

Giving voice to victims and survivors of abuse in the Church of England

Data from the 2022 Survivor Engagement National Survey

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Introduction

- As part of its survivor engagement work, the National Safeguarding Team (NST) of the Church of England ran a national anonymous online survey in 2022.
- The purpose of the survey was to gather the views of victims and survivors about how they would like to work with the NST to develop and implement a Survivor Engagement Framework and to better enable victims and survivors to engage with the Church of England.
- The survey did not ask about past or present experiences of abuse, harm or neglect. The survey was also not intended to describe the kind of safeguarding tasks and activities victims and survivors could be involved in.
- The NST is very grateful to the 171 adult victims and survivors of abuse who completed the survey, all those individuals who helped to co-design it and those staff members and groups, organisations, professionals, and other victims and survivors, who disseminated and shared the survey with others.
- This report presents the data from the survey with a view to facilitate wider dialogue and ongoing engagement with victims and survivors in establishing a Survivor Engagement Framework.

Survey Methods

- The methodology combines qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods.
- The survey questionnaire was co-produced with 12 victims and survivors who were already engaging with the work of the National Safeguarding Team.
- The final questionnaire consisted of 16 questions, 15 multiple choice questions and one open question (number 4). The main body of 8 questions aimed to provide the NST with information about how victims and survivors would like to engage with the NST to develop the Framework, and the remaining 7 questions were designed to collect demographic and other data from the respondents.
- The survey was open to the public for nearly three months (18 July to 9 October 2022) asking victims and survivors of any form of abuse to participate. It was published on the Church of England's Survivor Engagement webpage and shared with survivors and relevant stakeholders known to the NST via newsletters, and promoted in different communication channels, including *Church Times*, Premier Radio, and United Christian Broadcast.
- Overall, 185 persons completed the survey of which 14 were professionals and family members of survivors. The sample for analysis was limited to 171 individuals who identified themselves as victims and survivors of abuse in the survey.
- A more quantitative approach was taken to present the findings in order to provide a more factual and complete picture of people's responses.

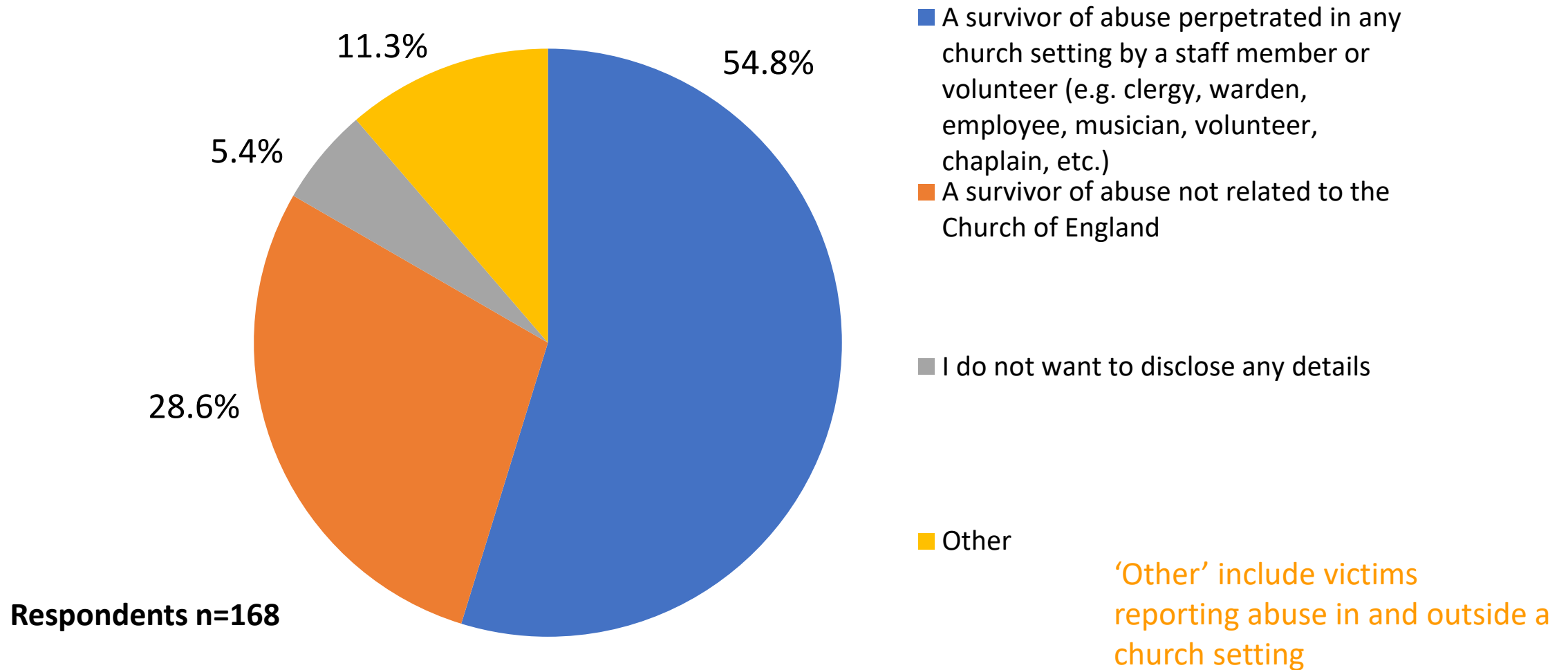
Ethical considerations

- The survey was anonymous to minimise the risk of identification and retraumatisation for victims and survivors, and to increase their confidence to participate.
- Anonymity was also essential to protect the rights of victims of specific types of abuse.
- The online platform SmartSurvey hosted the survey after a data protection assessment.
- Being aware of the potential of the survey to cause psychological stress, anxiety or harm, participants were given information and instructions in the introduction and closing text of the survey to access further support if they wished.
- The questionnaire allowed people to choose the questions they wanted to answer and provided space for other options and comments.
- The cooperation of survivors' groups and organisations was sought and promoted to ensure access to the survey for more victims and survivors and make them aware of the opportunity to share their personal thoughts and opinions.
- The survey followed the principles of the National Church Institutions' Research Ethics Committee (REC).

About the data in this report

- Victims' and survivors' responses to the survey are presented on the following 10 pages, followed by a summary of key findings and themes, and a list of ten next steps to be taken by the National Safeguarding Team.
- An appendix presents additional data from the survey about participants, such as age, gender, ethnicity and other protected characteristics. The survey questionnaire can be accessed at: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/preview/3HLEXT/1EC9DF62B0DD97D0E97DB31E0A2239>
- The terms 'survivor' and 'victim' are labels and carry limitations. For the purposes of this document, both terms will be used to identify individuals who have or may have been subject to abuse or neglect.
- The terms 'survivor' and 'victim' do not capture all personal experiences and journeys. Some individuals choose to use different terms or phrases to describe their experience or experiences of abuse. Others do not want an episode or series of episodes to be regarded as the defining moment of their lives and/or of who they are.
- These limitations and the right of individuals to self-identify are recognised in this report. The terms 'survivor' and 'victim' are solely used for ease of reference.

Chart 1: How participants described themselves



Question 1: The voices of victims and survivors of abuse are valuable to help make the Church a safer place. Whether or not you currently engage, what would motivate you to further engage and/or participate in the safeguarding work of the Church? Please tick the motivations and expectations below that apply to you

Response Option		% Response
1	Being able to influence decision-making	71.3%
2	Having a space to have my voice and opinion heard in the Church	68.4%
3	Having an opportunity to make changes with church officers and church leaders	67.8%
4	Seeing the impact of my involvement on the life of the Church	64.3%
5	Being given the choice of how to engage (e.g. working groups, online consultation, 1:1 meetings, written feedback)	58.5%
6	Having an opportunity to experience a collective effort and outcome	43.9%
7	Being able to make proposals or initiate new projects and activities	43.3%
8	Accessing options of support throughout my engagement	34.5%
9	Meeting and engaging with other survivors	31.0%
10	Developing myself through training and personal skills development	23.4%
11	Engaging outside of working hours (e.g. evenings and/or weekends)	21.6%

'Other' Responses Include:

- Being actively heard and believed, especially by those in power
- Having support in place and being treated well, fairly and as equal
- Good safeguarding arrangements
- Preventing future abuse

Respondents n=171 / Responses n=941

Question 2: What barriers or challenges might affect your engagement? Please tick the answers below that matter to you

Response Option		% Response
1	Concerns about people's negative assumptions and biased behaviours	57.3%
2	Concerns about church officers not being trained appropriately	43.3%
3	Not being sure about how much time and commitment are required	42.1%
4	Not knowing who else might be present at an event or a meeting	41.5%
5	Concerns about lack of support	38.6%
6	Home, family, work or other priorities in my life	26.9%
7	Accessibility and disability issues (i.e. health history, learning difficulties, no sign language interpretation, etc.)	14.0%
8	I do not see any barrier or challenge affecting my engagement	12.3%
9	Taking part in activities that involve direct contact with clergy	10.5%
10	Communication barriers (i.e. no access to Internet, language of materials, etc.)	8.2%
11	Concerns about Covid	5.3%

- 'Other' Responses Include:**
- No trust in NST and the Church
 - Fear and the emotional impact of retraumatisation
 - Tokenism
 - Lack of transparency
 - Concerns about safety

Respondents n=171 / Responses n=551

Question 3: There is a range of survivor engagement opportunities and activities for people to participate. In the following list, please rate the importance of what would make any survivor engagement activity inclusive and accessible. If you would like to add more answers to this question, please use the comment box at the bottom to share your views

Response Choice		% Responses 'Essential'
1	Meeting disability or other special requirements and reasonable adjustments to make participation possible	98
2	Actively listening to children and young people	92
3	Using fair selection processes (e.g. applications and interviews) for membership in governance bodies and working groups	91
4	Valuing survivors coming from diverse groups and communities as role models	84
5	Ensuring a variety of people are involved rather than the same people	82
6	Offering a range of engagement opportunities	77
7	Making training on diversity essential for everyone involved (church staff and survivors)	72
8	Speaking openly about diversity in any engagement activity	68
9	Using simple and appropriate language in materials	64
10	Offering information in more than one language	46

Other answers related to:

- A trauma-informed approach
- Addressing power differentials
- Good facilitation of activities
- Actively reaching diverse groups of survivors
- Geographical variance

Respondents n=170 / Responses n=1675

Question 4: How can the Church ensure that any survivor engagement activity does not retraumatise or negatively affect you? In the list below are areas which are considered as being important by survivors currently engaging with the Church.

- √ Protecting my rights of confidentiality, privacy and anonymity
- √ Being given the choice whether to remain anonymous or use pseudonyms
- √ Considering my personal needs, triggers and/or any other special requirements before being involved in tasks and activities
- √ Preventing and challenging certain attitudes that have the potential to harm and retraumatise
- √ Being fully informed about the content of engagement before any engagement (i.e. meeting agendas, briefs, etc.)
- √ Enabling a sense of care and human connection in all activities involving survivors
- √ Setting up and maintaining clear boundaries and trusted working relationships with church staff
- √ Tackling any unfair treatment promptly and sensitively
- √ Feeling welcomed, listened to and supported throughout my engagement

Please use the box below to indicate what else might be needed or is missing to prevent retraumatisation and/or harm.

Themes Provided

- Safety** creating carefully planned environments of engagement, providing access to a range of support actions
- Empowerment** avoiding tokenism, enabling informed choices, enhancing people's freedom and autonomy
- Trust** experiencing transparency, respect, kindness and honesty, delivering results and changes
- Communication** ensuring clear channels of interaction, information, genuine dialogue and simple language

Respondents n=111

Question 5: In which of the following ways would you like to hear about survivor engagement opportunities?

Response Choice		% Response
1	Sharing opportunities in a dedicated central space (website or an online application) which everyone has access to	67.9%
2	Sending a monthly newsletter with news and opportunities to all survivors who register their interest in participating in safeguarding work	60.7%
3	Hearing from an intermediary, such as a survivor group or survivors organisation	39.9%
4	Communicating via an advocate or next of kin who has my consent to act as my point of contact	13.7%

'Other' Responses Include:

- Advertising in local parishes/churches (i.e. poster)
- Via emails
- Hearing from the diocese

Respondents n=168 / Responses n=332

Question 6: How should the Church recognise and value your engagement? Please tick all that apply

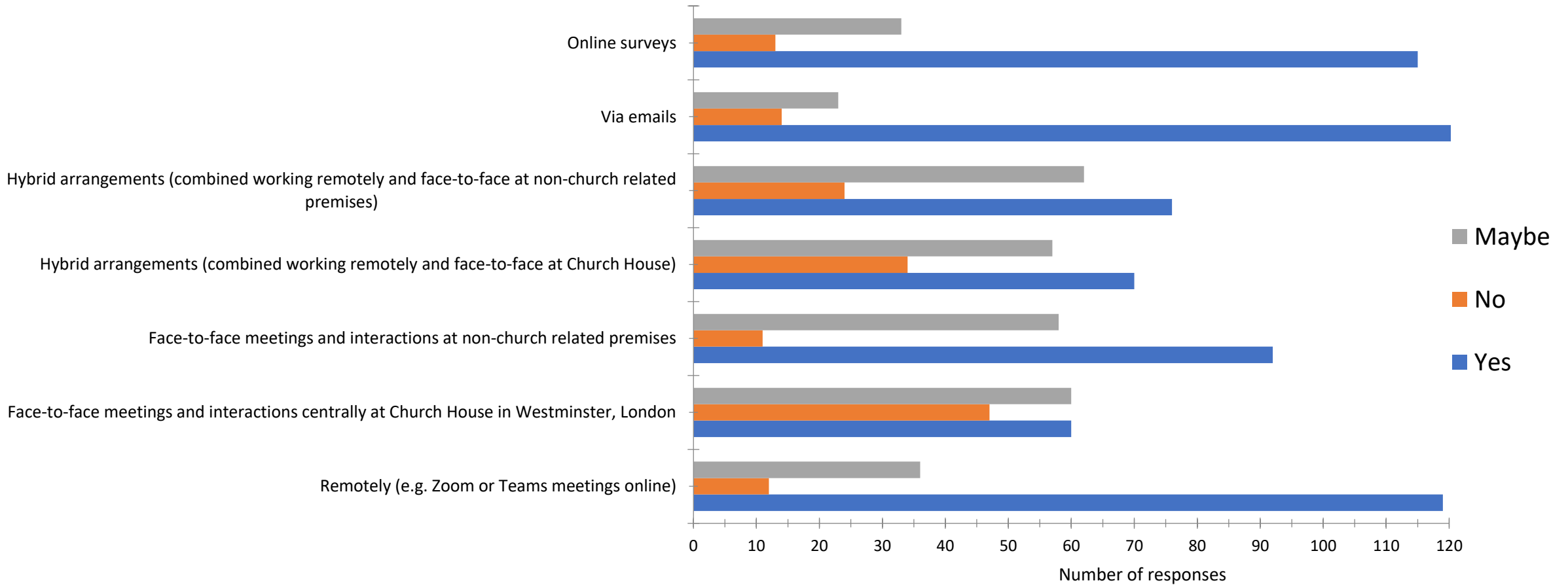
Response Choice		% Response
1	Receiving expenses (when appropriate to activity)	57.6%
2	Receiving thanks from the church officers and/or clergy involved	44.2%
3	Receiving thanks and acknowledgement from senior clergy	38.2%
4	Recognition of my time and volunteering role through a paid honorarium	27.9%
5	Acknowledgement of my contribution publicly	14.5%
6	Receiving retail or other vouchers as a thank you	10.3%

'Other' Responses Include:

- Not wanting any payment/ acknowledgement or thanks
- Making improvements/changes and what was promised
- Knowing the impact as a result of my engagement
- Organising special events/awards to credit survivors

Respondents n=165 / responses n=387

Question 7: The following statements describe different ways of interaction and engagement with the Church. Please tick the answers that apply to you personally, and use the comment box to share any thoughts or propose alternative ways of interaction.



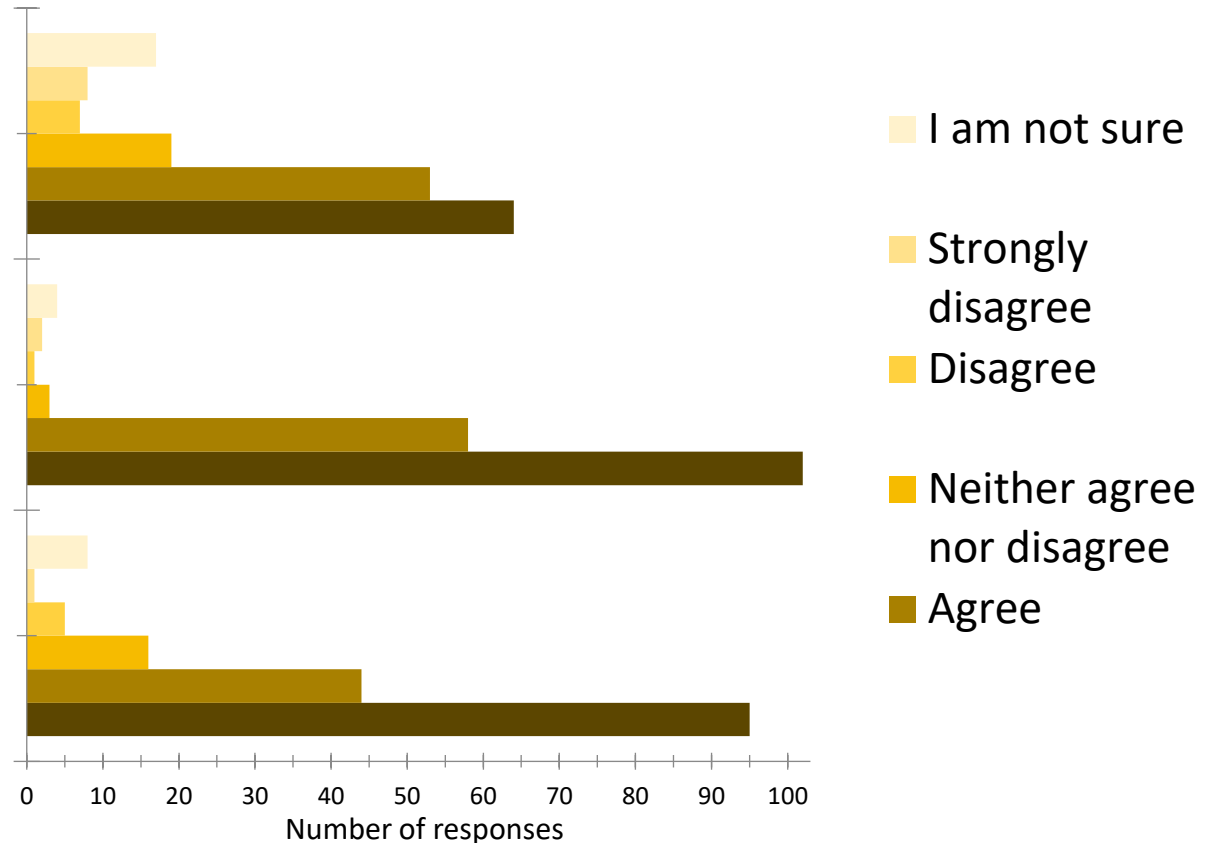
Respondents n=170 / Responses n=1141

Question 8: Current engagement with victims and survivors highlights the need to actively listen to all survivors and embed a coordinated, consistent and empathetic approach to their engagement with the Church. In your opinion, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? You have one choice per statement and space for additional comments if you so wish.

Getting everyone around the table can create open spaces where sensitive issues can be debated between leaders, survivors, professionals, academics and other valuable partners.

Any survivor engagement framework should include a mechanism (either through a code of conduct or a charter) that will enable and protect the working relationships for all those involved.

A clear policy of how the Church brings survivors and church officers to work together will help make the Church a safer place.



Respondents n=170

Question 8: Level of agreement or disagreement with the statements (continuation of previous page)

Statement	% Agree	% Disagree
A clear policy of how the Church brings survivors and church officers to work together will help make the Church a safer place	85.25%	3.55%
Any Survivor Engagement Framework should include a mechanism (either through a code of conduct or a charter) that will enable and protect the working relationships for all those involved	94.12%	2.17%
Getting everyone around the table can create open spaces where sensitive issues can be debated between leaders, survivors, professionals, academics and other valuable partners	69.65%	8.93%

Comments related to the development of the Framework:

- Boundaries and safe relationships
- Careful planning, incl. risk
- Consideration of power imbalances
- Evidence the impact of survivors' involvement
- Variety of engagement options, especially virtual

Respondents n=170

Summary of findings

- Most victims and survivors who took part in this survey agreed on the need for a mechanism that will enable and protect all those involved in the development of a Survivor Engagement Framework.
- A high number of survivors also agreed to have a clear policy on how the Church brings together survivors and church officers to work together to make the Church a safer place.
- Those survivors who responded said that they were motivated by having a space for their voice to be heard, to influence decision-making and make changes for safeguarding in the Church.
- Seeing the impact of their involvement as well as being given a choice about how to engage were also popular responses.
- To ensure engagement is inclusive, the responses noted that meeting disability requirements and making reasonable adjustments are essential, followed by listening to children and young people, using fair selection processes, reaching out and hearing from a diverse cohort of people.

Findings

- Safety, empowerment, trust and communication emerged as key themes in relation to preventing retraumatisation as a result of engagement.
- However, one-third of respondents (60 individuals) did not tell us how to ensure any survivor engagement activity would not retraumatise or negatively affect them.
- The most selected responses about barriers to engagement were concerns about people's negative assumptions, followed by concerns whether Church Officers would be trained appropriately.
- Barriers also related to uncertainties, such as not knowing how much time would be needed, or who else would be there.
- A high number of participants supported the creation of a dedicated central space where everyone had access to and heard about survivor engagement opportunities.

Findings

- Although most respondents wanted to hear about engagement opportunities directly from the Church (114 out of 168 who answered the relevant question), 64 survivors indicated they would like to hear about them via intermediaries, such as a survivors' group or survivors' organisation.
- A smaller number of respondents (23) preferred to communicate via an advocate or a next of kin.
- Online surveys, emails and meeting online were popular choices in the survey. If meetings were face-to-face, non-church premises were selected over Church premises.
- In terms of recognition of engagement by the Church, payment of expenses (such as travel) received the most responses, followed by receiving thanks, either from those involved or from senior clergy.

Themes

(taken from comments made by respondents in comment boxes in the survey and responses to open question 4)



Next steps

Findings	Actions (with victims and survivors)	Deadline
<p>A range of choices for people as to how they learn about, and participate in, survivor engagement opportunities and the development of the Framework.</p>	<p>Ensure the development of the Survivor Engagement Framework offers a range of modes for involvement (workshops, surveys and others).</p> <p>Share information about engagement opportunities online, via newsletters and via victim and survivor groups and organisations.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>A clear and coordinated approach to engagement with victims and survivors.</p>	<p>In line with NCI's Project Framework, develop and implement a plan to co-produce the Framework, to include strategic outcomes, key milestones, resources, risk assessment processes, communication strategy and evaluation.</p>	<p>December 2023</p>
<p>Safety is paramount when developing the Framework. A code of conduct/charter to support those involved in survivor engagement activities may help.</p>	<p>Co-production of a charter/code of conduct with victims and survivors (part of the Survivor Engagement Framework).</p>	<p>March 2024</p>

Next steps

Findings	Actions (with victims and survivors)	Deadline
Openness and transparency about engagement opportunities, and fair selection processes.	Inclusion of a recruitment policy for volunteer survivors (part of the Survivor Engagement Framework).	May 2024
Recognition of the contribution of victims and survivors.	<p>Review NST Survivor Engagement Honorarium and Expenses Policy as part of the Survivor Engagement Framework.</p> <p>Develop additional methods of thanks and acknowledgement in addition to recognition through honorariums for victims and survivors as part of the Framework.</p>	July 2024
Listening to children and young people.	Work with other relevant church bodies and subject experts to strategise and plan an approach to listening to children, young people and their families.	September 2024

Next steps

Findings	Actions (with victims and survivors)	Deadline
Survivor groups and survivor organisations have a role to ensure diverse and more voices of victims and survivors heard.	Ensure the Survivor Engagement Framework includes provision around how the NST works with survivor groups and organisations for the benefit of victims and survivors.	September 2024
A consistent and open approach to bringing together survivors and church officers to make the Church a safer place.	Survivor Engagement documentation is prepared and uploaded in the Survivor Engagement webpage of the Church.	October 2024
Concerns about negative assumptions and whether Church Officers would respond well in engagement activities.	Development of further learning and development resources for staff and survivors involved in survivor engagement.	November 2024
Ensuring people feel heard and engagement has impact on safeguarding.	Incorporate into the Survivor Engagement Framework a method of evidencing the impact of engagement on Church safeguarding.	December 2024

Conclusion

This survey made a firm starting point for the development and implementation of a Survivor Engagement National Framework with victims and survivors in the Church of England. The National Safeguarding Team listened to the views of 171 victims and survivors, including those who had not previously engaged with the team. The previous national survey, run by the team and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) received 58 responses (June 2018) ¹.

The findings show that victims and survivors want an inclusive, trauma-informed, and impactful process that would enable them or other survivors to co-produce this Framework. Inclusivity and accessibility are important elements in this process. This is also apparent in the demographic data which reveal that participants in the survey belong to a certain age, ethnic, gender and sexual orientation group (see appendix below). Further to this, the report alerts us to the fact that developing the Framework could cause high degrees of distress and anxiety and fears of retraumatisation for survivors who engage with the process. However, survivors feel that their engagement is worth it if it makes a real difference to the safeguarding work in the Church.

The thirst for change and the high number of respondents affirm that survivor engagement activities have the potential to grow into the organisational culture of the Church. To this end, the report includes a plan and 12 actions for the National Safeguarding Team to co-develop the Framework and integrate this learning into existing practices and processes. For this work to flourish, it is important to acknowledge that there are many victims and survivors who are silent or marginalised and/or have lost their faith and confidence in the Church. Continuing to hear from many victims and survivors as possible is the best way of making sure that the Framework is representative and responsive to the different types of abuse people might experience or have experienced in the past.

¹ <https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/overview/news-and-views/church-england-welcomes-final-scie-overview-report>

Appendix

Demographic data regarding participants

Chart 2: Age range selected by participants

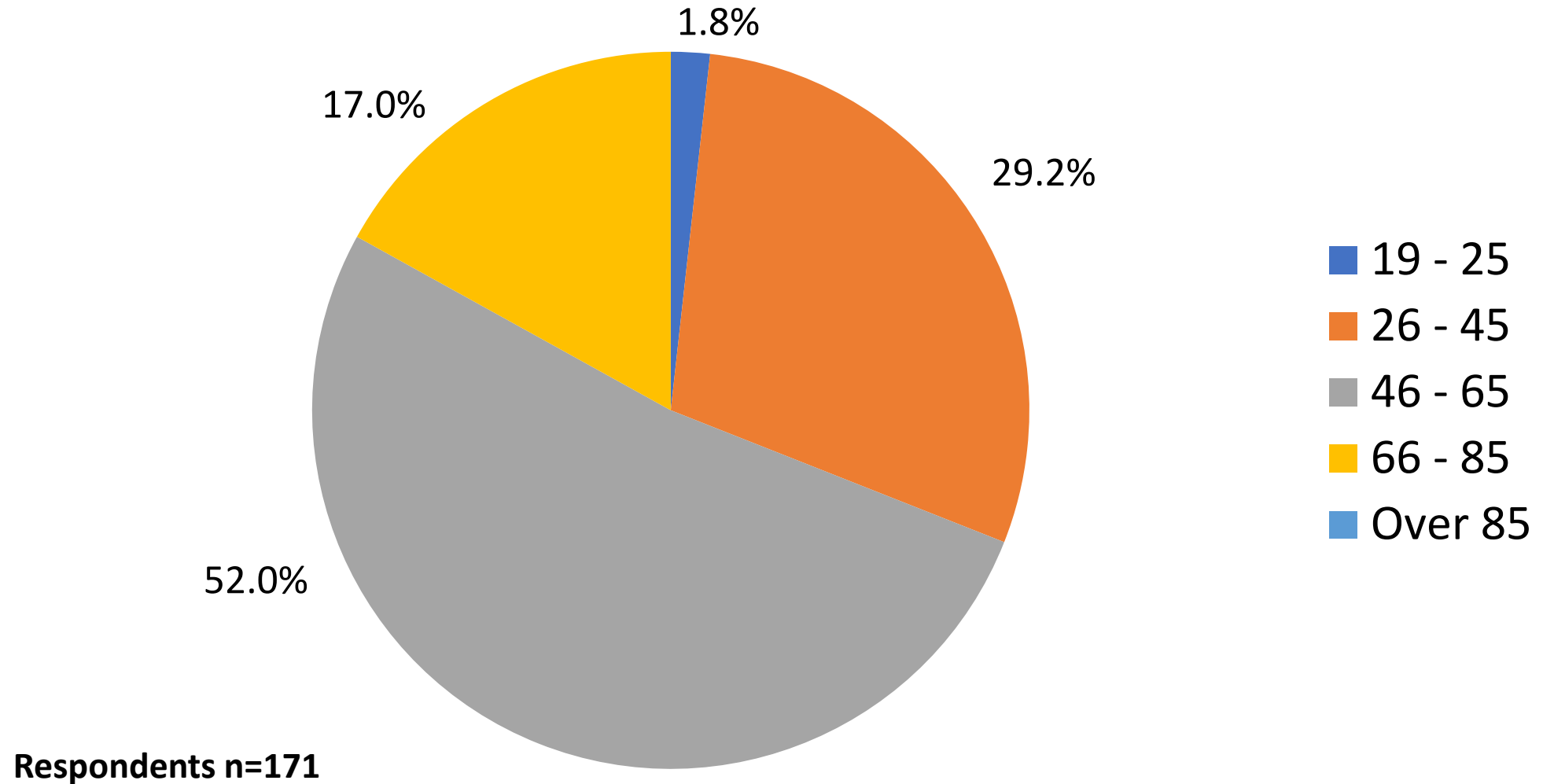


Chart 3: Gender identified by participants

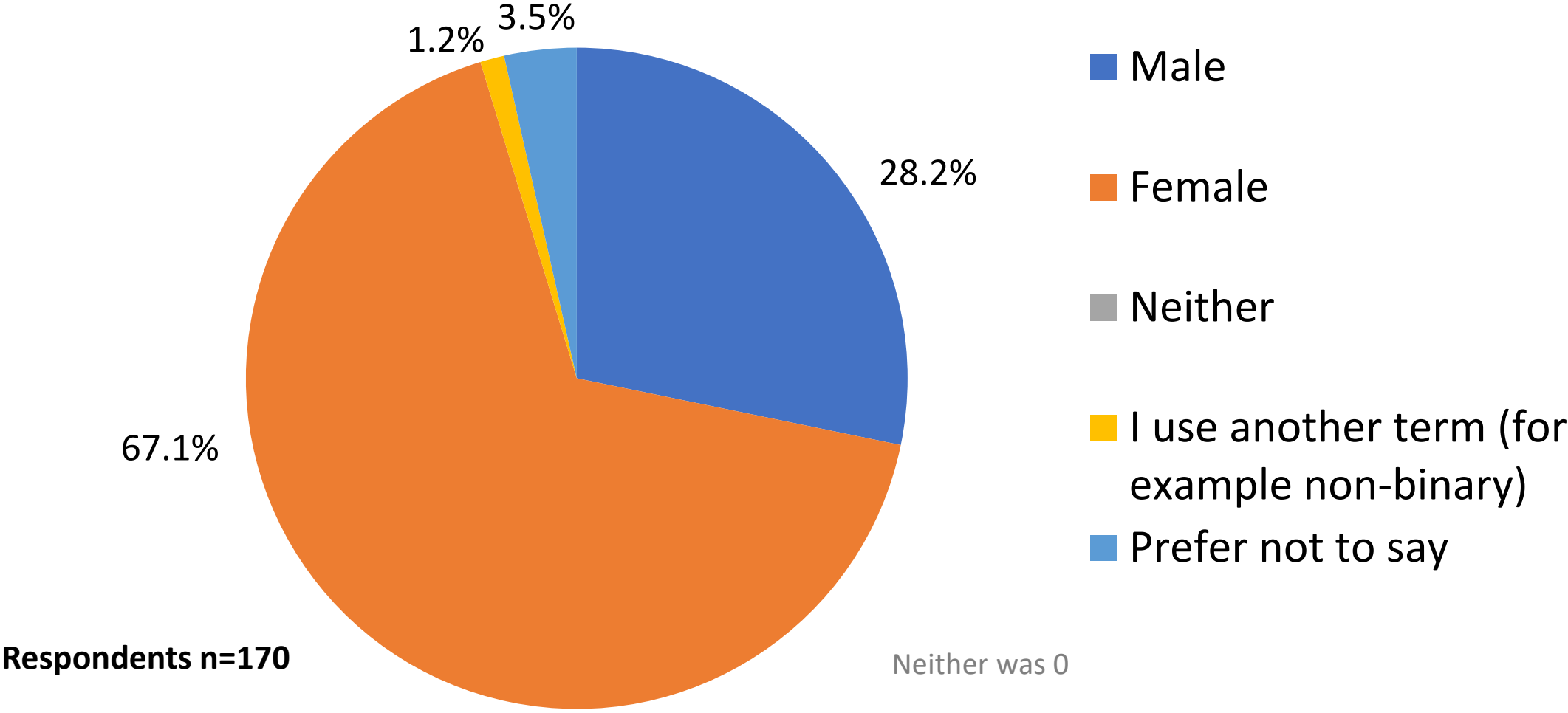


Chart 4: Participants consider themselves to have a disability?

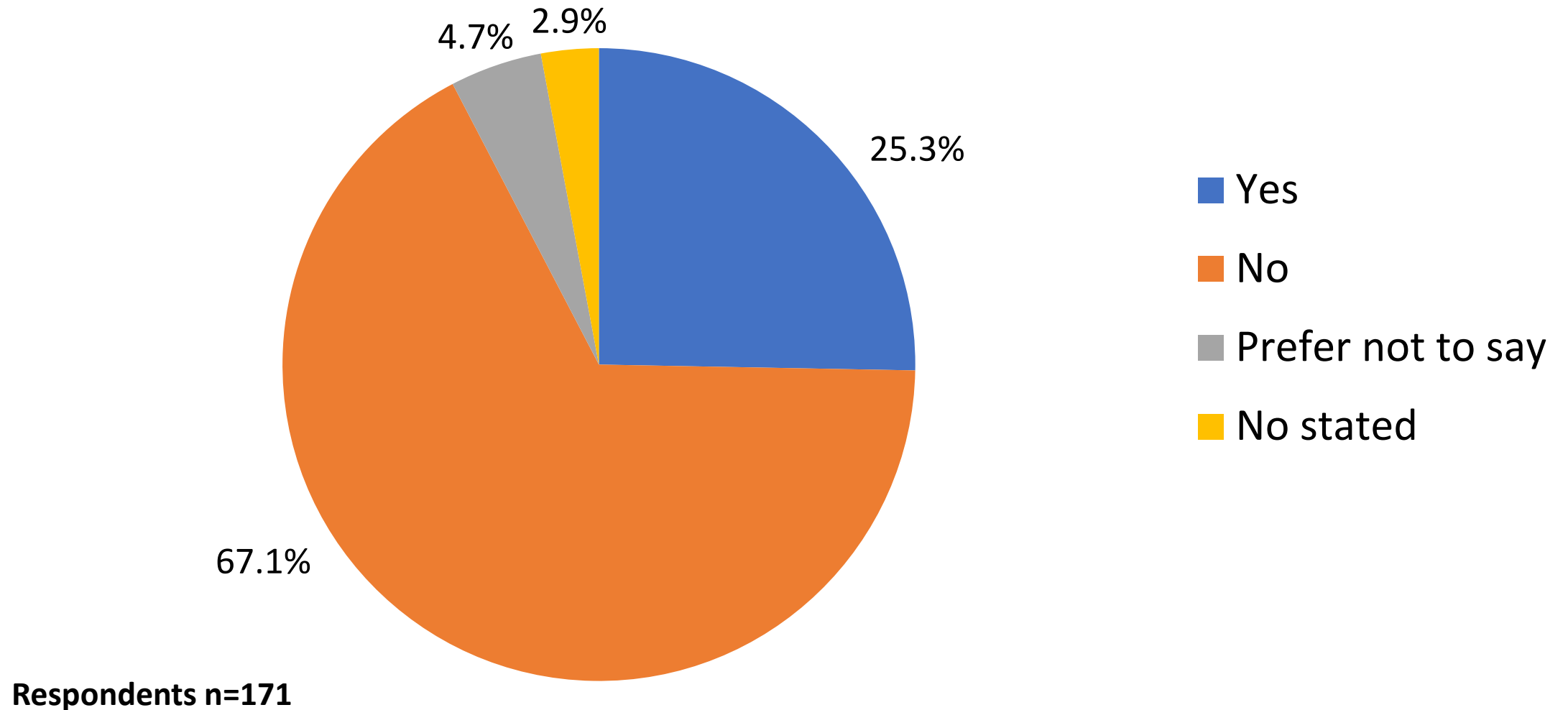
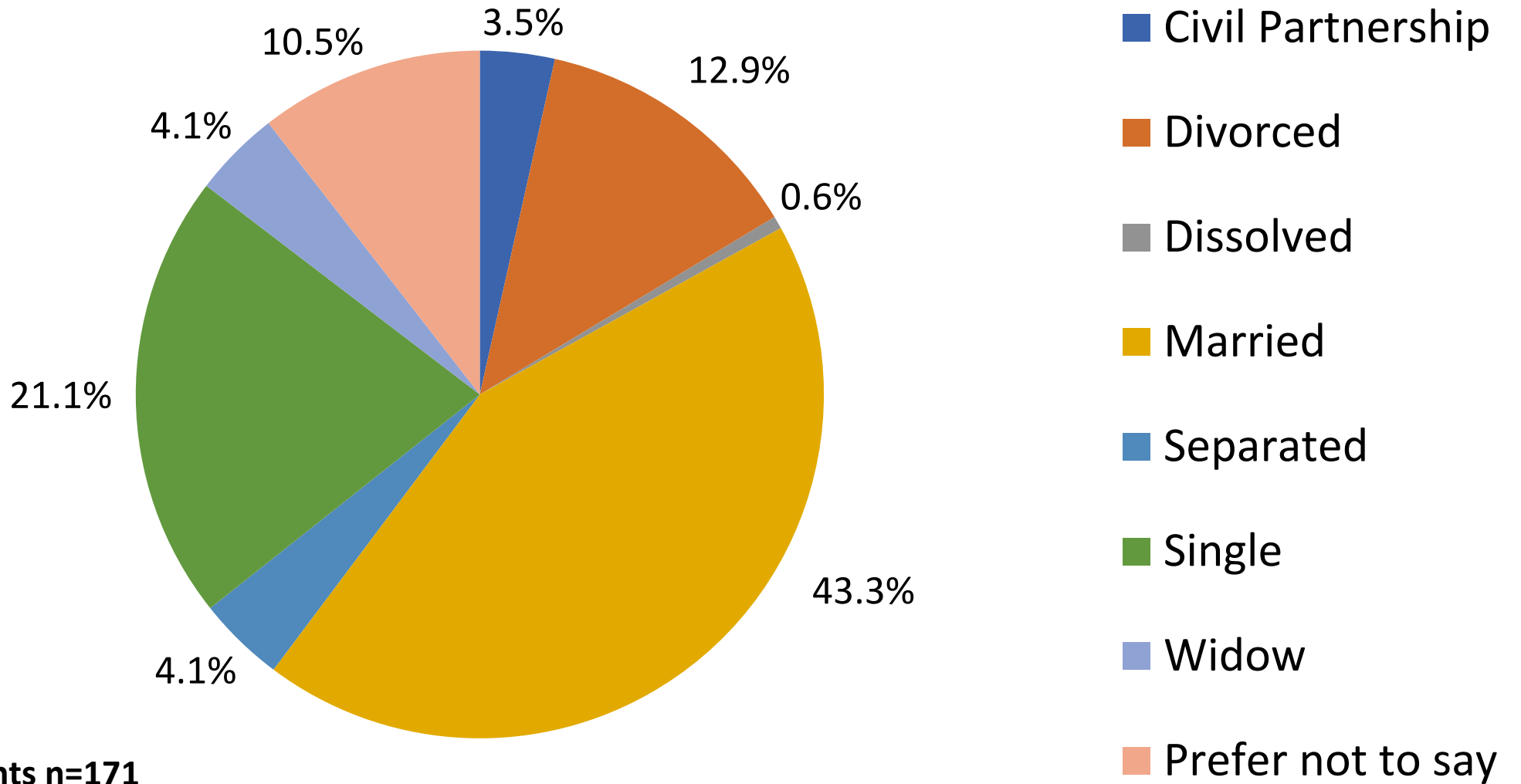
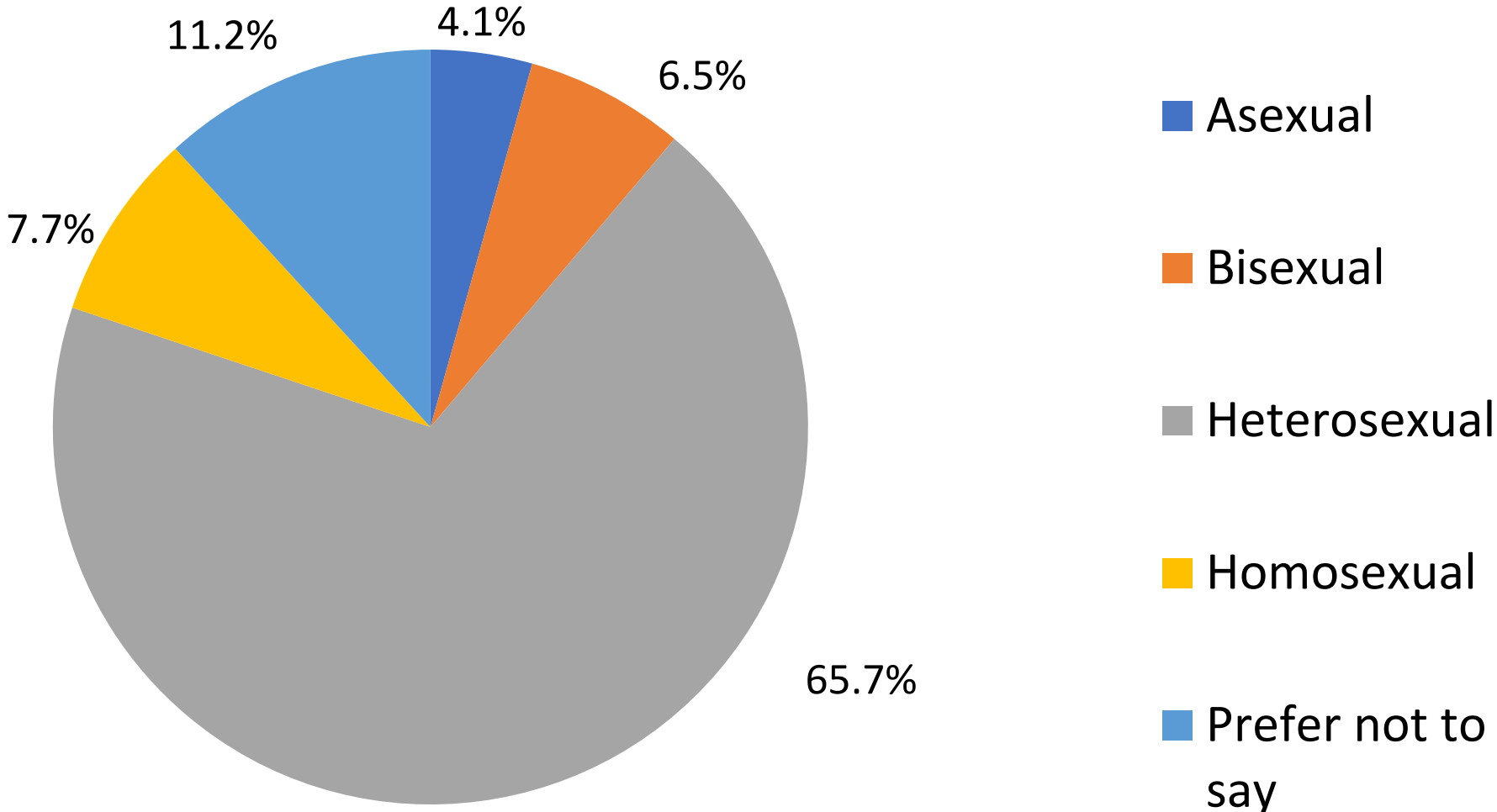


Chart 5: Marital Status of participants



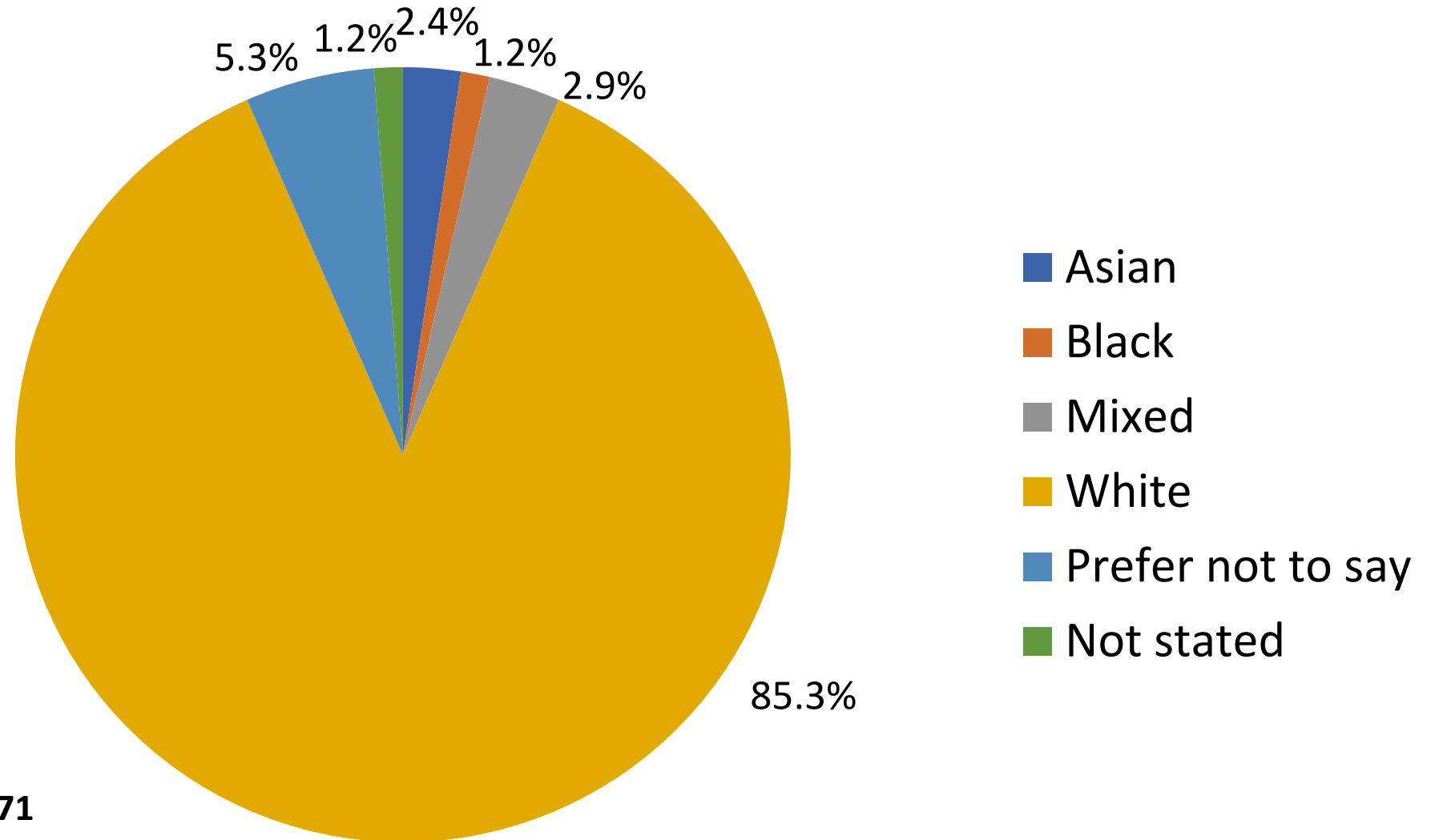
Respondents n=171

Chart 6: Sexual Orientation of participants



Respondents n=169

Chart 7: Ethnicity of participants



Respondents n=171

Chart 8: Religion of participants

