

The impact of substance misuse in Cheshire survey



Healthwatch Cheshire Citizens Focus Panel – June 2023

Introduction

Healthwatch Cheshire, consisting of Healthwatch Cheshire East and Healthwatch Cheshire West, are helping to plan, shape and improve local health and care services. We're gaining feedback and starting or joining discussions to influence decision making, using your voice to encourage those who run health and care services to act on what matters to you.

Healthwatch Cheshire's Citizens Focus Panel enables us to get feedback on current topical issues from a set group of Cheshire residents on a regular basis. Our panel is made up of a wide range of people from all across Cheshire and continues to grow; we're always looking for new volunteers to join us. Healthwatch Cheshire conducted a survey in June 2023 asking the Citizen Focus Panel members about the Impact of substance misuse in Cheshire.

Substance misuse is the continued use of any psychoactive substance that not only affects a person's physical and mental health, social situation and responsibilities, but also their children, family, friends and the wider community. In this case, substances include alcohol, over the counter medication, prescribed medication and illegal drugs.

Introduction

The Government's 10-year drugs strategy, From Harm to Hope, plans to cut crime and save lives by reducing the supply and demand for drugs and delivering a high-quality treatment and recovery system. The strategy relies on all local areas in England to deliver key actions across a range of local partners including enforcement, treatment, recovery and prevention.

The purpose of this survey is to help the local area's Combatting Drugs Partnership understand the impact substance misuse has on the residents of Cheshire. The findings of this report will be published on Healthwatch Cheshire West and Healthwatch Cheshire East websites for public access. The report will be widely shared, including with members of Cheshire East Health Care Partnership, Cheshire West and Chester Health Care Partnership, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside, as well as our colleagues at Healthwatch England, and the Care Quality Commission.

To view previous reports, please visit:

healthwatchcwac.org.uk/what-we-do/our-reports

healthwatchcheshireeast.org.uk/what-we-do/our-reports

Summary of findings

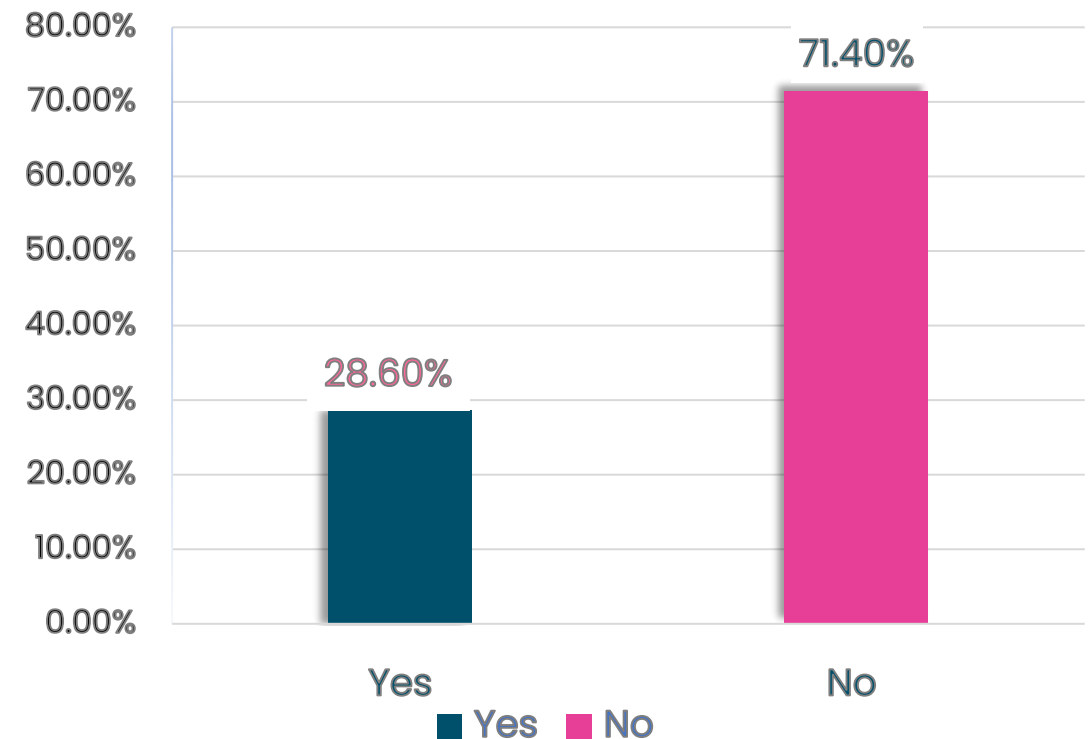
- 28 members of our Citizens Focus Panel responded to this survey. 8 of them had personally been impacted by substance misuse, 20 had not been impacted, and 10 respondents said they had friends/family affected by it.
- The majority of respondents (74%) didn't access any substance misuse services, whilst 26% of respondents knew someone who accessed substance misuse services.
- Most of the respondents who used the service knew where to go to get the support they needed such as Alcoholics Anonymous or narcotics groups. 12% of respondents reported that the support was effective, while 8% reported it was not.
- Half of our panel members had expressed that substance misuse had a negative impact on their local communities, such as a rise in antisocial behaviour.
- Respondents shared ideas that could help reduce the harm caused by substance misuse. This included: raising awareness about the subject, health education in school, support from health authorities, increasing support to groups that help users, and collaborative multi-agency work.

Survey Results

Have you personally been impacted by substance misuse?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 0

- Of the **28** respondents who answered this question, 8 of them (**29%**) said they had personally been impacted by substance misuse;
- Whilst **20** respondents (**71.4%**) had not been impacted.



How has substance misuse affected you?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 5

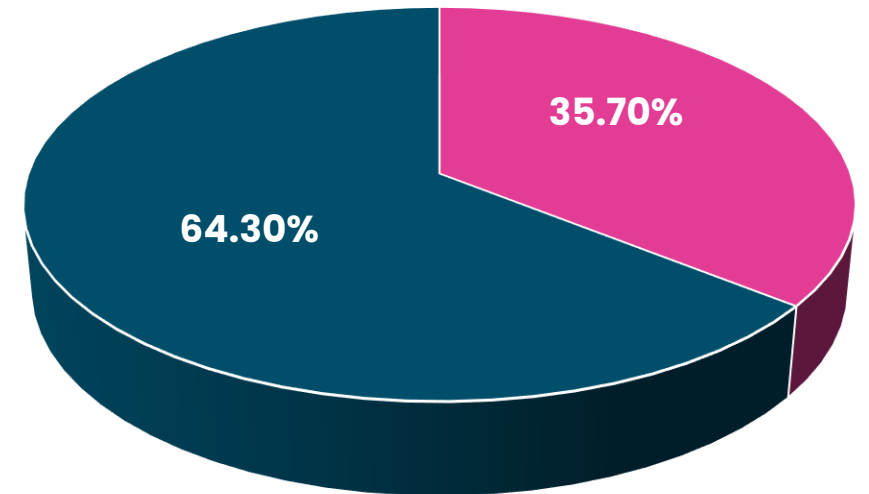
Responses:

- The impact of family members using substances led to my depression and ability to cope at work.
- It helped during times of depression to keep the negative feelings at bay and maintain a sense of neutrality however it does have impact on my finances and ability to concentrate.
- We adopted my daughter; she has Foetal Alcohol Syndrome - this has affected her in that she has learning difficulties and some aspects of her behaviour. Whilst we as a family, more so her, help and support her to the very best of our ability. The impact of her birth mother's drinking during pregnancy will have life long effects on her.
- My neighbour is an alcoholic and his behaviour can be very aggressive and threatening. He shouts and plays his music loudly. He took a hammer and smashed up a neighbour's car whilst intoxicated.
- Tensions on relationships with my husband
- Damaged relationship
- It hasn't at a personal level
- It's stopped me getting medication because drugs misused
- It hasn't
- Death in family
- No experience of substance misuse

Have any of your friends or family been affected by substance misuse?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 0

- **18** respondents (**64%**) said none of their friends or family members had been affected by substance misuse.
- **10** respondents (**36%**) said they had friends or family affected by it.



■ Yes ■ No

How has substance misuse affected them?

Answered: 22 Skipped: 6

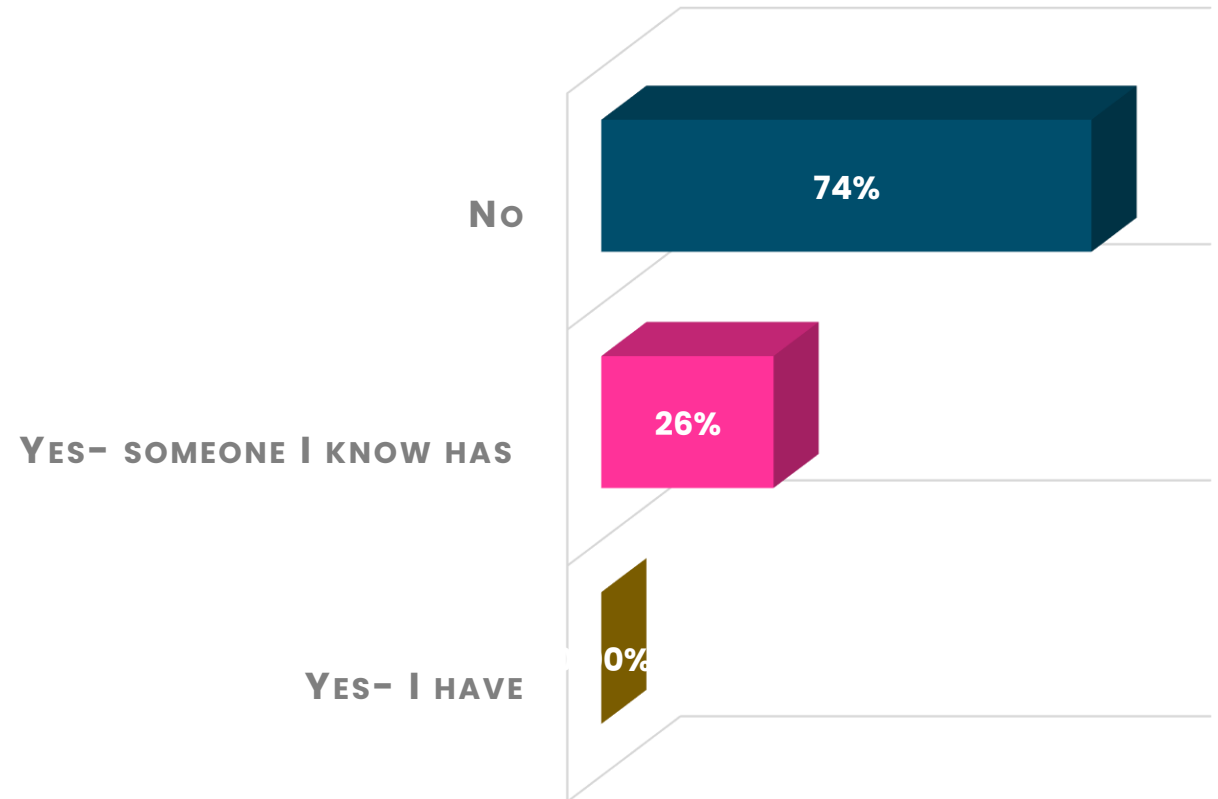
Responses:

- Both children have ADHD - one child got caught up in county lines and couldn't seem to keep a friendship group long enough to steer him away from trouble and also couldn't hold down his job. My daughter has a professional job and doesn't feel she can get help without being judged or this impacting on her job, so she quietly suffers. She has frequent periods of absence at work that get put down to her mental health.
- Mostly stealing to buy the substance.
- My daughter lives with me, and is affected by feeling threatened and intimidated whilst coming and going from our property.
- It reduces their conscious level to do work
- Great strain on the family
- It hasn't
- Made them vomit
- In a very negative way, caused much distress
- Health, quality of life
- Eventually fatal

Have you or anyone you know accessed support service for substance misuse?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 1

- Nearly three quarters of respondents to this question (**20**) said neither they nor anyone they know have accessed any substance misuse services.
- 26% of respondents (**7**) knew someone who had accessed substance misuse services.
- None of the respondents had accessed services.



What support was given and where?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 7

There were a variety of responses of what type of support was given and where:

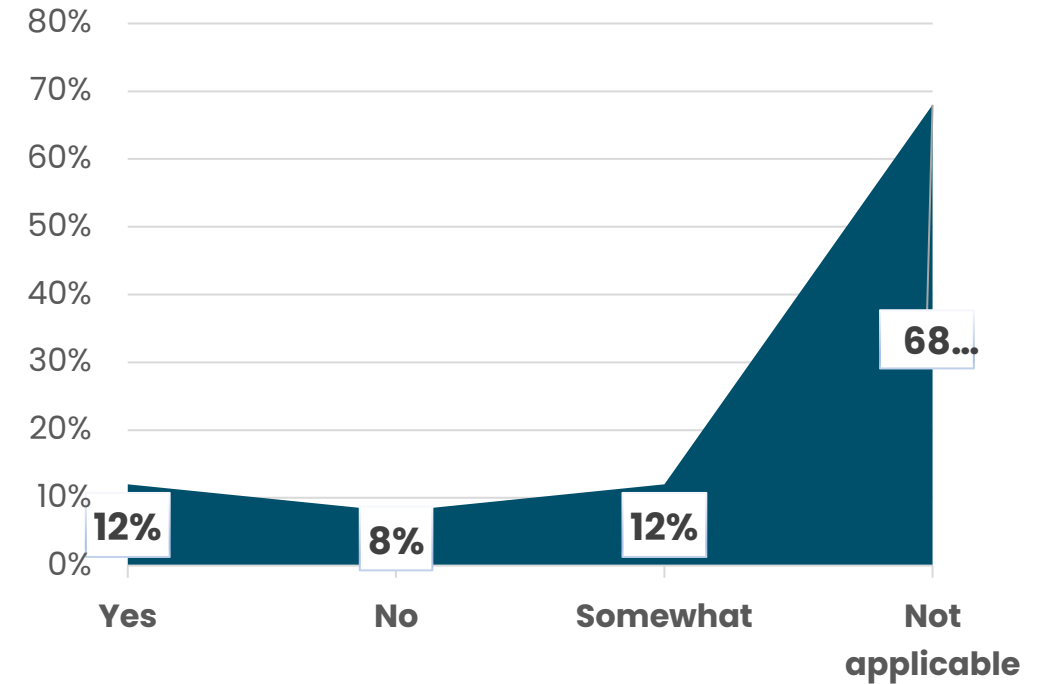
- Law against drugs should be empowered strictly
- N/A
- Al-anon meetings locally*
- Al Anon and counselling
- Therapy, Hospitalisation, Long term care
- Did access
- CGL (Change Grow Live Charity) son wasn't compliant with attending appointments so was discharged- however this was part of his ADHD so we found that it became a vicious circle and nobody was tailoring support to his needs.
- Negligible help provided
- None needed
- Rehabilitation but in Nigeria
- Attended Narcotics Anonymous sessions
- None

* Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire is there for anyone whose life is or has been affected by someone else's drinking.

Do you feel the support you/they received was effective?

Answered: 25 Skipped: 3

- **12%** of respondents (**3**) said the support they received was effective.
- Another **12%** thought the support received was somewhat effective.
- A small number of respondents, around **8% (2)**, expressed that the support they had received was not effective.
- Most of the respondents **68% (17)** felt the question was not applicable for them.



Other comments included:

- Basically saved my son's life. Al-anon helped us to cope and feel we were not alone in dealing with the problem.
- It helped create understanding but didn't resolve the issue as the person wasn't ready to change.
- It helped with the withdrawal but didn't fix some underlying issues they had that made them begin to misuse substances.
- They received support and have maintained sobriety for 30 years.
- Also needs individual motivation and humility to recover.
- Substance misuse unresolved and mental health suffers.
- They died waiting.

What else do you think would have been effective?

Answered: 18 Skipped: 10

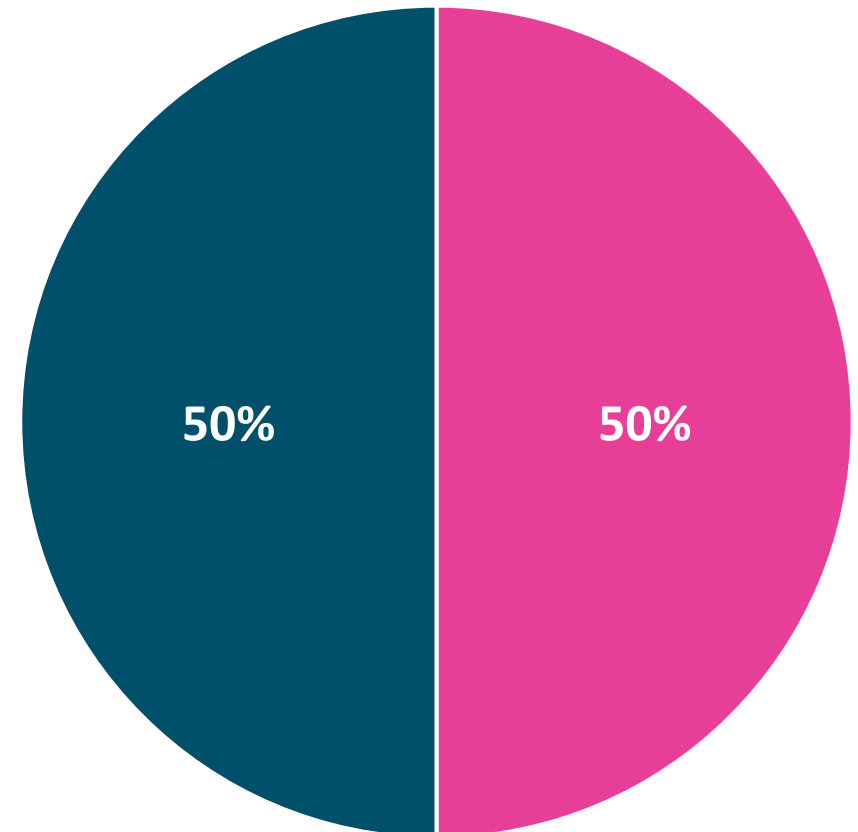
Responses:

- Strict law
- N/A
- Support for the family to stop the individual getting access to the substance
- More peer support. Other self help groups for those at an earlier stage – people tend to have reached desperation by the time they go to AA (Alcoholics Anonymous)
- More social activities to bring young people together as a group, particularly ADHD and Autism, as I found as a parent there was very little help to integrate my son into 'normal' society and to help him enjoy the things that other boys his age were doing
- Don't know
- Didn't access
- Nothing really, someone has to want to change
- Adventure therapy
- A functioning NHS
- Psychosocial support, educating his family, less victim blaming

Are you aware of any negative impacts substance misuse has had in your local community?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 2

- Half of the respondents **50% (13)** expressed that substance misuse has impacted their local communities.
- While the other half **50%** believed their communities had not been affected by substance misuse.



Other comments:

- Some social housing tenants on the new Redrow development have serious substance abuse issues resulting in anti-social behaviour which impacts hard working decent neighbours and others. The constant police presence is disproportionate for the numbers involved, ie 3-4 households on a development of 300+ homes.
- County lines operating in our local parks and car parks. Residents do not feel it's safe to walk or let children use the facilities.
- Antisocial behaviour
- I live in Blacon and drugs and alcohol are a problem at times. The police do what they can but they take a long time gathering evidence enough to break a door down and arrest people and citizens get frustrated with this.
- Impacts attitude and behaviour
- People selling in local area
- Anti social behaviour. Family discord. Petty theft
- Always see drug users around the town and hear about crime happening so it makes you reluctant to go certain places and to go out at night. I would not want to be raising young children in this area now as you would worry who they are with and what influence these people are having on them.
- Increases demand within the Acute of the NHS.
- Considerable amounts of litter from NO2 misuse - cylinders small and large, balloons, boxes.
- Alcohol and illicit drug taking causes motoring, domestic abuse, antisocial and criminal offences
- Can smell it constantly when walking down the street
- Not applicable

Do you know where to find information or support for those impacted by substance misuse? Please include any examples you are aware of

Answered: 24 Skipped: 4

Responses:

- No - in the ASB (Anti-social behaviour) instances mentioned previously, any issues are referred to the police
- No but would start looking on the NHS app for support
- Yes, Aqua House in Chester
- Yes - AA website (Alcoholics Anonymous)
- I don't really know a lot about these things
- None I know of
- Alcohol Anonymous, counselling, CGL (Change Grow Live Charity), Emerging Futures, Chance, changing lives, Churches, GP.
- I would go to the internet or GP but these sources weren't always the right ones in 2018 when this was happening to my family
- GP, ED, online searching
- Websites
- Cheshire and Wirral (NHS) Foundation Trust. Cheshire East Council. GP A and E
- Connexions- www.connexions.org.uk, Change, Grow Live - www.changegrowlive.org, Talk to Frank - Cheshire East Substance Misuse Service - Macclesfield RICE (Recovery in Cheshire East), www.scvr.org.uk UK- Rehab- www.uk-rehab.com, Love the kid, hate the disease - help for addiction- www.addictionlessons.com, Cheshire Change Hub (Cheshire West) - <https://cheshirechangehub.org>, NHS England - www.england.nhs.uk substance misuse and gambling support, Better Health NHS - 'drink less' section- www.nhs.uk Drink line- 0300 123 1110
- GP, WDP (Westminster Drug Project)

What do you think could be done to reduce the harm caused by substance misuse?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 4

Responses:

- Education in schools, increase support from health authorities, increase support to groups that help users
- Have more support services available
- Funds for adventure therapy. Treatment in nature
- More community policing, school education, more funded activities for youths and social groups for neuro diverse groups
- Reduce alcohol availability to youngsters
- Tougher penalties on dealers etc. Stronger rules about vaping dangers. Better information/condemnation in schools and colleges
- More “diversionary” activities in the community, e.g. sports, outdoor pursuits, gardening, building, and entertainments
- More awareness about the effects on your health and your family – all media sources could do this
- Decriminalise drug use – especially cannabis. Limit the sale of NO2 to business accounts (except very small quantities)
- Being more open and honest about conversations involving substance abuse
- Change the culture of blame on the addicted individual. Early education
- Services being available when needed and not having to go on a waiting list

What do you think could be done to reduce the harm caused by substance misuse?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 4

Responses:

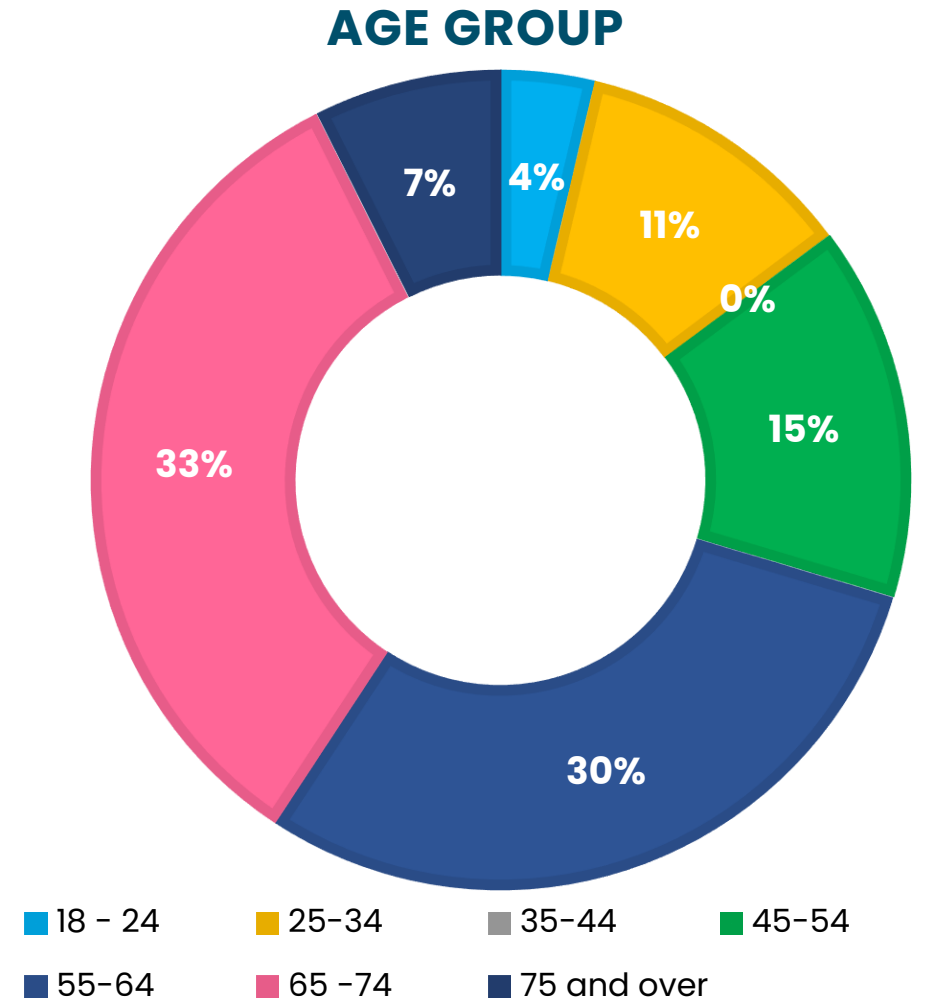
- Talk about the subject and raise awareness. Signposting and knowing where to find help and support especially in community spaces e.g. chemists, off licenses, supermarkets, GPs, community centres, etc. Knowing how and where to report issues and concerns around drug misuse in the community. More information about prescription drugs, risk of addiction and pain management alternatives. Community PCSO engagement and drug misuse lead
- Collaborative multi-agency working
- Try harder to stop the people who supply drugs and break laws
- Very little sadly
- Empower strict law
- NHS and CWAC websites (Cheshire West and Chester Council)
- I usually just google things
- Frank website, GP

What is your age?

Answered: 27 Skipped: 1

- Healthwatch asked the respondents about their age group, and their ages ranged from 18 to over 75 years

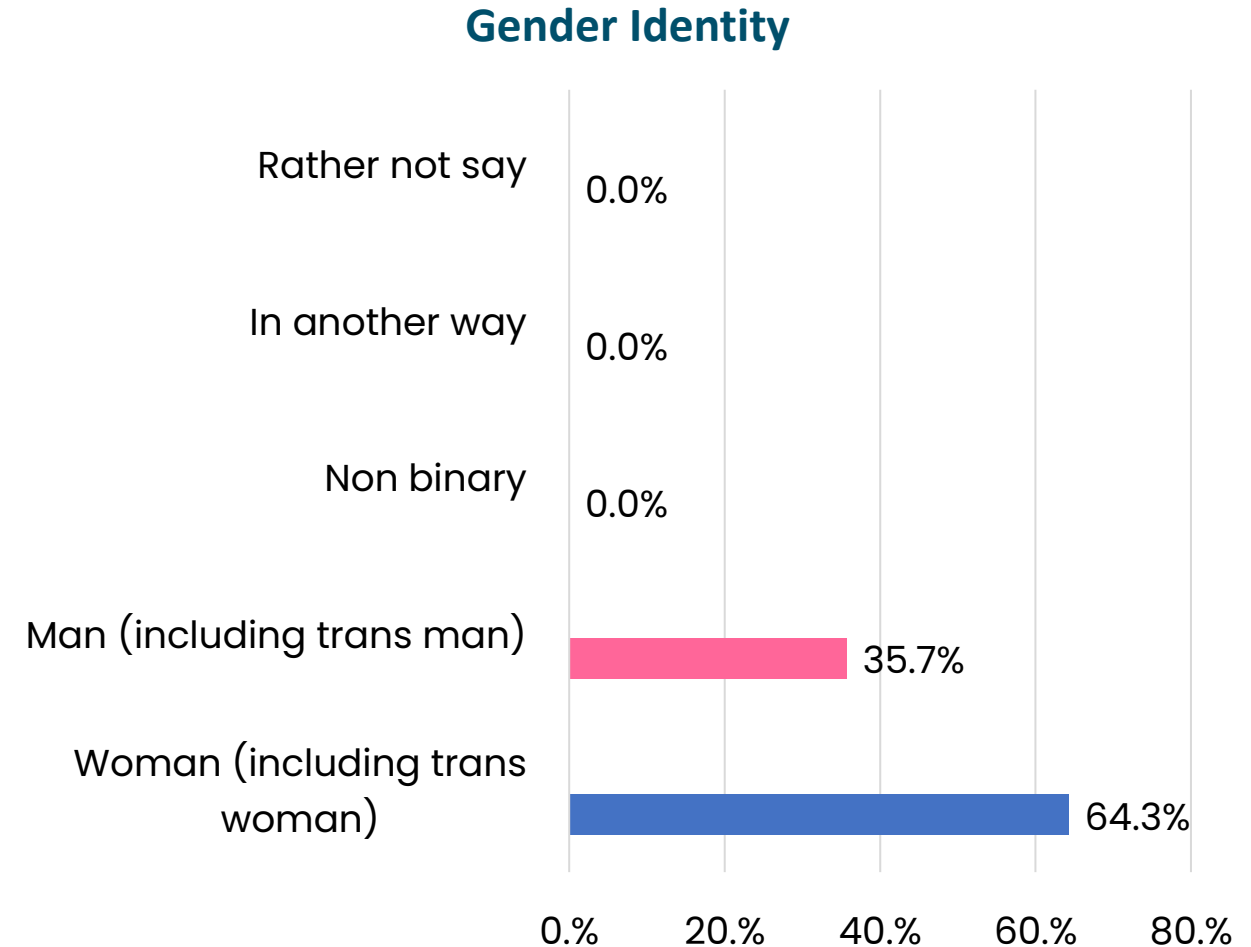
Age/year	Number of respondents
18 - 24	1
25-34	3
35-44	0
45-54	4
55-64	8
65 -74	9
75 and over	2



Gender Identity – which of the following options best describes how you think of yourself?

• Answered: 28 Skipped: 0

- The survey results show that the majority of the respondents **64.3%** (**18**) preferred to describe themselves as women.
- **35.7%** (**10**) of respondents described themselves as men.

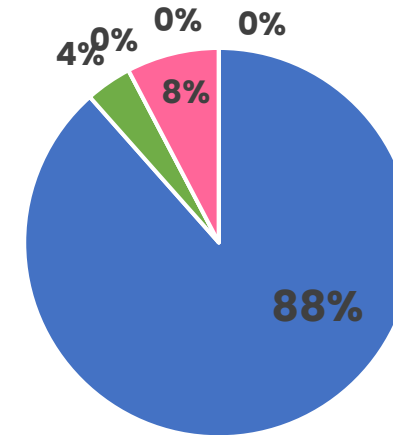


Which of the following option best describe how you think of yourself?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 2

- The majority **88%** (**23**) of respondents who answered this question identified themselves as Heterosexual or straight.
- Whilst **8%** and **4%** identified themselves as Other sexual orientation (**2**), Gay/lesbian (**1**) respectively.

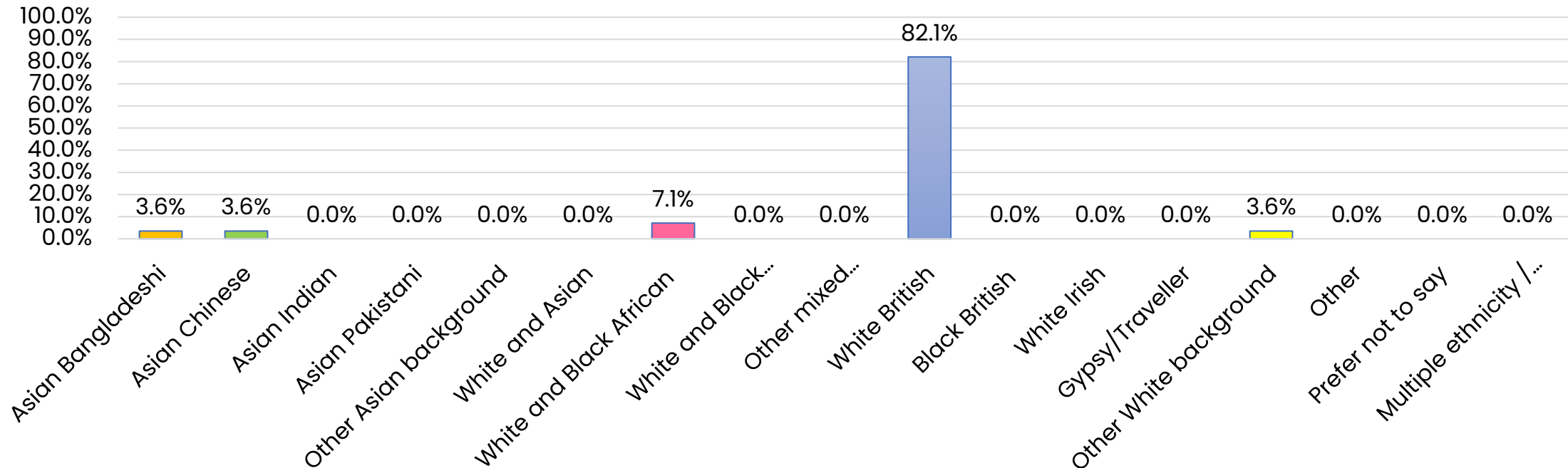
Sexual orientation



- Heterosexual or straight
- Gay or lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other sexual orientation not listed
- Don't know or unsure
- Rather not say

What is your ethnicity?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 0



- The vast majority of respondents were White British (**23**).
- **2** respondents came from White and Black African backgrounds.
- Asian Bangladeshi, Asian Chinese were represented with one participant each.

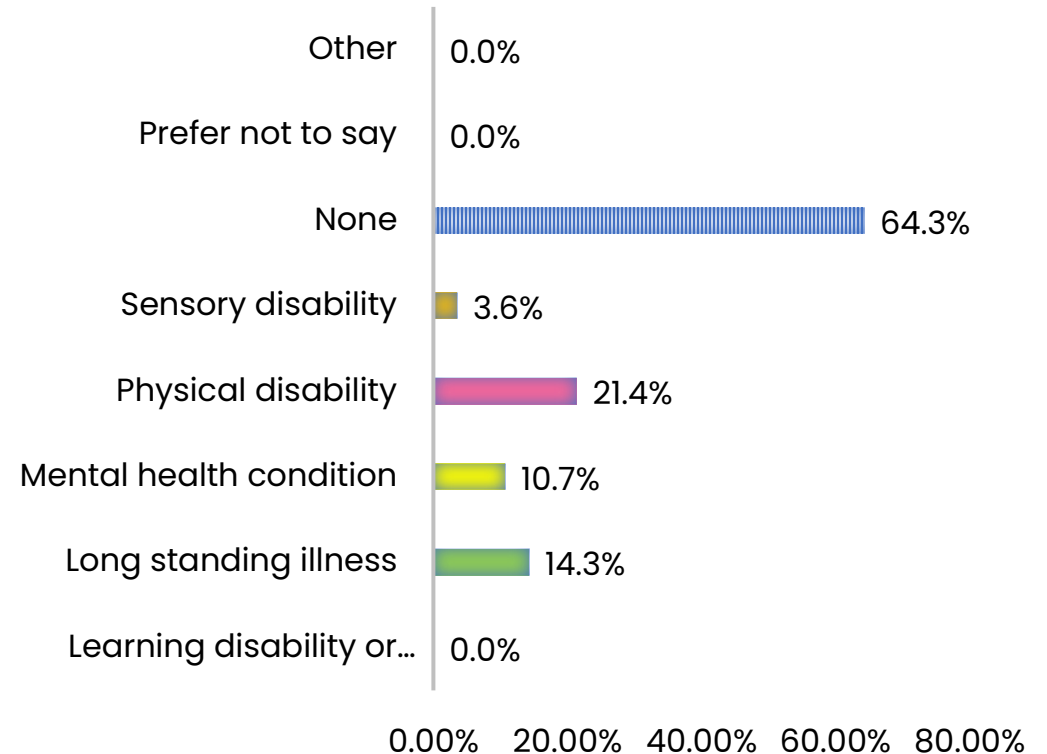
Do you consider yourself to have any of the following?

Answered: 28

Skipped: 0

- Of the **28** participants who responded to this question, **18** of them said that they hadn't any kind of disability;
- Whilst **6** respondents said that they had physical disability, and **4** respondents had long standing illness.
- 3** and **1** out of **28** of respondents had mental health condition and sensory disability respectively.

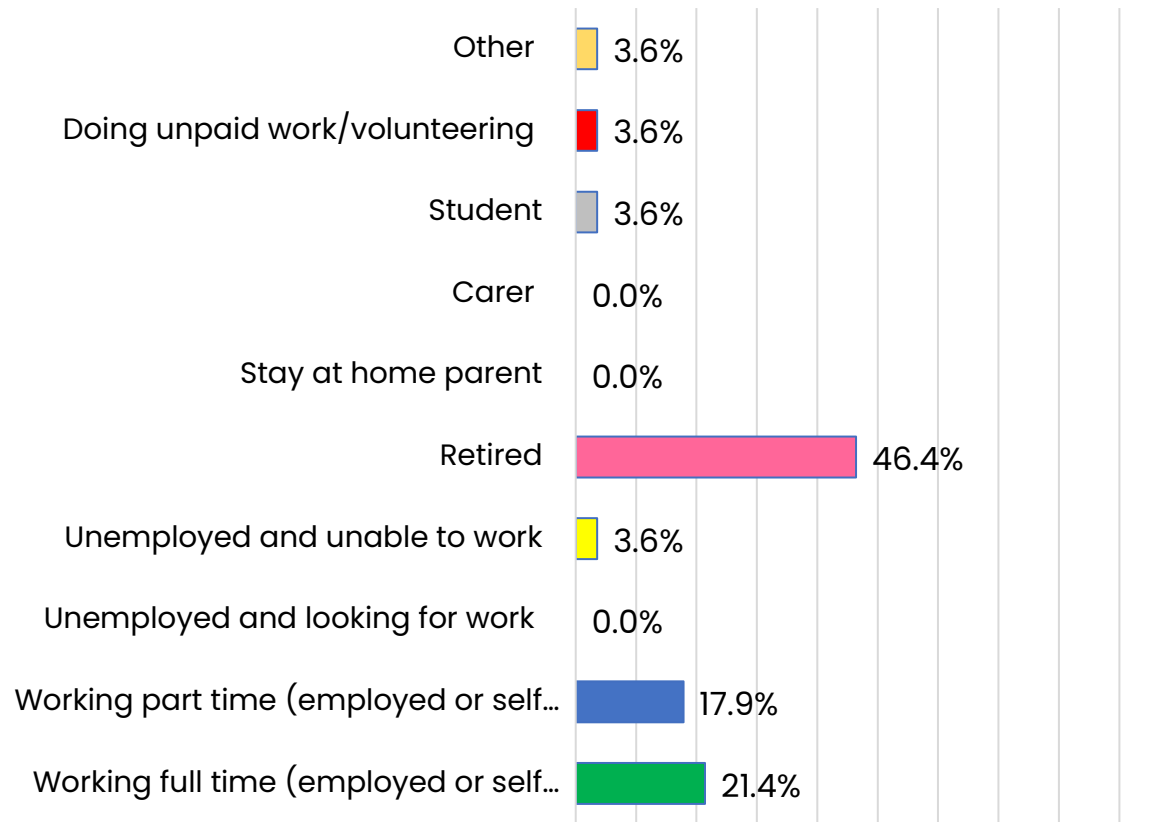
SPECIAL NEEDS



Employment status

Answered: 28 Skipped: 0

Employment status

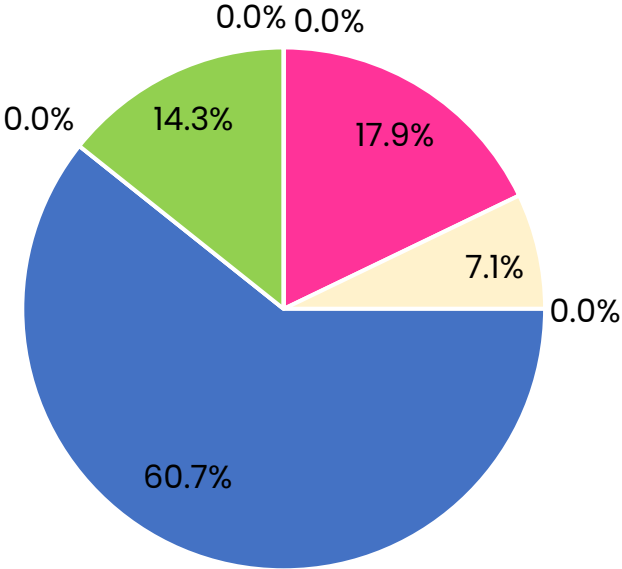


- Just under half of respondents, **46.4% (13)**, reported that they are Retired, and around **6** respondents are working full-time.
- **17.9% (5)** of respondents reported they are working part-time;
- Whilst Unemployed, student, and doing unpaid work/volunteering respondents scored **3.5% (1 each)**.

How would you describe your marital or partnership status?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 0

Marital Status



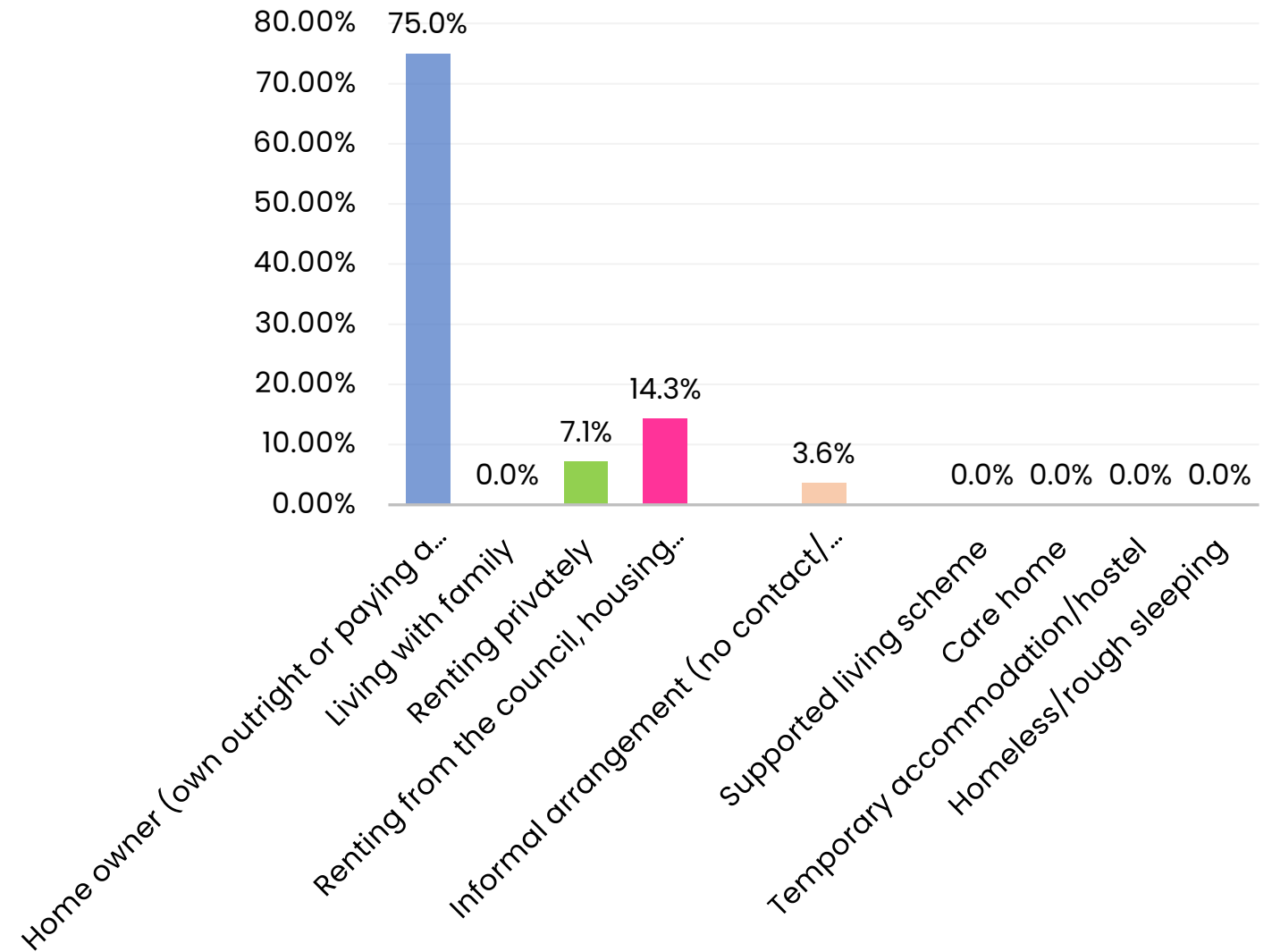
- Single
- In a civil partnership
- Prefer not to say
- Divorced/dissolved civil partnership
- Cohabiting
- Married
- Widowed
- Separated

- Around **60%** of the respondents (**17**) reported that they are married, while **17.9%** (**5**) are single
- And **14.3%** (**4**) respondents to this question reported that they are widowed.

Which of the following best describes your housing situation?

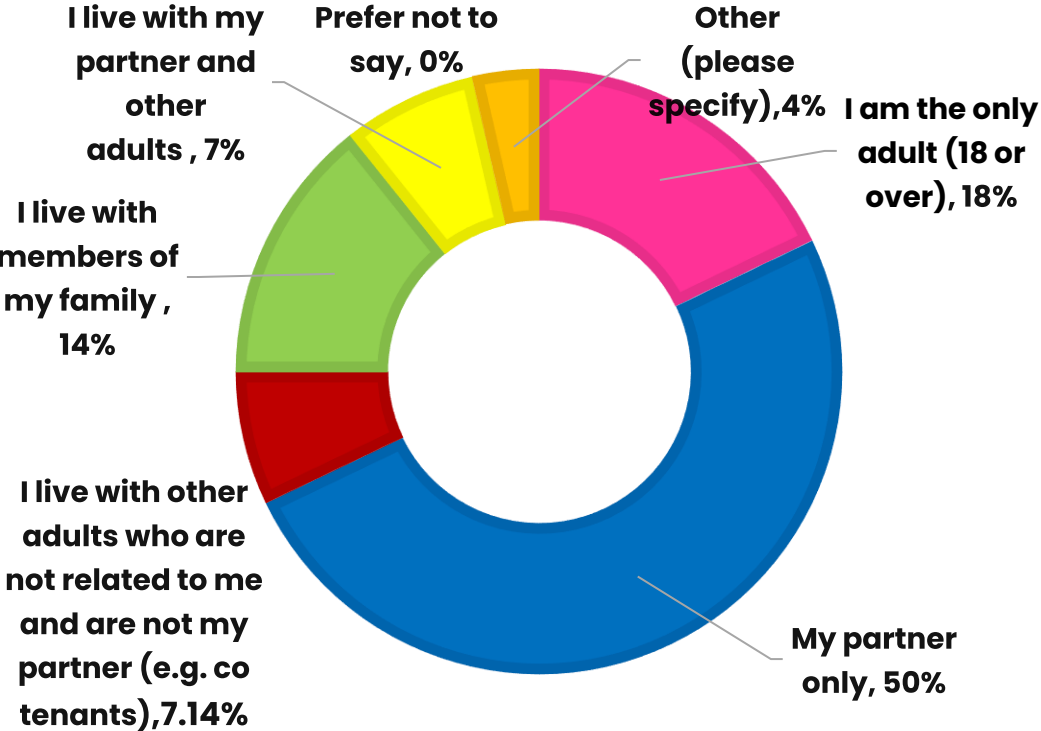
Answered: 28 Skipped: 0

- The majority of respondents (**75%**) are home owners
- And **14.3%** (**4**) respondents to this question reported that they are renting from the council, housing association or another social landlord.
- A further **3.6%** of respondents currently have informal living arrangements



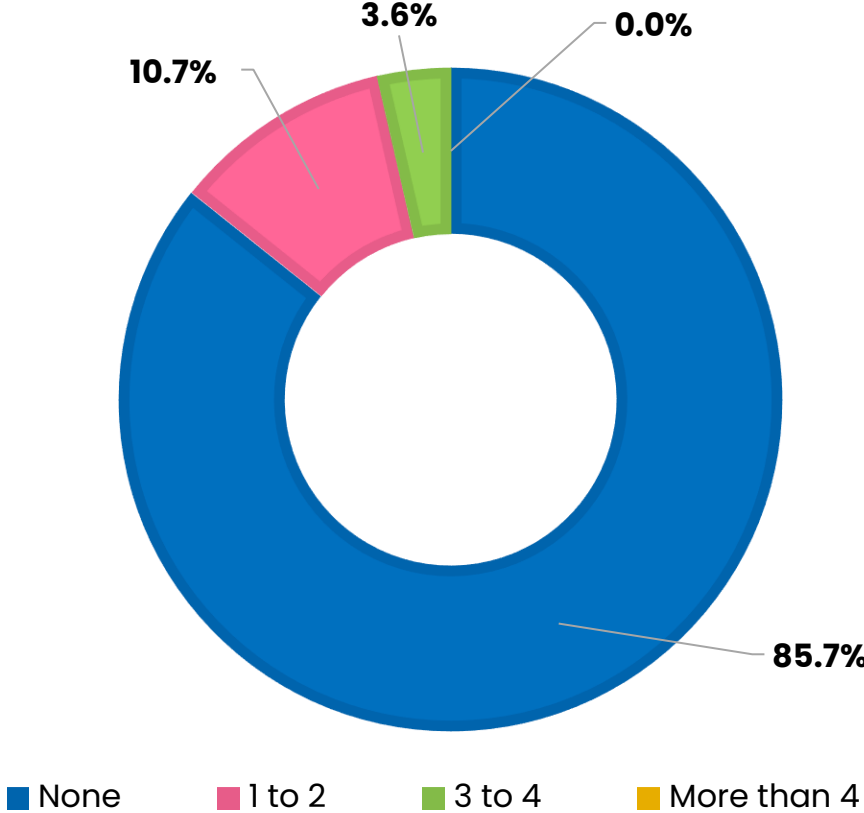
Besides you, what other adults (18 or over) live in your home?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 0



How many dependent children (under 18) live in your home?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 0

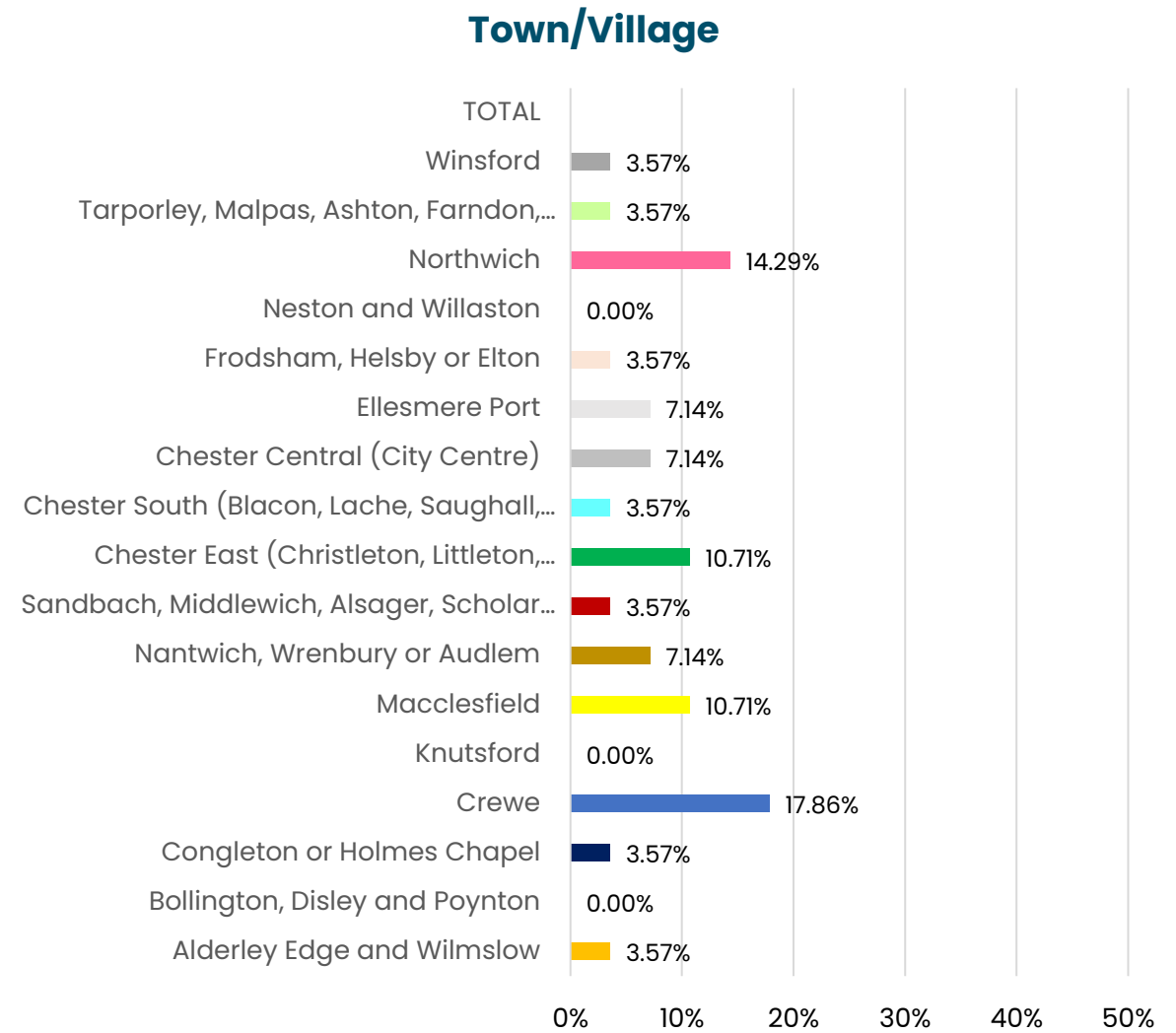


- Half of respondents are living with their partners and 5 respondents are living alone.
- The majority of respondents (85.7%) had no children living with them.

What is the name of the town or village you are from?

Answered: 28 Skipped: 0

- Crewe and Northwich had the largest numbers of participants with 5 and 4 respondents respectively.
- Neston and Willaston, Knutsford, Bollington, Disley and Poynton had no participants.



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