

## BASW 2022 Annual Survey Nation Report: Wales

### **INTRODUCTION**

This report contains the results of the 2022 BASW Annual Survey for Wales.

### **HOW WE CONDUCTED THIS SURVEY**

The survey was conducted on-line through the BASW website. It opened on 8 December 2022 and closed on 9 January 2023. The survey was designed to allow social workers to reflect on their role and the profession during 2022 and is thus the 2022 BASW Annual Survey. Although hosted on the BASW website, it was open to non-member social workers to respond.

The survey used mostly closed questions. For some questions, respondents were able to select more than one response. Some questions included the option to include a free-text response to provide an alternative answer or expand upon the option chosen.

Some of the questions used Likert scale responses, which are commonly used in questionnaires. The Likert scale is used as a way of establishing respondents' attitudes on an issue as the scale indicates the extent to which respondents agree or disagree with a given statement. In this instance, an option to indicate that the statement did not apply to their situation was also included. Whilst Likert responses can include a 'neither agree nor disagree' option, this was not available for the questions here. This means that some responses cannot be directly compared with the same question last year where respondents were able to choose 'neither agree nor disagree'.

Respondents were asked whether they wished to be included in a free draw to receive a discount code for CPD training with BASW. Five discount codes were available. Five recipients were selected by random generator in January 2023.

As an on-line survey, there are caveats that should be noted. Respondents represent a self-selecting sample, being those social workers and students who felt motivated to respond. Consequently, this may result in bias if those with particular types of experiences were more likely to respond.

In total, the survey received 1602 responses from across the UK. Of these, 80 reported working in Wales. Due to the sample size, there is a greater risk that the findings are not representative. The statistics in this report are indicative in nature.

Descriptive statistics for Wales have been produced from the results. Not all respondents replied to all questions. Not all questions were asked of all respondents. Some questions applied only to those with specific professional arrangements e.g. agency social worker. Some questions created skips allowing respondents to bypass questions that were not relevant to their situation based upon their earlier responses. Due to the small sizes of sub-samples for agency, independent/self-employed and student-specific questions, these results have been excluded as they are not meaningful.

Compared with the 2021 BASW survey, more questions were made mandatory this year. This led to a change in the method of calculating the descriptive statistics as the number of those responding to a question would be the same as the sample size. This has created some discrepancies when comparing results for questions asked in both years, as 2021 descriptive statistics were calculated based upon the number of people responding to a question and were only calculated based on the overall sample in the BASW internal report. For some questions this creates the impression that percentages have dropped. However, if the calculation of last year's statistics as a proportion of the overall sample is used, the findings are much more closely aligned. The exception is where there has been a marked change in the number of respondents selecting an option. Some response options were also changed from last year in order to reflect new issues that have emerged on the agenda. More questions being mandatory this year has also impacted as respondents were unable to skip those questions.

For most questions, results have been calculated out of the full sample size, in this case 80. Exceptions are where the PowerBI software has created pie charts (see graphics file) where descriptive statistics are calculated out of the number of responses received. Where these were mandatory questions, the descriptive statistics are calculated from the full sample size.

In the results, percentages have been calculated to two decimal places. Percentages may not total 100% due to non-responses and the rounding process. Where respondents were allowed to select more than one option in response to a question, percentages will not total 100%.

A column containing equivalent percentages from the UK-wide survey is included for ease of reference. Where respondents were allowed to select more than option,

tables show the ranking of results in highest to lowest order, not the order in which options were presented in the survey. Where the ranking differs between the results for Wales and the results for the UK, options are ranked according to the most selected options for Wales.

## WORKFORCE PROFILE

This section contains the data from the introductory questions to the survey which collected information about the nation of the UK in which the respondents worked, their current (or most recent) professional role, current professional arrangement, current or most recent area of practice and whether they qualified in or outside the UK. For some of these questions, respondents had the opportunity to specify something other than one of the options listed. For the respondents who chose to do this, it was often because they either combined two different roles or because they had a role which covered more than one area of practice.

The largest number of respondents were working in England, with the third largest response rate from Wales. This mirrors the demographic composition of the UK, with Wales having the third largest population behind England. This unequal demographic distribution is reflected in both the social work population and the BASW membership.

A new question was introduced this year to ask where respondents qualified as social workers. Its introduction reflects the fact that growing numbers of social workers who are now working in one of the four UK nations qualified outside the UK. 5% of respondents in Wales reported having qualified outside the UK.

Table 1: *Which best describes your current (or most recent) professional role?*

Role	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Experienced	40	50%	51.19%
NQSW	16	20%	7.12%
Manager	10	12.5%	17.67%
Practice leader etc	8	10%	8.68%
Other	3	3.75%	10.42%
Educator/academic	3	3.75%	4.93%

Half of respondents reported being an experienced social worker. A higher proportion of respondents from Wales reported being Newly Qualified Social Workers, with a smaller proportion reporting being managers. Options were updated this year to reflect role titles currently being used in practice. The option to select student social worker was transferred to the question on current professional arrangement.

Table 2: Which best describes your current professional arrangement?

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Employee	62	77.5%	64.92%
Independent/self-employed	9	11.25%	14.11%
Agency	6	7.5%	9.68%
Retired	2	2.5%	3.31%
Student	1	1.25%	4.12%
Other	0	0	2.37%
Unemployed	0	0	1.5%

More than three-quarters of respondents in Wales report being employees, a higher proportion than for the UK as a whole. Proportionately fewer respondents reported as being either independent/self-employed or agency social workers in Wales. Almost all respondents who were agency social workers (144/155) and almost all student respondents (58/66) were based in England.

Table 3: Please specify your current (or most recent) area of practice

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Adults	42	52.5%	35.33%
Children and families	35	43.75%	54.74%
Mental health	16	20%	18.1%
Youth/young adults	6	7.5%	6.43%
Emergency duty	5	6.25%	4.18%
Other	5	6.25%	4.56%
Educator/academic	4	5%	8.24%
Justice	2	2.5%	2.37%
Immigration	1	1.25%	1.62%

Respondents were allowed to choose more than one option in response to this question, reflecting the overlapping nature of the issues faced by the people with whom social workers work and the multiple ways in which social workers divide their time. Consequently, percentages add up to more than 100. More than half of respondents in Wales reported working in 'Adults' whereas across the UK the largest proportion of respondents reported working in 'Children and Families'. Almost all social workers who reported working in 'Immigration' are based in England and not in the devolved nations. There are some differences between the rankings for Wales and the UK but this may result from percentages for the smaller Welsh sample size being more significantly impacted by each individual selection.

## **PUBLIC PERCEPTION**

Respondents were asked to rate the public's current perception of social workers on a scale from 1-10 where 1 is 'poor' and 10 is 'excellent'. The average score for Wales was **2.98**, slightly lower than the UK average of 3.3. This makes clear that there is ongoing concern within the profession about the negative public perception of what social work is and what social workers do.

## **POSITIVES AND CONCERNS**

The following three questions are all repeated from the 2021 survey with the intention of building up a longitudinal dataset identifying both key positive factors and core issues of concern and how these may change over time.

Table 4: *Of the following options, please choose 3 that have the most positive impact on your workplace experience:*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Peer support	53	66.25%	57.24%
Appropriate level of management and supervision	28	35%	32.27%
Effective multi-agency and/or partnership working	26	32.5%	29.65%
Training and learning opportunities	24	30%	22.28%
Space and time for reflective practice	12	15%	14.17%
Service development and improvement opportunities	9	11.25%	8.68%
Engage in rights-based practice	8	10%	8.86%
Trade union membership, knowledge, advice and support	8	10%	8.99%
Research and knowledge-sharing opportunities	6	7.5%	12.98%
Career progression	3	3.75%	5.18%
Effective workplace policy on anti-discriminatory practice	3	3.75%	5.93%
Sufficient resources for people I work with	2	2.5%	7.12%

Peer support is the most selected option by a clear margin. In the UK figures, it has increased markedly from last year and the proportion selecting this option is even higher in Wales. It is possible that this increase relates to the increasing return to sharing physical workspace over the last twelve months. Differences between the two rankings lower down may be related to the impact of the smaller sample size.

Table 5: *Of the following options, please choose 3 that you consider to be the biggest challenges to you in your workplace*

Option	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Demands of administrative tasks	43	53.75%	41.32%
Workload demand	37	46.25%	45.32%
Access to resources for people I work with	29	36.25%	30.77%
Adequacy of staffing levels	29	36.25%	34.89%
Inadequate reflective time, space and/or practice supervision	21	26.25%	19.04%
Management of change in organisation	10	12.5%	10.3%
Keeping up with professional development and/or mandatory training	9	11.25%	9.93%
Lack of progression	9	11.25%	10.11%
Inadequate managerial support	6	7.5%	15.17%
Bullying and/or harassment	4	5%	5.18%
Relationships with colleagues	4	5%	2.12%
Support and induction for NQSWs	4	5%	3.18%
Autonomy in my work	1	1.25%	2.87%
Discrimination	0	0	3.56%

For Wales, 'Demands of administrative tasks' was the most chosen option, whereas across the UK as a whole, it was the second most-chosen option behind 'Workload demand'. 'Access to resources for people I work with' and 'Adequacy of staffing levels" both come out equally for Wales, unlike the UK. 'Inadequate managerial support' comes out lower in Wales, but it is not clear how this might be affected by sample size. Again, changes in ranking at the lower end of the order may be a consequence of the sample size.



Table 6: *Of the following options, please choose 3 that you consider to be the biggest challenges for the social work profession now and in the immediate future*

Option	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK% (n =1602)
Failure to adequately fund social care	57	71.25%	68.35%
Recruitment & Retention	47	58.75%	54.18%
Not enough time to spend with people using services	34	42.5%	38.39%
Cuts to local services	31	38.75%	42.38%
Widening/deepening poverty	21	26.25%	23.66%
Cost of living crisis	16	20%	26.03%
Privatisation and profit-driven models in health and social care	16	20%	18.48%
Media/TV/news perception	5	6.25%	6.99%
Abuse or violence at work	4	5%	3.75%
Meeting the requirements of the regulators	4	5%	6.43%
Encouraging/promoting social worker activism and campaigning	2	2.5%	3.81%
Hybrid and/or home working	2	2.5%	4.99%
Poverty perception [sic]	1	1.25%	2.25%
Recruiting and encouraging social workers to be active Trade Union members	1	1.25%	1.87%
Communicating digitally with the people I work with	0	0	2.12%

More than seven-tenths of respondents in Wales (71.25%) chose the ‘failure to adequately fund social care’ as one of the three biggest challenges to the social work profession, a larger proportion than for the UK as a whole. This was followed by recruitment and retention which was chosen by almost three-fifths of respondents (58.75%). The next two options were reversed in order compared with the UK as a whole with ‘not enough time to spend with people using services’ ranking above ‘cuts to local services’. The option on ‘cost of living crisis’ (20%) was a new option introduced to capture economic developments in 2022. Again there are some differences in ranking order between Wales and the UK amongst the least selected options.

## **AGENCY, INDEPENDENT/SELF-EMPLOYED AND STUDENT SOCIAL WORKERS**

Due to the small numbers, it was not possible to produce descriptive statistics for the responses to the targeted questions for these sub-samples. In all cases, there were too few responses for the results to be meaningful. The numbers can be seen in the graphics file that accompanies this report.

## **WORKLOAD**

Building upon the 2021 survey, respondents were once again asked about their workload and whether or not they worked additional hours.

Table 7: *Are you able to complete all your work within your contracted hours?*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 77) <sup>1</sup>	UK % (n = 1459)
No	61	79.22%	74.91%
Yes	16	20.78%	25.09%

Due to the small sample size, the differences between the descriptive statistics for Wales and those for the UK should be treated with some caution.

Table 8: *“I feel able to manage my current workload”*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Strongly Agree	6	7.5%	7.49%
Agree	24	30%	28.65%
Disagree	30	37.5%	32.9%
Strongly Disagree	16	20%	19.29%
Not Applicable		1.25%	2%

Well over half of respondents in Wales (57.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that they felt able to manage their current workload. Over one-third (37.5%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. The 2022 survey removed the option to ‘neither agree nor disagree’, encouraging respondents to choose whether to agree or disagree. Overall, a tendency to choose the negative response is demonstrated here. These figures have been calculated out of the overall sample size to allow comparison. However, only 77 respondents from Wales completed this question.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the pie chart format in the graphics, these descriptive statistics are calculated out of the number of respondents to the question, not the overall sample size, to allow comparability with the UK figures. This was not a mandatory question. This also applies to Figures 9, 16 and 23.

Table 9: *In an average week, do you work any additional hours to complete your work?*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 68)	UK % (n = 1233)
Yes, between 1 and 5 hours per week	31	45.59%	34.39%
Yes, between 5 and 10 hours per week	16	23.53%	27.58%
Yes, over 15 hours per week	9	13.24%	10.87%
No, I do not work any additional hours	5	7.35%	8.94%
Yes, between 10 and 15 hours per week	4	5.88%	12.57%
Yes, up to 1 hour per week	3	4.41%	5.76%

There are differences here between the proportions for Wales and for the UK. However, the figures should be treated with caution due to the small sample size.

Table10: *Are you paid overtime for the additional hours you work?*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 68)	UK % (n = 1233)
No, I am not paid overtime for any of the additional hours	59	86.76%	90.27%
Yes, I am paid for all of the additional hours I work	5	5.88%%	3.49%
Yes, I am paid overtime for some of the additional hours	4	7.35%	6.24%

The small sample size means that these calculations are indicative in nature for Wales.

## **COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS**

With increasing rates of poverty being experienced across the UK in 2022, and a growing squeeze on the income of families and individuals as a consequence of the rising cost of living, the 2022 survey introduced a new section on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. Respondents were asked to decide whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements (Likert scale responses).

Table 11: *The number of people I work with has increased as the cost of living has increased*

	Wales	Wales % (n=80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Strongly agree	19	23.75%	22.66%
Agree	24	30%	27.22%
Disagree	19	23.75%	20.72%
Strongly disagree	2	2.5%	3.25%
Not applicable	13	16.25%	17.23%

Over half of respondents in Wales (53.75%) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, higher than the proportion for the UK overall, which was just over one-half of respondents. One-quarter of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed (26.25%).

Figure 12: *The cost-of-living crisis has driven people I work with into deeper poverty*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Strongly agree	41	51.25%	39.08%
Agree	25	31.25%	36.7%
Disagree	4	5%	5.24%
Strongly disagree	1	1.25%	1.5%
Not applicable	6	7.5%	8.55%

The survey also asked whether, in the experience of respondents, the people they worked with were being driven deeper into poverty as a consequence of the cost-of-living crisis. This produced a striking result, with over four-fifths of respondents in Wales (82.5%) agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. Unusually for this type of question, more respondents were in strong agreement than in agreement. Only 6.25% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Table 13: *The cost-of-living crisis has brought about additional problems for the people I work with*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Strongly agree	43	53.75%	42.01%
Agree	25	31.25%	37.08%
Disagree	2	2.5%	3.87%
Strongly disagree	0	0	1.44%
Not applicable	7	8.75%	6.68%

Respondents were asked whether the cost-of-living crisis was bringing about additional problems for the people with whom they work. Again, the response was overwhelmingly in agreement with the statement, and again, more people strongly agreed than agreed. Over four-fifths (85%) agreed or strongly agreed, with only 2.5% disagreeing.

Table 14: *I work with more people living in poverty now than before the cost-of-living crisis*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Strongly agree	36	45%	33.65%
Agree	25	31.25%	35.02%
Disagree	6	7.5%	9.93%
Strongly disagree	1	1.25%	1.5%
Not applicable	9	11.25%	10.99%

When asked whether or not they agreed with the statement that they were working with more people living in poverty now than had been the case before the cost-of-living crisis, more than three-quarters of respondents (76.25%) agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case. Less than one-tenth (8.75%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that although just under half reported an increase in the number of people with whom they are working, a majority of respondents have found that the situation of these families and individuals is getting worse.

Table 15: *I am supporting more people with my own resources as the cost of living has increased.*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Strongly agree	13	16.25%	12.05%
Agree	24	30%	20.72%
Disagree	19	23.75%	29.53%
Strongly disagree	8	10%	10.24%
Not applicable	13	16.25%	18.54%

Finally, respondents were asked whether they were supporting more people with their own resources as the cost of living has increased, a trend that can also be seen with other professions such as teachers in the shared concern for those with whom they work. In Wales, unlike for the UK as a whole, more people agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (46.25%) than disagreed or strongly disagreed (33.75%).

## **CURRENT ROLE AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Building on work in last year's survey, the 2022 survey asked respondents about their current role and associated opportunities for both career and professional development.

Table 16: *Are you currently working at a higher pay band or grade than when you first started?*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 68)	UK % (n = 1233)
No	19	27.94%	79.48%
Yes	49	72.06%	20.52%

When asked whether they were now working in a higher pay band or grade than when they joined the profession, more than seven-tenths (72.06%) of those who responded to this question in Wales reported that they were. This is lower than across the UK as a whole. However, a greater proportion of Welsh respondents reported being Newly Qualified Social Workers and they are likely to figure in those who answered 'No'. The small sample size means this statistics should be treated with caution.

Table 17: *"I am happy in the social work profession"*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Strongly agree	13	16.25%	18.91%
Agree	31	38.75%	40.26%
Disagree	25	31.25%	23.41%
Strongly disagree	8	10%	7.8%
Not applicable	0	0	0.69%

In a question repeated from last year, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement that they were happy in the social work profession. More than half (55%) reported that they agreed or strongly agreed. Two-fifths disagreed or strongly disagreed (41.25%). This year, the 'neither agree nor disagree' response was removed and the proportion of those disagreeing or strongly disagreeing has increased. This suggests that when asked to decide, respondents may have tended to take a more negative view of the profession.



Table 18: *“I am happy in my current role”*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Strongly agree	14	17.5%	19.23%
Agree	38	47.5%	42.57%
Disagree	22	27.5%	20.54%
Strongly disagree	3	3.75%	7.62%
Not applicable	0	0	1.12%

Another repeated question looked at whether respondents agreed or disagreed that they were happy in their current role. Again the ‘neither agree nor disagree’ option has been removed in this year’s survey. Almost two-thirds of respondents (65%) agreed or strongly agreed that they were happy in their current role. However, more than three-tenths (31.25%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. Against this suggests a more negative view once the option to take a neutral position has been removed.

Table 19: *“I feel secure in my current role”*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Strongly agree	22	27.5%	21.22%
Agree	33	41.25%	42.95%
Disagree	14	17.5%	18.1%
Strongly disagree	8	10%	6.49%
Not applicable	0	0	2.31%

Building upon the two previous questions, respondents were asked whether they felt secure in their current role. More than two-thirds of respondents in Wales (68.75%) agreed or strongly agreed that they felt secure in their current role. Worryingly, more than one-quarter (27.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The wording of this question does not allow us to determine why respondents may feel insecure in their role.

Table 20: “There are sufficient opportunities for me to develop my professional skills and/or experience”

	Wales	Wales% (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Strongly agree	9	11.25%	14.61%
Agree	33	41.25%	41.39%
Disagree	24	30%	24.84%
Strongly disagree	11	13.75%	8.68%
Not applicable	0	0	1.56%

When asked whether they felt they had sufficient opportunities to develop their professional skills and experience, more than two-fifths of respondents (42.5%) agreed or strongly agreed. However, more than two-fifths of respondents (43.75%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. This is a reversal of the UK findings where 56% agreed or strongly agreed and 33.52% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

A further question on perceived barriers to professional and career development appears below.

Table 21: “There are sufficient opportunities for me to advance my career in social work”

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Strongly agree	4	5%	9.74%
Agree	31	38.75%	34.52%
Disagree	23	28.75%	28.53%
Strongly disagree	16	20%	11.49%
Not applicable	3	3.75%	6.8%

Asked whether they agreed or disagreed with this statement, in Wales, just over two-fifths agreed or strongly agreed (43.75%). This is similar to the result for the UK overall (44.26%). Meanwhile, almost half (48.75%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared with two-fifths (40.02%) for the UK as a whole.

Table 22: *Of the following possible barriers to progressing your career and/or professional skills, please choose the ones most applicable to you and your current situation*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Limited number of promotional positions available	41	51.25%	31.71%
Not enough opportunities to advance in my particular area of work or specialism	22	27.5%	26.15%
I don't feel confident enough right now	19	23.75%	13.92%
My responsibilities outside of work	16	20%	17.48%
I don't feel supported by my manager	14	17.5%	12.98%
Not enough opportunities to advance in my geographical area	14	17.5%	13.23%
I am unable to take time off for training and development	13	16.25%	20.41%
No other career opportunities within social work interest me	13	16.25%	12.42%
Other	10	12.5%	10.8%
Too few opportunities to access training and development	9	11.25%	17.42%
Loss of earnings	7	8.75%	11.74%

In order to better understand what might be preventing respondents from developing either their career or professional skills, respondents were asked to select from a list of options those that they felt were most applicable to their situation. The top two most-selected options are the same as for the UK as a whole. However, the third-most selected option 'I don't feel confident enough right now' ranks more highly for Wales than for the UK.

## **BULLYING, HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION**

In the 2021 survey, one of the most concerning findings was that around two-fifths of respondents had either experienced personally or been aware of someone experiencing bullying, discrimination or harassment in their workplace<sup>2</sup>. The 2022 survey contained further questions around these experiences.

Table 23: *Have you experienced bullying, harassment and/or discrimination in your place of work or study over the past 12 months, or are you aware of someone who has?*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 71)	UK % (n = 1376)
No	47	66.2%	62.21%
Yes	24	33.8%	37.79%

One-third of respondents in Wales (33.8%) reported that they had either personally experienced bullying, harassment and/or discrimination in the workplace, or were aware of someone who had. This is slightly lower than the equivalent UK result. The following three questions in the survey were asked only of those who reported having experienced bullying, harassment and/or discrimination personally or who reported being aware of someone who had in their workplace. Given the small number of those who responded 'Yes' (24), it is not meaningful to calculate descriptive statistics for this sub-sample. However:

- Of the 24 respondents, 17 reported having personally been a victim.
- For the reasons given, professional grievance was selected most often, the same as the UK as a whole. 'Disability' ranked more highly in Wales, the second most selected option, compared with 'Ethnicity' as the second most-selected option for the UK as a whole.
- As with the UK as a whole, more respondents reported that the person who experienced the bullying, harassment and/or discrimination was either managed or supervised by the person responsible or was less senior than them.

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<sup>2</sup> 2021 figures were originally calculated out of the number of respondents to a particular question. More questions were mandatory in the 2022 survey, meaning more questions were completed by the full sample.

## **EXPERIENCE OF ABUSE IN SOCIAL WORK SETTINGS**

The 2022 survey also asked questions about whether respondents had experienced abuse from people who were using social work services in the last 12 months, reflecting upon the risks that social workers may face from unpredictable and potentially dangerous behaviour on the part of others.

Table 24: *Please indicate which (if any) of the following you have experienced whilst working with people using social work services in the last 12 months (including placement experience)*

	Wales	Wales % (n=80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Verbal abuse	50	62.5%	49.56%
None of the above	26	32.5%	42.82%
Harassment whilst working with them (e.g. belittling, offensive jokes, inappropriate comments)	23	28.75%	21.29%
Threats of physical violence	23	28.75%	24.03%
Harassment outside of my time working with them (e.g. persistent attempts to make contact or stalking)	5	6.25%	7.05%
Other	5	6.25%	4.99%
Actual physical violence	3	3.75%	3.31%
Sexual harassment	0	0	1.62%

Almost one-third (32.5%) reported having experienced none of the negative behaviour listed, lower than the equivalent proportion for the UK. More than three-fifths (62.5%) reported having been verbally abused whilst working, higher than the equivalent proportion for the UK, and more than one quarter (25.49%) reported having received threats of physical violence. Alarming, 3.75% of respondents had been victims of physical violence whilst doing their job.

Table 25: *What do you think was the reason for the behaviour?*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Frustrated at the situation for which I am providing support	41	51.25%	35.21%
They have a history of violent and/or abusive behaviour	24	30%	28.34%
Health-related problems	17	21.25%	14.23%
Dissatisfied with the work I am doing	13	16.25%	14.29%
Intoxication	12	15%	10.42%
Discriminatory (in relation to gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age, disability or other factor)	10	12.5%	12.23%
Other	6	7.5%	6.87%

Respondents were also asked to identify what they believed to be the reason(s) for the abusive behaviour. The most commonly selected option (51.25%), chosen by more than half of respondents from Wales, was the frustration people were experiencing with the situation they were in. Three-tenths (30%) also identified that the person involved had a known history of violent and/or abusive behaviour. 'Health-related problems' was proportionately more frequently selected in Wales than across the UK as a whole.

## **POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT**

The final set of new questions for the 2022 survey looked at the political engagement of social workers as reported by respondents. Political decisions and policy-making are crucial to the environment in which social workers carry out their daily work. Such decisions shape the legislative framework, funding decisions, decisions on who receives different welfare payments and the value of those payments, and, as experienced in 2022, can dramatically influence the economic circumstances of a country and its inhabitants. Understanding political engagement on the part of social workers can therefore help BASW understand how to best engage with members to try and influence decision-makers. In the 2021 Annual Survey, better promotion of social work with politicians and policy-makers was clearly identified as being most important for the development of social work in the immediate future.

Table 26: *Do you vote in UK general elections?*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
No	3	3.75%	3.37%
Yes	75	93.75%	91.82%
Prefer not to say	2	2.5%	2.81%
I am not eligible to vote	1	1.25%	2%

Over nine-tenths of respondents (93.75%) reported that they voted in UK general elections (elections to the Westminster Parliament), higher than the finding for the UK as a whole. Respondents who reported being from the devolved nations were also asked whether they voted in their national Parliament or Assembly elections.

Table 27: *Do you vote in national Parliament or Assembly elections?*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)
No	4	5%
Yes	69	68.25%
Prefer not to say	4	5%
I am not eligible to vote (in these elections)	3	3.75%

A similar pattern can be seen for devolved elections. The vast majority of respondents vote. However, the proportion voting 'Yes' in Wales is somewhat lower. Turnout for the Senedd/Welsh Parliament elections has historically been relatively low and this may be reflected in the statistics here.

*“On a scale of 1 - 10 how much confidence do you have that UK government will improve conditions for social work practice (where 1 is 'none at all' and 10 is 'complete')”*

Respondents were also asked to rate their confidence in the UK Government to improve conditions for social work practice. Whilst this largely applies to England, as decisions on health and social care are devolved to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, there are some policy areas relevant to social work, such as immigration and human rights, that are largely reserved to the UK government which makes decisions on those issues for the whole of the UK. Criminal justice and policing are not devolved to Wales, but are reserved to the UK Government (unlike Scotland and Northern Ireland). Key pieces of legislation, such as the Mental Health Act 1983 and the Mental Capacity Act 2005 also cover both England and Wales.

With 1 being ‘poor’ and ‘10’ being excellent, the average rating of confidence in the UK Government from respondents in Wales was 1.71, the same as the UK average of 1.71.

*“On a scale of 1 - 10 how much confidence do you have that your national government will improve conditions for social work practice (where 1 is 'none at all' and 10 is 'complete')”*

The **Welsh Government** returned a rating of 3.09. The **Scottish Government** fared somewhat better in this exercise, an average confidence rating of 3.59 and the Northern Ireland Executive returned a rating of 1.62<sup>3</sup>. As a consequence of the complicated politics of Northern Ireland and their impact on executive formation, there was no sitting Northern Ireland Executive in power during the period when the survey was live, nor had there been for most of 2022.

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<sup>3</sup> Given the small number of respondents who reported working in Northern Ireland, this figure should be treated with caution.



Table 28: *In the last 12 months, have you engaged in any of the following activities?*

	Wales	Wales % (n = 80)	UK % (n = 1602)
Voted in the last local election (if there were any)	61	76.25%	67.48%
Signed a petition (email, online or in person)	55	68.75%	72.78%
Boycotted certain products or businesses for political reasons	33	41.25%	39.58%
Posted or forwarded political content on social media	25	31.25%	29.96%
Contacted a politician, government or local government official	23	28.75%	30.02%
Provided input or feedback on government policy, law or document	23	28.75%	27.78%
Taken part in a public demonstration	17	21.25%	10.99%
Wrote to a local government official using a template provided by organisers of a campaign	17	21.25%	21.29%
Worn or displayed a campaign badge or sticker	16	20%	14.79%
Attended a meeting of a trade union, political party or political action group	14	17.5%	13.11%
None of these	12	15%	12.73%
Stood for election to public office (e.g. local government councillor)	2	2.5%	1%
Participated in a Citizen Assembly, Citizen Dialogue or Citizen Jury	0	0	0.81%

A final question on political engagement asked members to select which, if any, of a number of options they had engaged in, in the previous 12 months. What the results of this section demonstrate is that social work respondents to the survey are politically engaged and aware. Only 15% of respondents in Wales reported not having engaged in of the activities listed.

Respondents could select as many activities as they chose.