People in this neighbourhood are good at influencing each other'.

Group Membership

68.7% agreed 'I feel like a member of this neighbourhood'.

72.5% agreed 'I belong in this neighbourhood'.

Emotional connection

65.2% agreed 'I feel connected to this neighbourhood'.

68.1% agreed 'I have a good bond with this neighbourhood'.

Bystander Attitudes

84.3% agreed 'I need to set an example in my own behaviour for what I expect in others'.

47.1% agreed 'It is my responsibility to intervene when I notice a problematic situation'.

31.6% agreed 'There is no need to get involved in a problematic situation'.

There are significant differences by sex, age group, ethnicity, and deprivation in the proportions of participants who perceive violence as common, feel unsafe, report low neighbourhood cohesion, and have positive bystander scores (see Tables A6-A9).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The MerVCom survey indicates that most participants feel safe in the areas more local to them, however, have poorer perceptions of safety in relation to Merseyside more broadly. Crucially, findings also highlight that certain sociodemographic groups are less likely to feel safe in different settings across Merseyside, and that there are stark reductions in participants' feelings of safety during the nighttime compared to the daytime (particularly in parks). Community members' perceptions of safety have important implications for their social participation, access to key sources of resilience (e.g. services and community spaces), and health and wellbeing. Across Merseyside there is a clear commitment to enhancing community feelings of safety across different settings, evidenced by the implementation of evidence and data-led interventions to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour (e.g. hotspots policing, Safer Streets). Local and national policymakers, services, practitioners, and communities should use the evidence in this report, alongside wider data and evidence, to advocate for increased investment to enhance community residents' safety in different settings. Critically, policymakers and practitioners must ensure investment is tailored to the needs of local communities, aims to reduce inequitable experiences of safety across sociodemographic groups, and has a strong focus on early intervention.

Key recommendations:

1. As part of broader community safety interventions, raise awareness of the high proportion of adults who feel safe in their neighbourhood, and successes of violence prevention activities, to enhance perceptions of safety across Merseyside and within local authority areas.

2. Ensure that there is a strong strategic commitment across multi-agency partners to improving safety for women and girls and people living in the most deprived areas of Merseyside. Strengthen and fund the implementation of policies and interventions which aim to improve feelings of safety and prevent and respond to incidents of victimisation broadly, and specifically for groups who are most at risk.

3. Increase the presence of factors which improve peoples' feelings of safety in different nighttime settings. Consider conducting further qualitative work to understand factors that influence different groups' feelings of safety across different nighttime environments, and design and implement interventions and approaches in line with this.

4. Improve understanding amongst community residents of how safe other groups (e.g. children and young people) feel and share local data on children and young people's views (e.g. Hope Hack).

5. Introduce activities to bring residents together to build community connections and give residents a stronger voice over what goes on in their local neighbourhoods. Consider targeting these activities towards groups with lower levels of community cohesion.

6. Engage with community residents to understand why there are generally poor attitudes towards acting as a positive bystander. Design and implement culturally relevant interventions for adults which aim to improve community residents' confidence, intentions, and skills to enable them to act as a positive bystander. Consider targeting these interventions towards groups with poorer levels of attitudes towards bystander intervention.

Wilson C et al. (2025). *Perceptions of Community Safety, Violence and Neighbourhood Cohesion, and Bystander Attitudes across Merseyside.* Liverpool: Liverpool John Moores University/Merseyside Violence Reduction Partnership.