

SALISBURY SAFEGUARDING CULTURE SURVEY

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2025

Commentary

Commentary from someone who has experienced abuse within a church related setting:

It takes a great deal of strength and courage to engage with the institution in which abuse has occurred. Therefore, I would like to express particular thanks to those respondents who, like me, have suffered within the churches and/or Cathedral of Salisbury Diocese.

I am sure that all victims and survivors welcome this report and are grateful that the safety of children and vulnerable adults is now being taken so seriously. However, if the recommended improvements are not acted on then there is a real risk that we will be left retraumatised by the process and feeling once again that our voices are not being heard. So I would urge everyone who reads this report to play their part in making the church a safer place for all.

Beth

Commentary from Head of Safeguarding:

It is my vision that the church becomes known for being a place where all individuals including children, young people and vulnerable adults feel safe, respected and supported. Creating healthy cultures is an essential part of this, so I welcome this report which gives us valuable insights into the cultural health within the parishes and the cathedral in the Diocese of Salisbury.

Thank you to Sam Nunney who is the author behind the 5 National Safeguarding Standards and who designed, ran and analysed the survey results.

This report represents not only data but the collective voices of those who took part in the survey including people who have experienced abuse within a church setting and may consider themselves to be victims and/or survivors. I want to express my thanks for everyone who took part, but especially victims/survivors, for whom there may have been more of a personal toll in giving feedback to 'the church'. With the backdrop of victim/survivor voices not always having been heard, we wanted to pay particular attention here so have noted where the views of victims/survivors differed from those in other roles.

The survey itself was undertaken with the goal of understanding the strengths and areas for growth in the health of the cultures that make up our parishes and Cathedral. The results will serve as a roadmap for leaders and individuals across the diocese to foster safer, more supportive environments.

So what next??

It is my hope that this report acts as a catalyst for conversations and commitments. Please share it, please talk about it. Discuss it in Chapter meetings and with your PCC's and Leadership Teams. Put it as an agenda item in Deanery Synod, have a meeting with your Parish Safeguarding Officer. Then convert the conversations and reflections into actionable steps. Our collective response requires us not only to talk about how we are going to respond, but to follow through with actions towards safer environments.

Suzy Futcher (Head of Safeguarding)

Executive Summary

The Salisbury Safeguarding Culture Survey received completed data from 539 participants across Salisbury and the Channel Islands. Overall, the survey presented a positive picture of safeguarding culture across the diocese and cathedral.

The average score for all questions was approximately 4.00 out of 5 across most locations, with the Channel Islands scoring significantly higher at 4.40 out of 5.

Regarding the National Safeguarding Standards, most Standards received an average score of 4.00, except for Recognising, Assessing, and Managing Risk, which also achieved a notably higher score of 4.40 out of 5.

Role Differences

Across both the Diocese and the Cathedral, a noticeable difference was observed in the responses of individuals who had experienced abuse in a church setting compared to all other roles. This group provided significantly lower average scores across all five Standards.

Diocese of Salisbury

The survey highlighted several areas of strength, supported by both data and comments. The strongest responses were:

- I know who to report safeguarding concerns to: 96% agree, 3% not sure, 1% disagree.

- I am confident that I know what to do if I was concerned about someone's behaviour: 97% agree, 2% not sure, 1% disagree.

Key themes of strength included: **Commitment to Safeguarding; Training and Awareness; Supportive and Inclusive Environment.**

Areas for improvement were generally associated with a higher percentage of "not sure" responses. The weakest responses were:

- I am aware that victims and survivors have contributed to safeguarding practice: 31% agree, 59% not sure, 10% disagree.
- People are aware of their impact on others: 58% agree, 33% not sure, 9% disagree.

Key themes for improvement included: **Training Accessibility; Communication and Involvement; Leadership and Organisational Culture.**

Salisbury Cathedral

The Cathedral's individual question data revealed similar areas of strength and weakness to those identified in the diocese.

The strongest responses were:

- Safeguarding is recognised as important: 93% agree, 2% not sure, 5% disagree.
- I know who to report safeguarding concerns to: 92% agree, 5% not sure, 3% disagree.

Key themes of strength included: **Supportive and Inclusive Atmosphere; Clear and Structured Safeguarding Processes; Valued Volunteers.**

The weakest responses were:

- I am aware that victims and survivors have contributed to safeguarding practice: 32% agree, 63% not sure, 5% disagree.
- People are aware of their impact on others: 54% agree, 35% not sure, 11% disagree.

Key themes for improvement included: **Transparency and Accessibility in Safeguarding Processes; Professional Oversight; Cultural Issues Around Behaviour and Accountability.**

Introduction and Methodology

This online survey was designed by Dr. Samuel Nunney in collaboration with the Diocese of Salisbury Safeguarding Team and was distributed during November and December 2024. A total of 545 participants responded, however, six participants did not consent to their data being processed. Consequently, this report is based on 539 responses. The median completion time for the survey was approximately six minutes.

The survey was structured around the five National Safeguarding Standards and comprised five sections:

- Culture, Leadership, and Capacity
- Prevention
- Recognising, Assessing, and Managing Risk
- Victims and Survivors
- Learning, Supervision, and Support

Each Standard will include an aggregated score, calculated by averaging the responses to all questions within that Standard (scored on a scale where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 3 = Not Sure, and 5 = Strongly Agree). Additionally, individual question responses are displayed, with 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Disagree' combined, as well as 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree'. It should be noted that due to rounding, the total percentages in this report may not always sum to exactly 100%. Some questions in the data tables have been slightly shortened to enhance data visualization.

For certain negatively framed questions (e.g., "I feel that I would be anxious or fearful about raising a concern"), reverse-coding has been applied to facilitate analysis. These questions are marked with an asterisk (*).

The average scores for each safeguarding standard, segmented by location and role (where applicable are divided into church/cathedral roles and members of the congregation), can be found in the Data Table section at the end of this report.

Open-ended responses to questions about strengths and areas for improvement regarding diocesan and cathedral culture were thematically analysed. The analysis identified the three most common themes, which are highlighted in this report, supported by illustrative quotes.

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Response Rates

By Area

Archdeaconry and Deanery	Total
Archdeaconry of Wilts	47
Bradford	18
Calne	7
Devizes	10
Malbrough	6
Pewsey	6
Archdeaconry of Sarum	115
Alderbury	19
Chalke	17
Heytesbury	8
Salisbury	63
Stonehenge	8
Archdeaconry of Dorset	140
Milton and Blandford	12
Poole	80
Purbeck	28
Wimborne	20
Archdeaconry of Sherborne	96
Blackmore Vale	6
Dorchester	8
Lyme Bay	8
Sherborne	15
Weymouth and Portland	59
Channel Islands	44
Guernsey	29
Jersey	15
Salisbury Cathedral	95
Other/Did Not Respond	2
Total	539

By Primary Role

Participants were asked to label their primary role. The numbers for each of these are as follows.

Role	Total
Clergy	75
Licenced Lay Ministers and Lay Pastoral Assistants	49
PCC Member	64
Parish Safeguarding Officer (or Equivalent)	47
Other Church Role	158
Someone who has experienced abuse/trauma in a church-related setting	14
Congregation Member	132
Total	539

Overall Survey Scores

The average scores across all five Standards in Salisbury indicate a generally positive response. The **Average Score Map** below highlights consistently high scores across all locations.

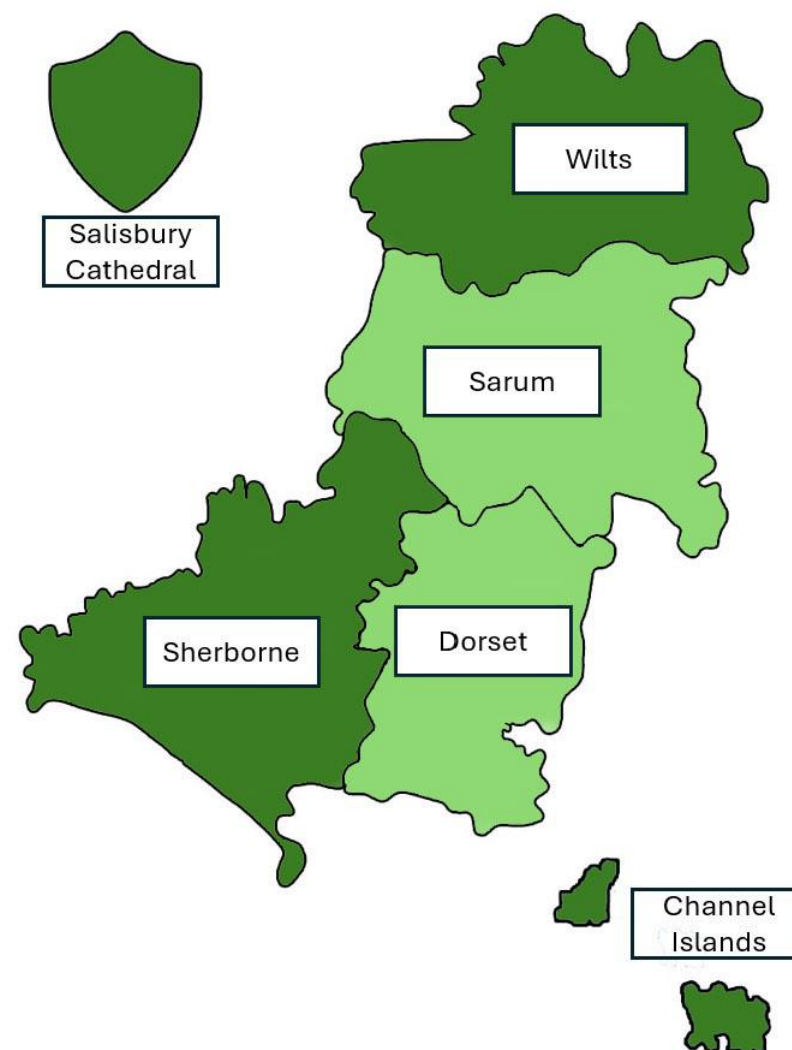
While there are some variations between locations, Dorset and Sarum achieved total average scores slightly below 4.00, whereas Wilts, Sherborne, and Salisbury Cathedral recorded scores slightly above 4.00. Notably, the Channel Islands had significantly higher scores than all other locations across all Standards, with a total average score of 4.40.

In terms of individual Standards, **Recognising, Assessing, and Managing Risk** emerged as a particular strength for Salisbury, achieving an average score significantly higher than the other Standards.

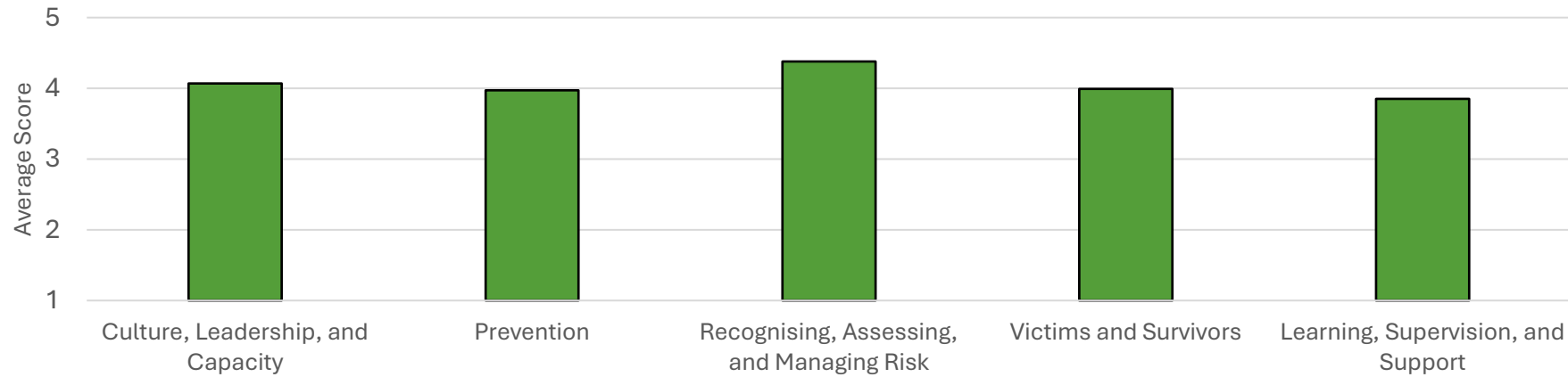
Average Standards Scores:

- Culture, Leadership, and Capacity: **4.10**
- Prevention: **4.03**
- Recognising, Assessing, and Managing Risk: **4.40**
- Victims and Survivors: **4.02**
- Learning, Supervision, and Support: **3.91**

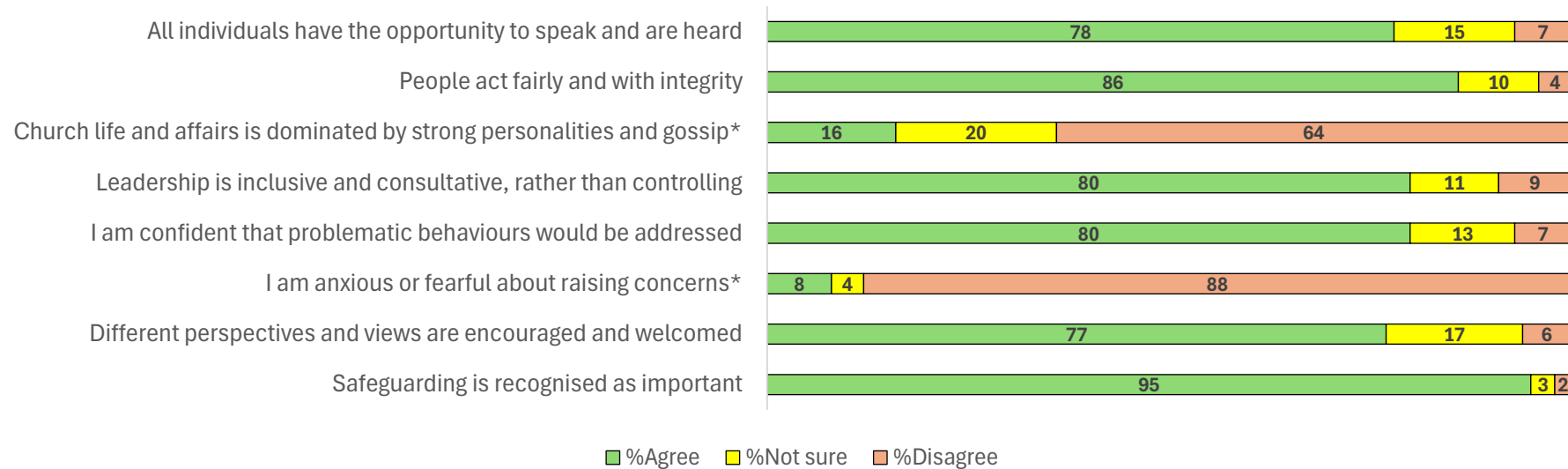
	4.51-5.00
	4.01-4.50
	3.51-4.00
	3.01-3.50
	2.51-3.00
	2.01-2.50
	1.51-2.00
	1.00-1.50



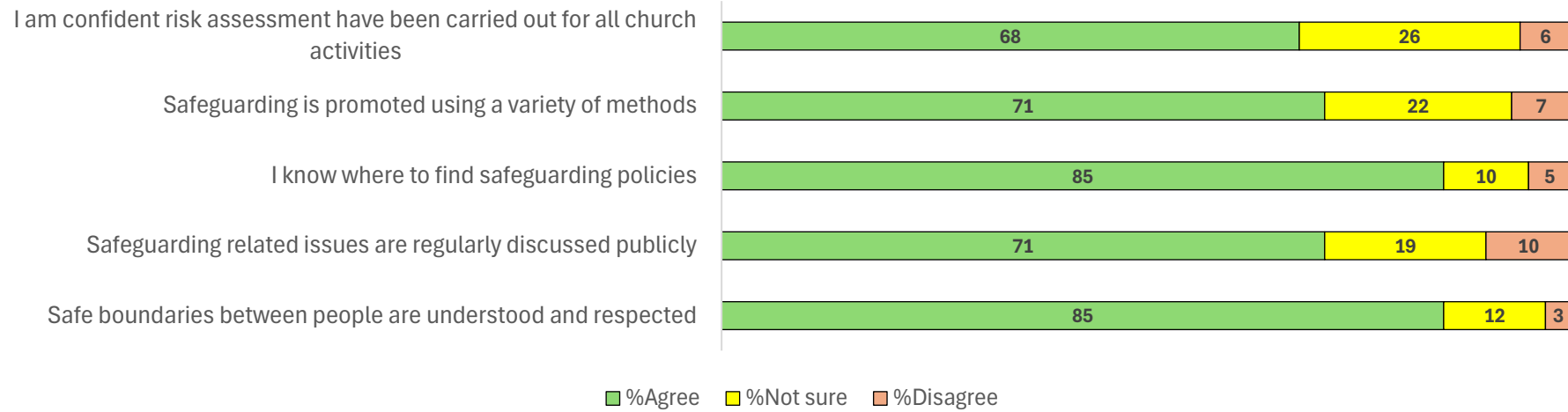
Diocese of Salisbury



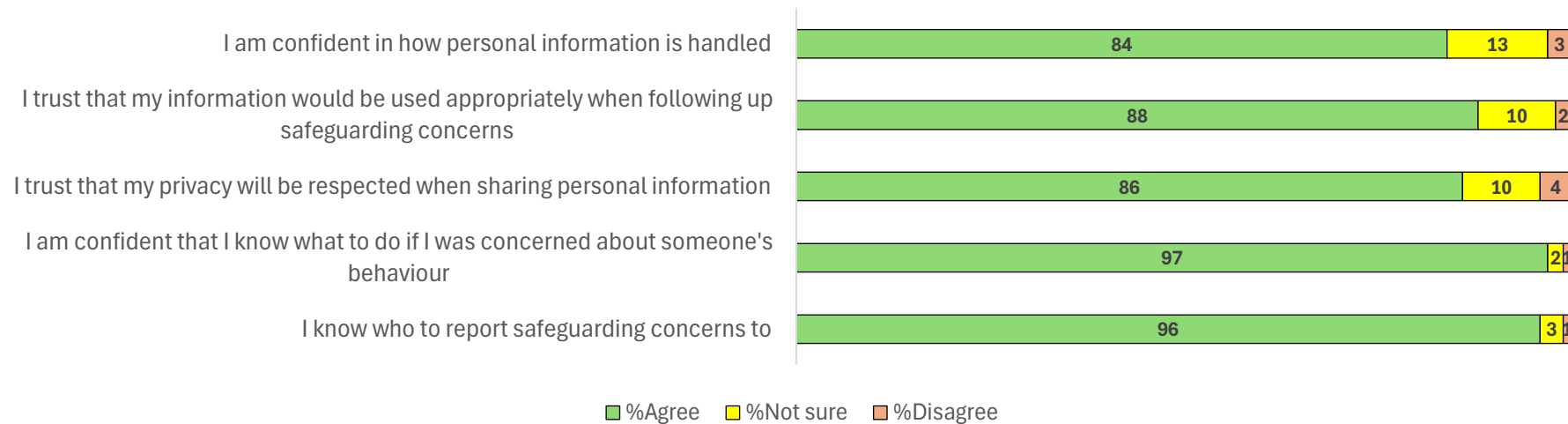
Culture, Leadership, Capacity



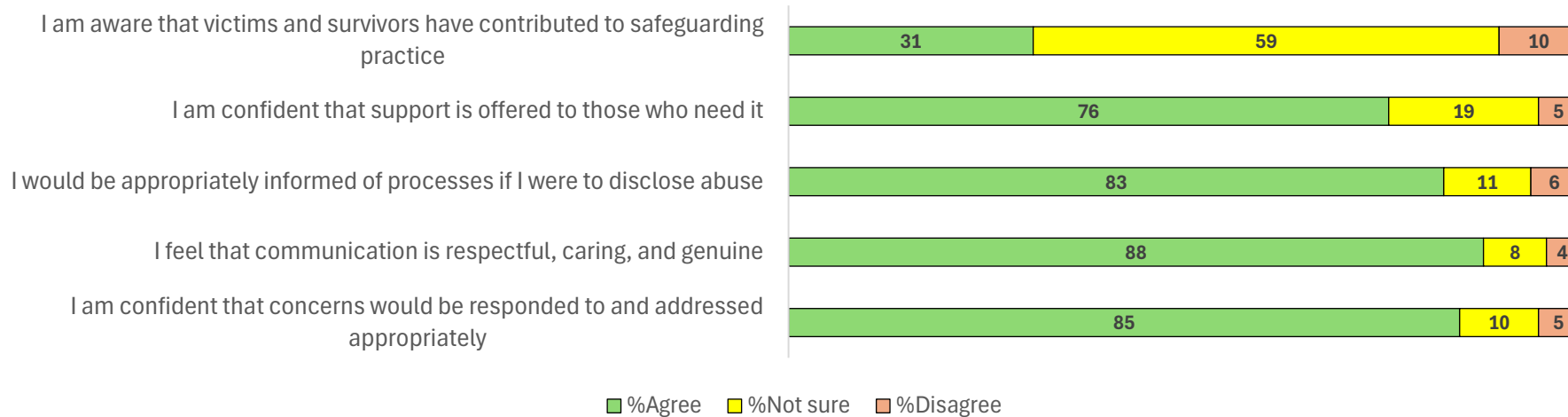
Prevention



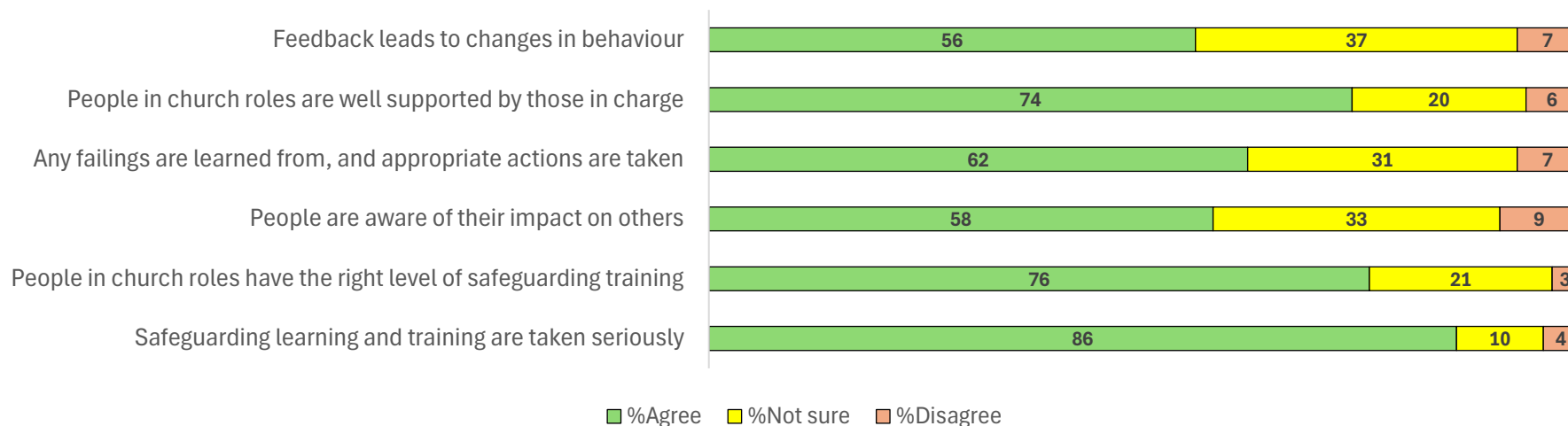
Recognising, Assessing, and Managing Risk



Victims and Survivors



Learning, Supervision, and Support



Strengths and Improvements

Strengths

Commitment to Safeguarding: A strong commitment to safeguarding is evident across the church community, with many prioritising its importance. Safeguarding is woven into church life through regular discussions, adherence to policies, and visible actions. Church leaders' model safeguarding practices, and the commitment is reflected in ongoing efforts to keep safeguarding at the forefront, ensuring a safe and supportive environment for all participants.

"Safeguarding is always a top priority in our church, and we make sure to discuss it at every meeting. Our leadership sets the example and keeps it visible to everyone."

"Our clergy have been very open and clear about safeguarding; it is an ongoing focus in our parish life."

Training and Awareness: Safeguarding training is seen as a critical element of church life, not only as a procedural necessity, but also as an opportunity to reflect on cultural attitudes and behaviours. Ongoing training and awareness-building help embed safeguarding as a core value. Regular updates ensure that all church members, from leaders to volunteers, remain informed, fostering a proactive and holistic approach to safeguarding within the community.

"We are moving from seeing safeguarding training as just a requirement to seeing it as part of the church's culture. It's about how we interact and protect one another."

"Regular updates and discussions help us all keep safeguarding at the forefront of our minds, ensuring that everyone feels responsible for it."

Supportive and Inclusive Environment: Churches are dedicated to creating supportive, welcoming, and inclusive environments, where everyone feels valued and safe. Safeguarding is not just about policies but is integrated into fostering relationships and a strong sense of community. This inclusive atmosphere nurtures a collective responsibility for safeguarding, ensuring that individuals feel protected and supported, reinforcing the broader safeguarding culture.

"Our church fosters an inclusive environment where everyone, regardless of background, feels safe and supported."

"It's vital that our church community is a place where people can come for help, knowing they will be treated with compassion and respect."

Improvements

Training Accessibility: While safeguarding training is essential, there are barriers to making it accessible to all. Issues like technological challenges for those not IT-literate and the complexity of training content need addressing. Simplifying training for groups such as PCC members and offering more accessible options would enhance engagement. Tailored, updated training could ensure all members are effectively trained, with ongoing accessibility improving overall impact.

"Some of our volunteers are not IT-literate, and this makes accessing online safeguarding training difficult. We need to offer more in-person options."

"At the PCC level, the training needs to be simpler and more targeted, especially around how to respond to disclosures."

Communication and Involvement: A recurring theme is the need for improved communication around safeguarding matters. Many church members feel that safeguarding issues are not discussed openly enough, leading to a lack of awareness. Calls for more visible safeguarding information, clearer communication channels, and open discussions reflect a desire for increased transparency and involvement, ensuring that safeguarding is a shared responsibility and understood by all.

"There needs to be more openness about safeguarding within our church. We don't talk about it enough, and many people don't know where to find information."

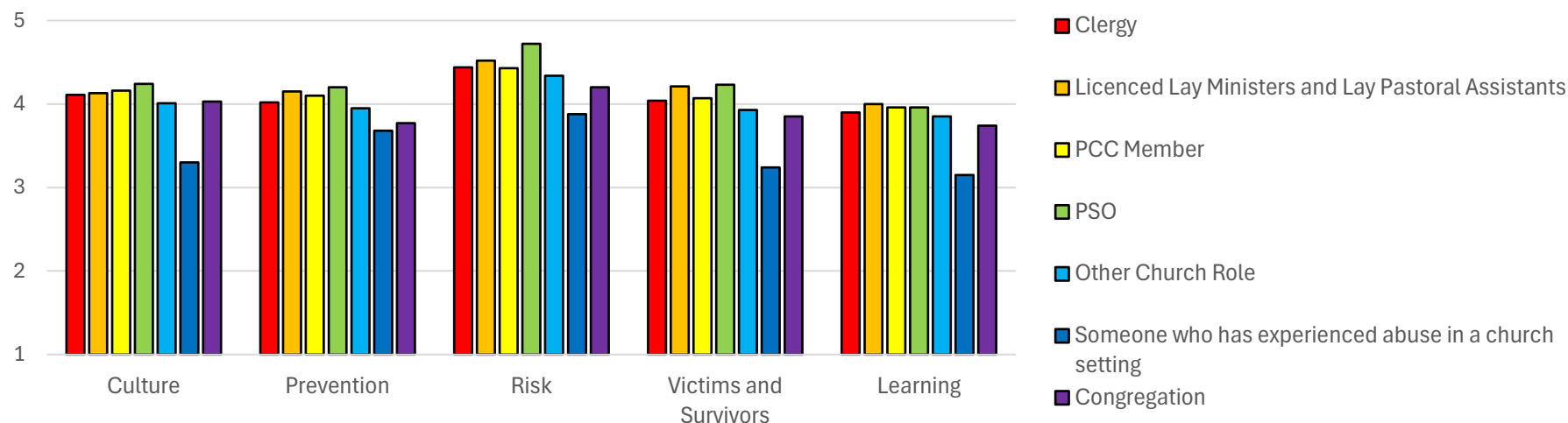
"We need to ensure that the entire congregation is involved in safeguarding discussions. It shouldn't just be something that's addressed in leadership meetings."

Leadership and Organisational Culture: There are concerns about inconsistent safeguarding practices at higher levels, despite strong commitment at the grassroots. Generational gaps, lack of uniform leadership commitment, and insufficient support for safeguarding tasks contribute to these issues. Strengthening leadership's role in safeguarding, addressing these gaps, and fostering consistent practices across all levels of the church will help create a more unified and accountable safeguarding culture.

"While safeguarding is taken seriously at the grassroots level, there is inconsistency in how it is treated at the leadership level. We need more commitment across all areas."

"Safeguarding has become a difficult task made more complicated by the failures of those at high level in the church."

Role Differences



The role analysis shows us that there is a significant difference in experience between someone who has experienced abuse in a church setting and all other roles. All other roles have given a higher average score across all five Standard areas.

Key Differences Include (those who have experienced abuse in a church setting vs. all other roles; agreement to the nearest 5%):

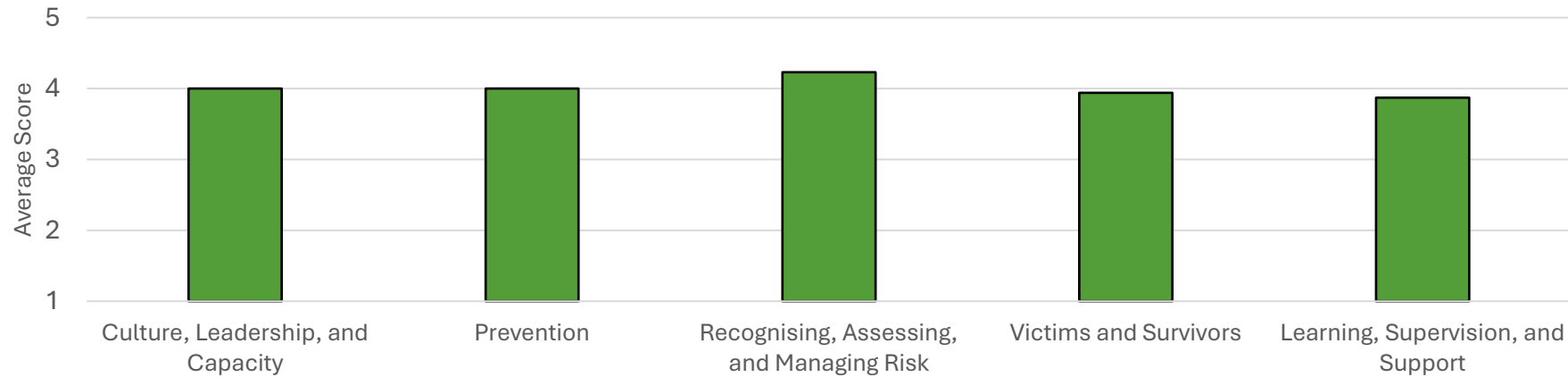
- “I am anxious or fearful about raising concerns”: 40% agreement vs. 5% agreement
- “Safeguarding issues are regularly discussed publicly”: 40% agreement vs. 70% agreement
- “I trust that my privacy will be respected when sharing personal information”: 50% agreement vs. 85% agreement
- “I feel that communication is respectful, caring, and genuine”: 50% agreement vs. 90% agreement
- “People are aware of their impact on others”: 10% vs. 60% agreement

Regarding the Risk Standard, there is a difference approaching significance for PSO’s, where they have given a higher average score than all other roles.

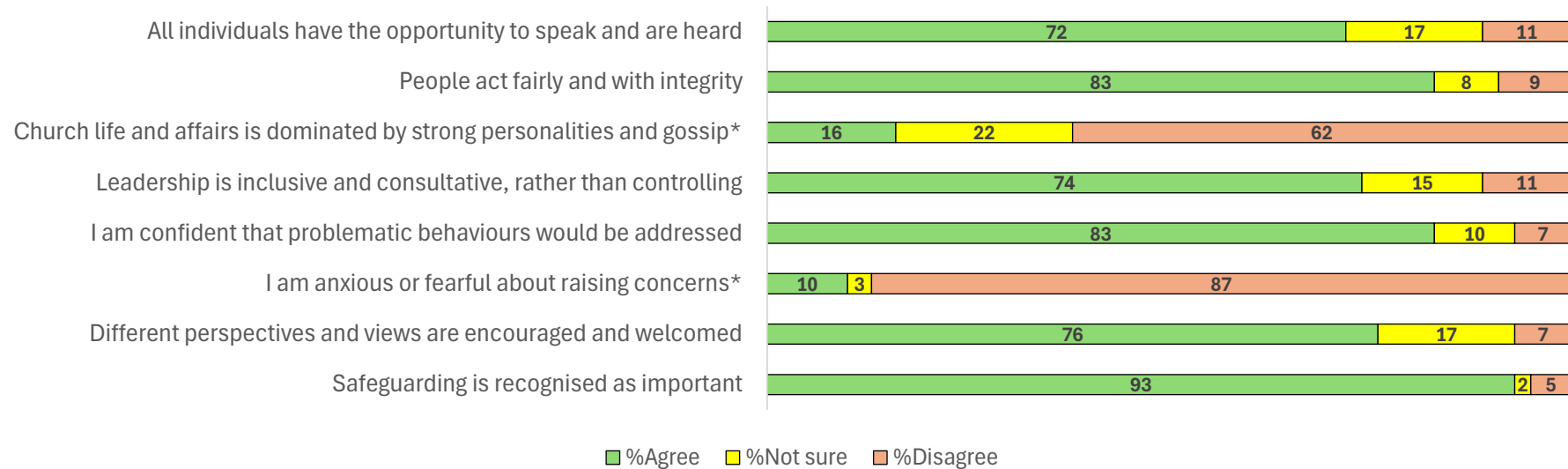
Key Differences Include (PSOs vs. all other roles; agreement to the nearest 5%):

- “I trust that my privacy will be respected when sharing personal information”: 95% agreement vs. 85% agreement.

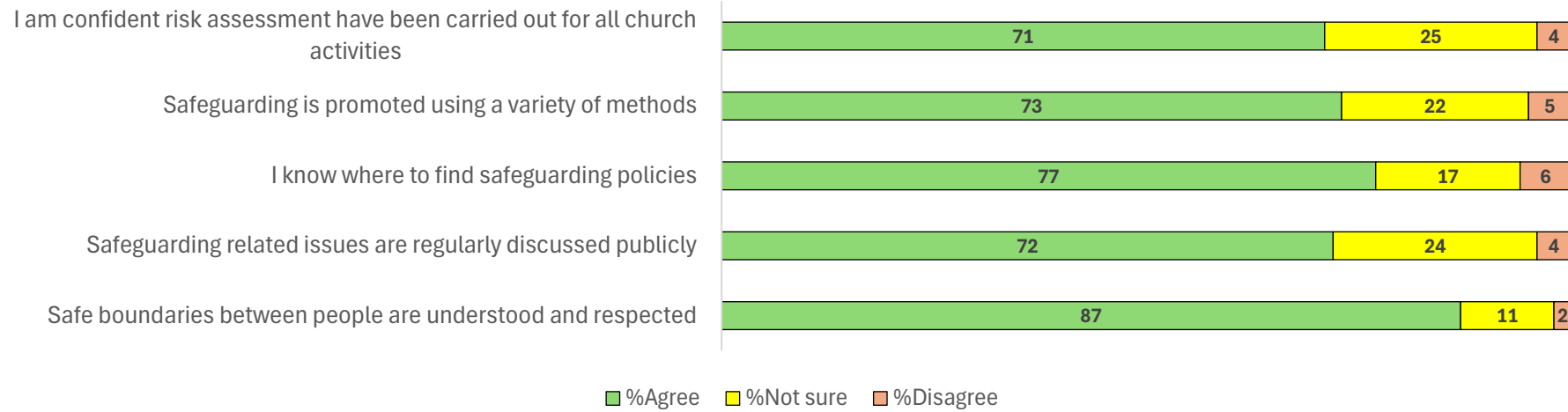
Salisbury Cathedral



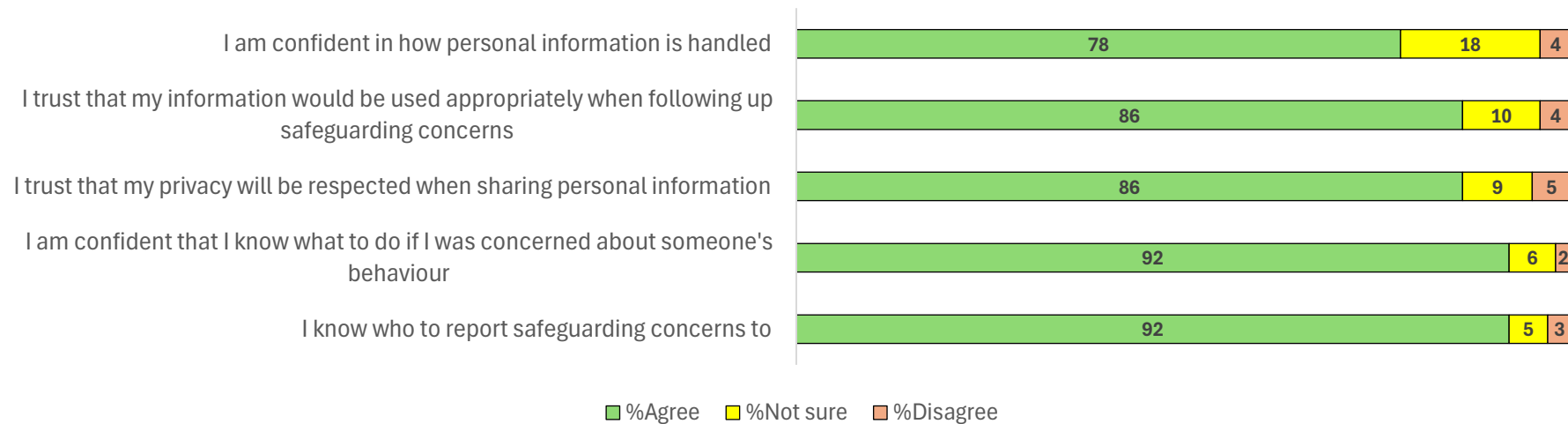
Culture, Leadership, Capacity



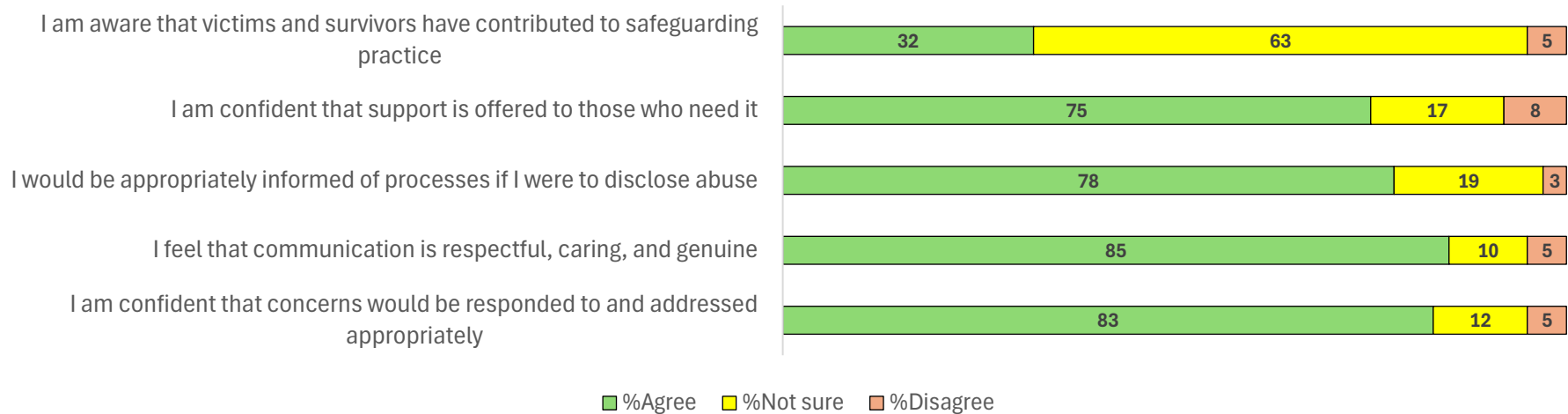
Prevention



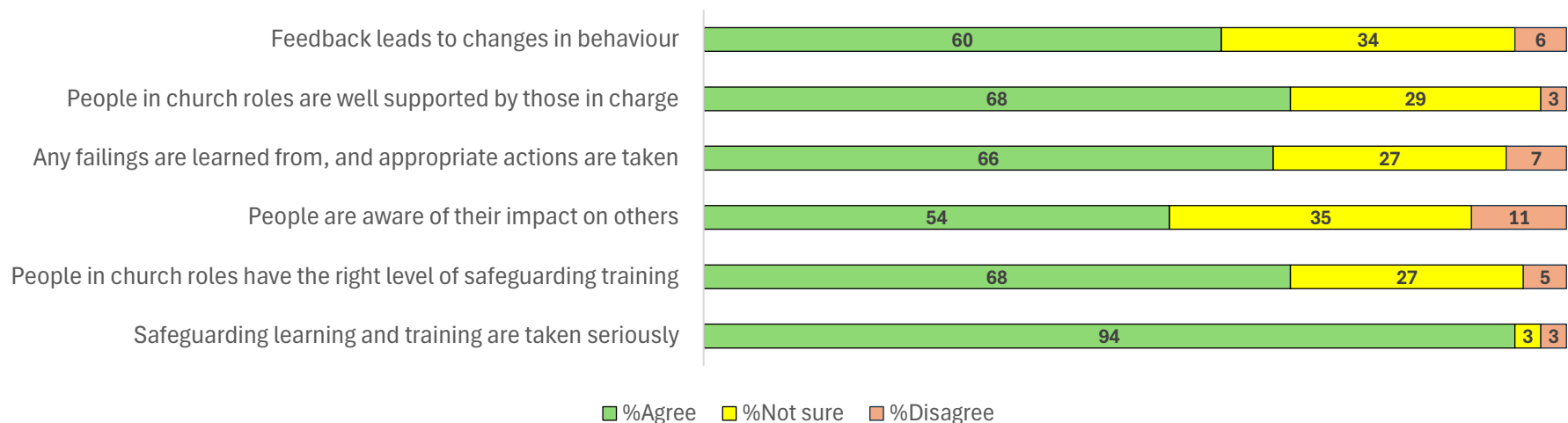
Recognising, Assessing, and Managing Risk



Victims and Survivors



Learning, Supervision, and Support



Strengths and Improvements

Strengths

Supportive and Inclusive Atmosphere: The cathedral fosters a welcoming environment where both volunteers and visitors feel included and valued. Many quotes emphasized the friendly, caring culture that allows individuals from both religious and secular backgrounds to feel comfortable. Volunteers and the congregation are seen looking out for each other, contributing to a strong sense of community.

"The friendly, supportive culture is immediately clear in the cathedral. The atmosphere within the building is welcoming and full of variety."

"I have found the Cathedral a gentle and awe-inspiring place to be and feel completely safe, valued and welcomed when volunteering, worshipping, or sitting in quiet prayer."

Clear and Structured Safeguarding Processes: Safeguarding is treated with priority, and the processes are described as well-organised and accessible. Volunteers feel supported with clear guidance and regular updates on safeguarding practices. The ability to approach the Safeguarding Lead and receive help quickly is a key strength, de-mystifying complex safeguarding issues for staff and volunteers alike.

"When I had a safeguarding query, I emailed our Safeguarding Lead to ask for a meeting to discuss the situation. We met quickly, I was listened to, and together we were able to seek further advice and ascertain the appropriate response."

"Every member of my team is fully aware of safeguarding requirements and the Cathedral Visitor Services Department keeps us up to date with any legislative amendments or recommended practices."

Valued Volunteers: The cathedral offers a professional and kind induction for volunteers, ensuring that they are well-prepared for their roles. Volunteers feel that their contributions are valued, and there is a commitment to ensuring that they are informed and up to date with any legislative changes or safeguarding updates.

"Induction of volunteers is kind and clearly structured in a professional manner."

"The cathedral is a warm, welcoming and friendly environment in which we feel included and valued by the leaders."

Improvements

Transparency and Accessibility in Safeguarding Processes: A recurring theme is the desire for clearer pathways to report safeguarding concerns, particularly in situations where volunteers or staff feel that internal structures may not be sufficient. Some suggested the option to bypass internal processes and directly report concerns to external authorities like social services, ensuring greater accountability and transparency.

"There should be an option for staff/volunteers to bypass the internal structures and go straight to social services, if they feel that a safeguarding lead is not taking adequate action or is complicit in abuse."

"I think more could be done to ensure that the names, faces and characters of the Safeguarding Reps are known across the Cathedral to promote visibility and accessibility."

Professional Oversight: There is a strong call for changes to the safeguarding system. This includes appointing a cathedral safeguarding advisor and establishing an independent, paid chair of the safeguarding panel to ensure external perspectives and greater impartiality in handling safeguarding concerns. This would also help individuals raise issues without fear of retaliation from cathedral leadership.

"A safeguarding advisor and independent, paid chair of the safeguarding advisor panel. Someone to whom safeguarding concerns can be brought, and assurances that one's identity remains confidential from the cathedral leadership."

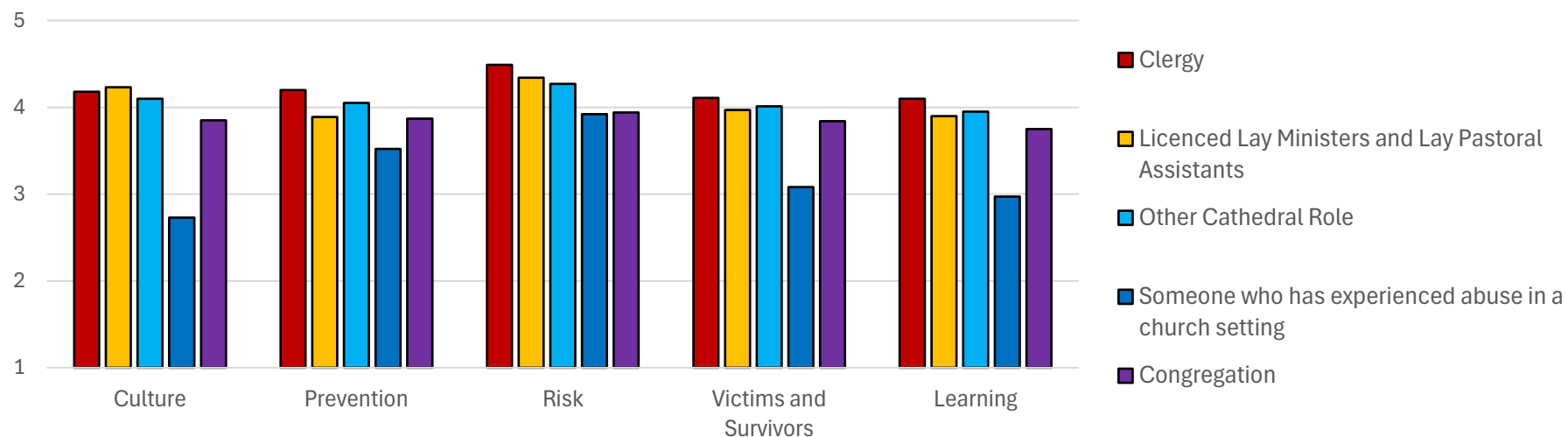
"The Safeguarding Lead role is currently held by a very senior position, which is a very busy role."

Cultural Issues Around Behavior and Accountability: Cultural challenges in addressing inappropriate behavior, especially from long-serving volunteers, were highlighted. It can be difficult for newer volunteers to challenge certain behavioural norms, particularly when remarks may be excused as part of an older generation's mannerisms. There is also concern that some clergy members are perceived as disconnected from the congregation, which affects their ability to advocate for or address safeguarding issues openly.

"If a long serving member of the volunteering team, well liked, were to speak in an inappropriate way, it would be very hard as a newer volunteer to voice doubt upon the individual's choices of words."

"Most people will make allowances for a variety of personalities within such a diverse venue as the cathedral, but there would be no harm in distilling guidance down to a phrase like 'Do not make personal remarks.'"

Role Differences



The role analysis shows us that there is a significant difference in experience between someone who has experienced abuse in a church setting and all other roles. All other roles have given a higher average score across all five Standard areas.

Key Differences Include (those who have experienced abuse in a church setting vs. all other roles; agreement to the nearest 5%):

- “I am anxious or fearful about raising concerns”: 60% agreement vs. 5% agreement
- “I know where to find safeguarding policies”: 60% agreement vs. 80% agreement
- “I trust that my information would be used appropriately when following-up safeguarding concerns”: 60% agreement vs. 90% agreement
- “I am confident that concerns would be responded to and addressed appropriately”: 40% agreement vs. 85% agreement
- “People are aware of their impact on others”: 0% agreement vs. 55% agreement

Data Tables

	Culture	Prevention	Risk	Victims and Survivors	Learning
Diocese of Salisbury	4.07	3.97	4.38	3.99	3.85
Archdeaconry of Wilts	4.14	4.09	4.43	4.03	3.94
<i>Parish Role</i>	4.18	4.15	4.46	4.08	3.97
<i>Congregation</i>	4.29	3.67	4.00	3.73	3.72
Archdeaconry of Sarum	3.97	3.93	4.29	3.93	3.81
<i>Parish Role</i>	3.93	3.95	4.33	3.93	3.80
<i>Congregation</i>	4.20	3.91	4.25	4.01	3.91
Archdeaconry of Dorset	4.05	3.90	4.30	3.95	3.78
<i>Parish Role</i>	4.15	4.01	4.42	4.06	3.90
<i>Congregation</i>	3.84	3.65	4.08	3.72	3.54
Archdeaconry of Sherborne	4.05	3.92	4.43	3.99	3.81
<i>Parish Role</i>	4.10	4.04	4.55	4.10	3.87
<i>Congregation</i>	4.01	3.70	4.21	3.80	3.72
Channel Islands	4.39	4.32	4.70	4.28	4.24
<i>Parish Role</i>	4.44	4.44	4.77	4.35	4.32
<i>Congregation</i>	4.29	4.06	4.56	4.11	4.07
Salisbury Cathedral	4.00	4.00	4.23	3.94	3.87
<i>Cathedral Role</i>	4.08	4.02	4.28	3.99	3.93
<i>Congregation</i>	3.85	3.87	3.94	3.84	3.75
Those that have experienced abuse in a church setting	3.21	3.74	3.99	3.30	3.19

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