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Hawliau Dynol

Equality and  
Human Rights  
Commission

Social networks and relationships

# Who do you see?

Living together in Wales



## **Key Findings**

- On the whole, Welsh society is well integrated.
- Those with the most diverse social networks tended to be the young, those who left education later and those in higher socio-economic groups.
- Most people were happy with family members forming relationships with someone from a different ethnic background, a person with a different religion, someone with a learning disability.
- A significant number of Welsh people would be unhappy if a family member formed a relationship with an asylum seeker, a Gypsy Traveller, someone with a mental health condition or a transgender person (37% or more in each case).

# **Social networks and relationships**

## **Introduction**

This document focuses on the questions asked to examine the extent to which minority groups are integrated in Welsh society. The social networks investigated were family, friends, and work colleagues.

Further questions examined how people would feel if a close relative of theirs married or formed a long term relationship with someone from a particular group.

## **People's family and friendship groups**

Welsh society appeared well integrated. Approximately three-quarters of the population said that they knew someone who was:

- younger or older than them by 20 years or more - 95 per cent
- a different religion to them - 80 per cent
- from a different racial or ethnic background to them - 77 per cent
- disabled - 74 per cent
- gay, lesbian or bisexual - 74 per cent.

Not surprisingly, the largest proportion of people who knew someone who was twenty years younger or older than them did so because they were a member of their family (81 per cent).

Encouragingly, almost three quarters of the population (74 per cent) said they were friends with someone of this age difference.

For all other groups the most common reason for knowing someone was friendship. The following figures show the proportion of the Welsh population who said they were friends with people from the following groups:

- a different religion to them (64 per cent)
- a different race or ethnic background to them (60 per cent)
- gay, lesbian or bisexual (53 per cent)
- disabled (46 per cent)

**Table 1.1 Social networks - all who knew someone from specified group**

	<i>Unweight ed base, n =</i>	<i>Weighte d base, n =</i>	<i>Someone who is younger or older than you by 20 years or more (per cent)</i>	<i>Someone from a different religion (per cent)</i>	<i>Someone who is a different racial or ethnic background to you (per cent)</i>	<i>Someone who is disabled (per cent)</i>	<i>Gay, lesbian or bisexual (per cent)</i>
<b>Yes, all</b>	<b>1,589</b>	<b>1,589</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>74</b>
Yes, member of your family	1,589	1,589	81	30	14	32	15
Yes, friend	1,589	1,589	74	64	60	46	53
Yes, work colleague	1,589	1,589	46	36	32	16	23
Yes, someone else	1,589	1,589	28	21	18	16	16
No	1,589	1,589	5	18	22	26	25
Don't know / refused	1,589	1,589	*	1	*	*	1

Note: \* denotes less than 0.5%

## **What types of people are more likely to have diverse social groups?**

Ninety-five per cent of the Welsh population knew someone who was younger or older than them by 20 years. There were very few demographic differences between those who knew someone from this group and those who did not.

For the other four groups investigated there were some notable differences. People from the younger age groups were more likely than those aged 65 and older to have diverse social groups, i.e. knowing someone who was:

- from a different religion - 82 per cent of those aged 16-64 compared with 75 per cent of those aged 65+.
- a different racial or ethnic background to them - 81 per cent of those aged 16-64 compared with 65 per cent of those aged 65+
- gay, lesbian or bisexual - 80 per cent of those aged 16-64 compared with only 51 per cent of those aged 65+.

Within this, it was the very youngest age group who had the most diverse social groups: those aged 16-34 were markedly more likely to know people from these groups than the population as a whole (see table 1.2).

Non-white individuals were largely more likely than white British or Welsh people to know people from different racial or ethnic backgrounds and religions. Three quarters or more from non-white backgrounds were friends with people from different ethnic backgrounds (77 per cent) or different religions to themselves (82 per cent) compared with approximately two thirds of those from white British or Welsh backgrounds (60 per cent and 64 per cent respectively).

These findings indicate more diverse social networks, in terms of ethnicity and religion, amongst people of non-white backgrounds. However, this is inevitable given that non-white adults are in the minority in the Welsh population.

In contrast, those from white British/Welsh backgrounds were more likely than those from non-white ethnic groups to know people who were:

- disabled (74 per cent compared with 64 per cent of non-white ethnic groups)
- gay, lesbian or bisexual (74 per cent compared with 58 per cent of non-white ethnic groups)

With regards to class, a very clear difference was apparent with those from social class DE<sup>1</sup> being less likely to have diverse social networks than average. They were less likely to be acquainted with people who were:

- from a different religion to them (72 per cent of adults from DE households knew someone from this group compared with 80 per cent of the general population)
- from a different racial or ethnic background to them (65 per cent compared with 77 per cent of the general population)
- disabled (67 per cent compared with 74 per cent of the general population)
- gay, lesbian or bisexual (64 per cent compared with 74 per cent of the general population).

In contrast, adults in social grade AB households were markedly more likely than the general population to mix with people of different ethnic or religious backgrounds to themselves. Eighty-six per cent of AB adults knew people who were from a different ethnic background to them and 90 per cent knew someone from a different religion to them, compared with 77 per cent and 80 per cent respectively of the general population.

Linked with social class, those who left education aged 19 and above were more likely than average to know people who were from different ethnic or religious backgrounds to themselves or to know people who were gay, lesbian or bisexual. These results are shown in table 1.2.

Predictably, those who said they would rather live in an area with different kinds of people had wider social networks than those who said they would rather live in an area where most people were similar to them. The latter group was more likely to know:

- someone from a different religion (89 per cent compared with 76 per cent of those who would rather live in an area with similar people)

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<sup>1</sup> Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers or on state benefit/unemployed

- someone from a different ethnic background (88 per cent compared with 61 per cent )
- someone who was disabled (79 per cent compared with 66 per cent)
- someone who was gay, lesbian or bisexual (86 per cent compared with 58 per cent).

**Table 1.2 Social networks: All who knew someone at each individual group by demographic subgroup.**

	<i>Unweighted base, n =</i>	<i>Weighted base, n =</i>	<i>Someone who is younger or older than you by 20 years or more (per cent)</i>	<i>Someone from a different religion (per cent)</i>	<i>Someone who is a different racial or ethnic background to you (per cent)</i>	<i>Someone who is disabled (per cent)</i>	<i>Gay, lesbian or bisexual (per cent)</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,589</b>	<b>1,589</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>74</b>
Male	744	768	94	80	80	73	73
Female	845	821	96	81	75	75	75
Age:16-34	385	413	93	83	87	74	84
35-54	598	581	96	82	80	79	80
55-64	262	248	95	80	74	73	74
65+	344	347	96	75	65	67	51
White British/ Welsh	1438	1555	95	80	77	74	74
Other	151	34	91	93	88	64	58
AB	382	376	97	90	86	76	80
C1	533	538	95	83	83	77	78
C2	242	241	96	76	73	76	74
DE	428	431	94	72	65	67	64
Still studying	**78	92	91	85	86	79	83
16 or under	638	651	95	74	70	71	68
17-18	327	334	96	81	76	76	73
19+	544	511	96	87	86	76	80
Different kinds of people	236	231	96	89	88	79	86
Similar people	337	342	95	76	61	66	58
No preference	1005	1005	95	80	81	76	77

Note: \*\* denotes small base (unweighted base less than 100)

## Long-term relationships

This question concerned relatively personal circumstances. Therefore, we would expect it to reveal evidence of discriminatory attitudes where such views exist.

Attitudes varied quite considerably depending on the group under investigation. A relatively small proportion of the population (11 per cent or less) held negative attitudes in relation to those with a different religious belief, someone from a different ethnic background or someone who had a learning disability.

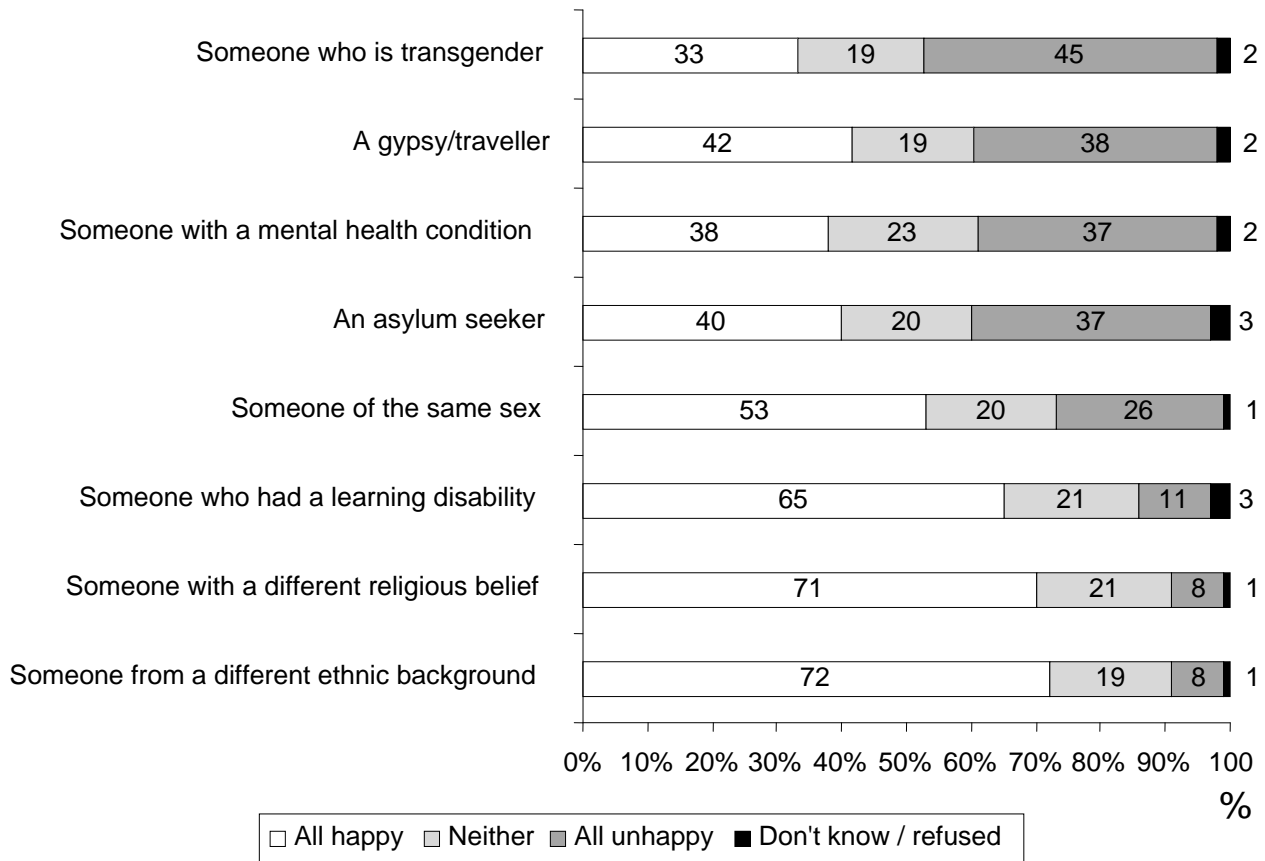
In the case of a close relative having a long-term relationship with someone of the same sex as themselves, attitudes were also relatively positive compared with other groups; more people said that they would be happy than unhappy about this. Fifty-three per cent said they would be happy compared with approximately a quarter of adults (26 per cent) who said they would be unhappy.

Views towards asylum seekers, Gypsy/Travellers and those with a mental health condition such as schizophrenia or depression were more mixed. Similar proportions of the Welsh population said they would feel happy and unhappy with the situation. For example:

- an asylum seeker - 37 per cent said they would be unhappy compared with 40 per cent who were happy
- a Gypsy/Travellers - 38 per cent unhappy compared with 42 per cent happy
- someone with a mental health condition - 37 per cent unhappy compared with 38 per cent happy.

Discriminatory attitudes, however, were more evident towards people who were transgender. The greater proportion of Welsh adults said they would be unhappy if a close relative formed a long-term relationship with someone from this group - 45 per cent said they would be unhappy compared with 33 per cent who would be happy.

**Figure 1.1 Generally speaking how happy or unhappy would you be if a close relative of yours married or formed a long-term relationship with someone from the following groups?**



Base: All respondents (1,589 unweighted; 1,589 weighted).

A similar question was asked on the Scottish Social Attitude Survey 2006, with the following groups common to both the Scottish and Welsh studies:

- an asylum seeker
- a Gypsy/Traveller
- someone of the same sex as themselves
- someone who has a learning disability.

In general, Welsh adults were more likely than Scottish adults to say that they would feel happy about a close relative marrying or forming a long-term relationship with someone from one of these groups (a difference of 11 percentage points or more). They were also less likely to be non-committal by saying that they were

neither happy nor unhappy (a difference of 6 percentage points or more). Despite this, the proportions of the Welsh and Scottish adults saying they would be 'unhappy' at this question were broadly similar.<sup>2</sup>

### **How do views on relationships vary across groups in society?**

There were some clear differences in attitude by gender for three of the groups asked about at this question. Firstly, men were more likely than women to express unhappiness about a close relative forming a relationship with someone of the same sex (29 per cent were unhappy compared with 23 per cent of women).

In contrast, women were slightly more likely than men to say they would be unhappy if a close relative married or formed a long term relationship with someone with a learning disability (13 per cent of women compared with 10 per cent of men) or an asylum seeker (39 per cent of women compared with 34 per cent of men).

There were some notable differences between the feelings of younger and older people. Older people (aged 55 and above) were markedly more likely than younger people aged 16-54 to say that they would be *unhappy* if a close relative married or formed a long term relationship with someone from all of the groups mentioned in this question (table 1.3).

Those in the very youngest age band (16-34) were the least likely to hold discriminatory attitudes, i.e. they were less likely than any other age group to say they would be unhappy if a close relative or friend married someone:

- with a mental health condition - 23 per cent compared with 30 per cent of those aged 35-54, 48 per cent of those aged 55-64 and 58 per cent of those aged 65 and above
- who is the same sex as themselves - 11 per cent compared with 18 per cent, 33 per cent and 52 per cent respectively
- with a learning disability - 1 per cent compared with 6 per cent, 22 per cent and 26 per cent respectively.

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<sup>2</sup> These differences should be treated with caution given the different methods adopted by the two surveys

Those who left education aged 16 or under were more likely than average to say they would feel unhappy if a close relative married or formed a long-term relationship with someone from seven of the eight groups asked about at this question. The only group for whom this difference was not apparent was 'someone with a different religious background.' The significant differences for the other seven groups were as follows:

- someone who is transgender - 52 per cent said they would be unhappy compared with 45 per cent of the general population
- a Gypsy/Traveller - 43 per cent compared with 38 per cent of the general population
- an asylum seeker - 44 per cent compared with 37 per cent of the general population
- someone with a mental health condition - 44 per cent compared with 37 per cent of the general population
- someone who is the same sex as themselves - 31% compared with 26 per cent of the general population
- someone with a learning disability - 14 per cent compared with 11 per cent of the general population
- someone from a different ethnic background - 12 per cent compared with 8 per cent of the general population.

In terms of ethnicity, those who were white British or Welsh were more likely than those from non-white ethnic groups to say they would be unhappy if a close relative married:

- a Gypsy/Traveller (38 per cent were unhappy compared with 27 per cent of those from non-white ethnic backgrounds)
- an asylum seeker (37 per cent compared with 20 per cent of those from non-white ethnic backgrounds).

However, when asked more generally about a close relative marrying someone from a different ethnic background to them, there were no differences between the feelings of white British/Welsh and non-white adults.

In contrast, those from non-white ethnic backgrounds were more likely than white British/Welsh adults to hold discriminatory attitudes towards gay men and lesbian women. Four in ten (40 per cent) said they would be unhappy if a close relative formed a close relationship with someone of the same sex as themselves compared with 25 per cent of white British or Welsh people.

In regards to religion, Christians were markedly more likely than those with no religion to say they would be unhappy if a close relative married or formed a long term relationship with someone from all of the groups asked about bar one. Christians were no more likely to be unhappy about a close relative forming a relationship with someone with a mental health condition than those with no religion (table 1.3).

As expected, those who said they would rather live in an area with similar kinds of people were more likely to say they would be unhappy if a close relative formed a long-term relationship with all of the groups asked about at this question than those who would rather live in an area with lots of different kinds of people. Figures are shown at table 1.3.

**Table 1.3 Generally speaking how happy or unhappy would you be if a close relative of yours married or formed a long-term relationship with....? All who said they were unhappy or very unhappy by demographic sub-group**

	<i>Unweighted base, n =</i>	<i>Weighted base, n =</i>	<i>Someone who is transgender (per cent)</i>	<i>A Gypsy/Traveller (per cent)</i>	<i>An asylum seeker (per cent)</i>	<i>Someone with a mental health condition (per cent)</i>	<i>Someone of the same sex as themselves (per cent)</i>	<i>Someone who had a learning disability (per cent)</i>	<i>Someone from a different ethnic background (per cent)</i>	<i>Someone with a different religious belief to them (per cent)</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1589</b>	<b>1589</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>
Male	744	768	47	37	34	35	29	10	8	7
Female	845	821	44	38	39	38	23	13	8	8
Age:	385	413	33	27	29	23	11	1	2	4
16-34										
34-54	598	581	39	31	32	30	18	6	3	6
55-64	262	248	54	45	42	48	33	22	15	13
65+	344	347	66	56	50	58	52	26	18	13
White British / Welsh	1438	1555	45	38	37	37	25	11	8	8
Other	151	34	48	27	20	34	40	13	9	11
AB	382	376	48	38	33	37	26	12	7	8
C1	533	538	41	33	31	32	22	8	6	7
C2	242	241	41	37	38	38	23	11	10	8
DE	428	431	50	42	45	42	31	16	10	9

Still studying	**78	92	35	34	30	19	12	*	1	2
16 or under	638	651	52	43	44	44	31	14	12	9
17-18	327	334	43	40	38	34	25	12	7	8
19+	544	551	41	30	27	32	22	9	5	7
Christian	1123	1144	49	40	40	38	30	12	9	9
Other religion	103	56	37	22	24	29	24	13	5	4
No religion	349	375	36	32	29	34	15	8	5	4
Different kinds of people	236	231	36	25	26	27	17	8	1	5
Similar people	337	342	68	60	61	53	48	22	24	18
No preference	1005	1005	40	33	31	34	20	9	4	5

Note: \* Less than 0.5 per cent. \*\* denotes small base (unweighted base less than 100)

## How do views on relationships vary by knowledge of certain groups?

The survey findings support the view that if people are acquainted with people from groups different to their own they are less likely to hold discriminatory views towards them. Where a direct comparison was possible, those who said they knew someone who belonged to a particular group were less likely than those who did not to take a discriminatory view relating to a family member building relationships with them.

There were three groups that were mentioned on both the question about long-term relationships and that about social networks, which made a direct comparison possible<sup>3</sup>. These were

- someone from a different racial or ethnic background
- someone from a different religion to them
- someone who was gay, lesbian or bisexual

Those who said they knew someone from each of these groups were less likely than those who did not to say they would feel unhappy if a close relative married or formed a long-term relationship with someone from that background. This difference was most evident in attitudes towards long-term relationships between couples of the same sex. Those who knew someone who was gay, lesbian or bi-sexual were 34 percentage points less likely than those who did not to say they would be unhappy if a close relative formed a relationship with someone of the same sex. Thus, the findings imply that knowing someone from this group “could discourage discriminatory attitudes on the basis of sexual orientation.”<sup>4</sup>

Interestingly, this difference was much less pronounced with regards to religion, although the difference was still statistically significant. Those who knew someone of a different religion to themselves were only 6 percentage points less likely to say they would be unhappy if a close relative formed a long-term relationship with someone of a different religion than those who did not know someone from this group.

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<sup>3</sup> Due to time limitations on the survey, it was not possible to include the same eight groups at each question

<sup>4</sup> Bromley et al (2007), *Attitudes to Discrimination in Scotland: 2006*, Scottish Centre for Social Research, p19.

**Table 1.4 Generally speaking how happy or unhappy would you be if a close relative of yours married or formed a long-term relationship with....? All who said they were unhappy or very unhappy by knowledge of groups.**

	<i>Unweighted base, n =</i>	<i>Weighted base, n =</i>	<i>Someone from a different ethnic background (per cent)</i>	<i>Someone as the same sex as themselves (per cent)</i>	<i>Someone with a different religious belief to them (per cent)</i>
Total	1589	1589	8	26	8
Yes, know someone from this group	1589	1589	5	17	7
No	1589	1589	17	51	13
<i>Difference</i>	-	-	12	34	6

## Summary

At least three quarters of Welsh adults had social links which included people who were:

- younger or older than them by 20 years or more
- a different religion to them
- from a different racial or ethnic background to them
- disabled
- gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Encouragingly, almost half of the population or more said they had a friendship with someone from one of these groups.

When people were asked how they would feel if a close relative of theirs married or formed a long-term relationship with someone from a particular minority group, the results varied quite considerably depending on the group in question.

For four of the eight groups, Welsh adults holding discriminatory attitudes were in the minority, with more people saying they would be happy if a close relative married or formed a long term relationship with someone from each groups than would be unhappy, as follows:

- someone from a different ethnic background
- someone with a different religious belief to them
- someone with a learning disability
- someone who was the same sex as themselves.

Views towards asylum seekers, Gypsy Travellers and those with a mental health condition were less positive, with similar proportions of adults saying they would feel happy or unhappy. Discriminatory attitudes were even more evident towards people who were transgender: Welsh adults were more likely to express unhappiness than happiness when asked to imagine their reaction if a close relative formed a long-term relationship with someone from this group.

The results demonstrated that where it was possible for a direct comparison to be made, people who knew someone from one of the groups researched were less likely to hold discriminatory attitudes towards their family building relationships with individuals from that group. Those who knew someone from different ethnic or religious backgrounds to themselves, or who knew people who were gay, lesbian

or bisexual were less likely to say they would be unhappy if a close relative married someone from these groups than those who did not. This underlines the positive benefits of diverse social networks.

## **Notes**

Further information on the research is available on the Commission in Wales pages on our website at:

[www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

### **About the attitudinal survey**

EHRC Wales commissioned GfK NOP to undertake research into people's attitudes towards discrimination, human rights and social cohesion in Wales. The research seeks to explore people's attitudes towards discrimination relating to gender, ethnic minority groups, disabled people, gay men and lesbians, issues on age, religion and faith and also the Welsh language. These results establish a baseline measurement of attitudes which could be repeated at future intervals.

The overall sample was 1,589 respondents. The survey was carried out by telephone. All respondents were offered the option of completing the survey in Welsh. Access issues were addressed by offering those with hearing impairments the opportunity to use a TypeTalk service. Those who found it difficult to communicate in English were offered the chance to have the interview interpreted using Language Line.

The sampling method used in the survey combined the selection of Random Digit Dial (RDD) numbers with the application of quotas to control the profile of those taking part in the survey. Quotas were set by region within Wales (five regions), by gender interlocked with working status, by age band and by ethnic origin based on demographic information derived from the 2001 Census. These were set to ensure that the sample would be representative of the Welsh population by these factors.

An interviewing boost was carried out in areas with higher proportion of ethnic minority people in the population.

### **Comparisons with Scotland and GB**

Comparisons have been drawn with the findings from the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2006 and the perceptions audit carried out by GfK NOP. It should be noted that only broad comparisons are possible because different methodologies were used in both these surveys. Therefore, any similarities or differences between the findings from these surveys and the results of the EHRC Wales survey must be treated as indicative rather than absolute.