

# Participatory Research Impact Report

## Exploring Intergenerational Connections

how can intergenerational relationships build community cohesion

**Community Safety and resilience**



**The Young  
Foundation**



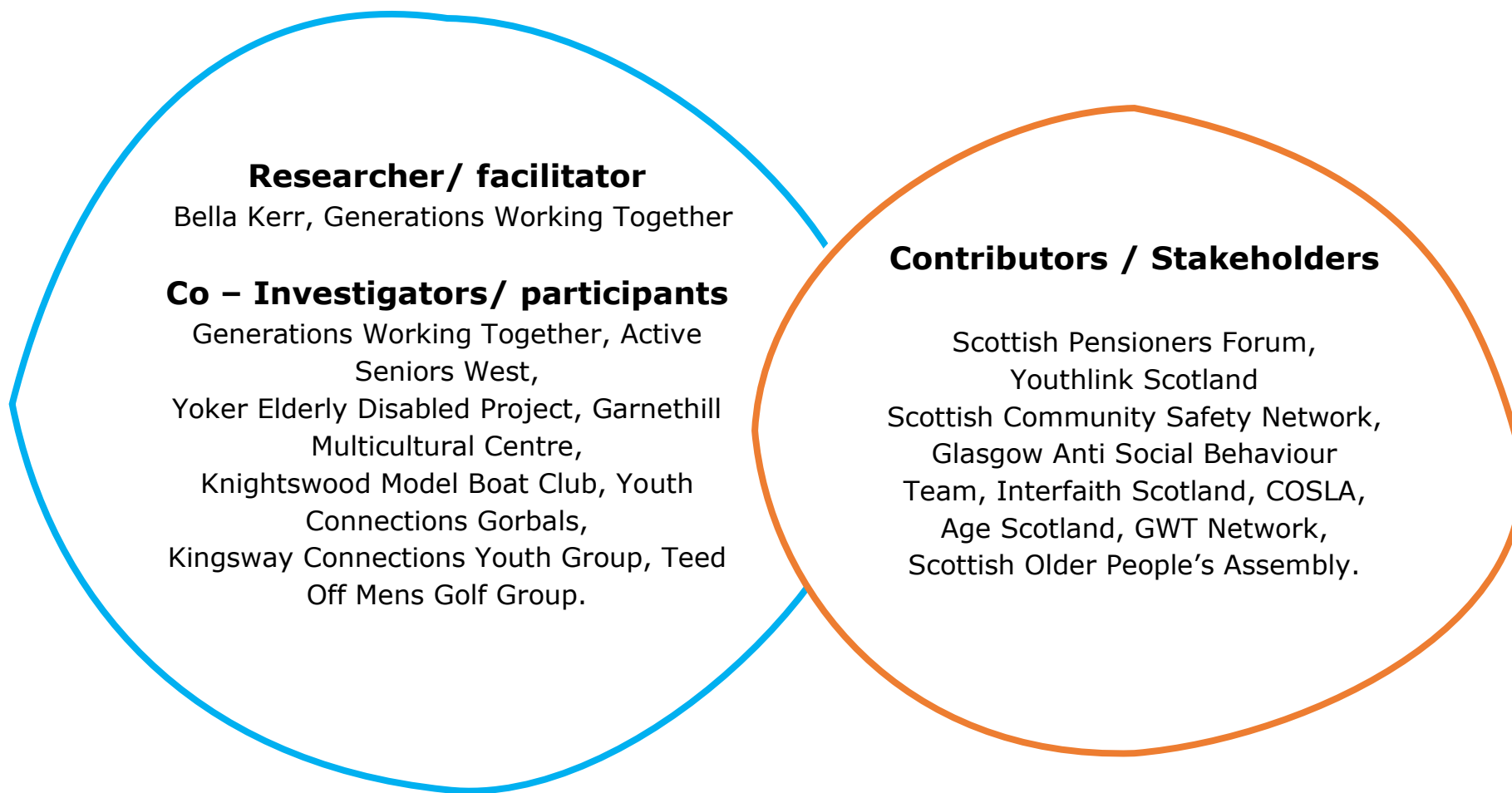
**UK Research  
and Innovation**



**Generations  
Working  
Together**

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# 1. Introduction

This impact report covers the 6 month (Feb- July 2023) participatory research, funded by the Community Knowledge Fund and initiated and facilitated by Generations Working Together (GWT). GWT wanted to know if forming intergenerational relationships would have an impact that may alleviate younger and older people's perceived fear of crime and how intergenerational connections can play an important role in preventative action by reducing ageism, building empathy, and encouraging more social connections between people of all ages. GWT were interested in exploring communities and connectedness through an intergenerational lens ensuring that all voices (younger and older) are listened to.

We acknowledge that Scottish Community Safety Network are the expert stakeholder in community safety and are thankful for their collaboration, advice and access to their data and research (see appendix 1).

This impact report focuses on the response to a first point interaction with community led organisations (working with older and / or younger people) through the exploration stage where we met with groups separately to test the quality of their connections with other generations. We wanted to explore age and difference through looking to see what kind of relationships the generations had between each other and how safe they felt in their communities. We considered time constraints and wanted to explore, with the following aims:

- Look at community safety and intergenerational relationships.
- Empower both younger and older people to form relationships and adopt a place in their community.
- Develop the resilience across and between generations to be able to deal with life in their community.
- Raise awareness about the needs of younger and older people and ways of empowering them.

## 2. Starting Out

We contacted the following stakeholders through the GWT networks in Glasgow and some new organisations to invite them to support this participatory research and inform them of research proposal.

- Scottish Pensioners Forum
- Interfaith Scotland
- Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA)
- Scottish Community Safety Network
- Youthlink Scotland
- Glasgow Anti-Social Behaviour Team
- Age Scotland
- University of Stirling, Scotland
- University of Granada, Spain

All stakeholders agreed to support the research and act as an information / advice group. Their assistance on ideas of how to approach the research in the beginning was most helpful. We decided to use qualitative methods to explore the intricacies of community relationships and hear firsthand from participants. This was an important decision and would involve grass roots community at the first stage of the research. Qualitative focus groups would allow the research to form from the participants experiences. We used NPC [‘Theory of Change’](#) to guide us in connecting activities and impact. In considering the process of bringing groups and organisations together we decided to use 4 research questions that would inform the research.

1. What did you / do you do with your time as a younger person / teenager?
2. Are you friends with people from a different generation who are not related to you?
3. Do you know people of a different generation who live in your area / street?
4. Is there any where you feel unsafe in your community?

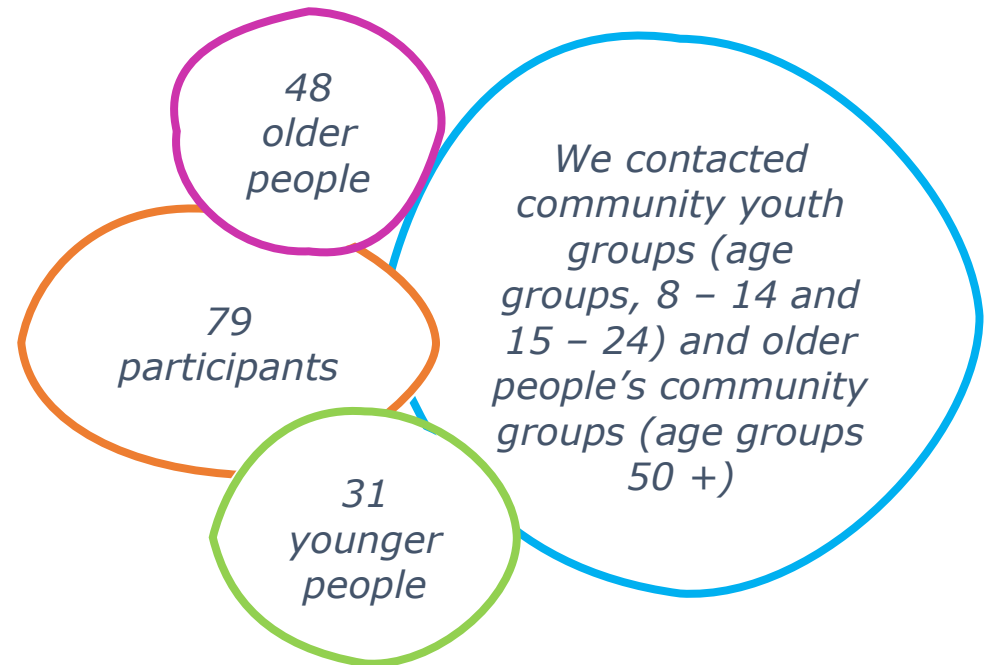
### 3. Meeting the Co-investigators / participants

We reached out to community groups in Glasgow central areas asking them to be involved in the research. We met with the 7 focus groups over a 3-month period (some of them twice due to sensory and other needs) asking the same 4 questions to each group. We kept regular communication and informed them of progress in each step.

We fitted the focus sessions and engagement in with participants daily schedules allowing for accessibility and other needs. We met with **79 participants** (31 young people, 25 female, 6 male) and (48 older people, 39 female, 9 male). We met each group separately to test the research aims and explore whether generations connected with each other in their communities.

#### THE Co-investigators / participants

- Active Seniors West
- Yoker Elderly Disabled Project
- Garnethill Multicultural Centre
- Knightswood Model Boat Club
- Youth Connections Gorbals
- Kingsway Connections Youth Group
- Teed Off Men's Golf Group



## 4. What people said/ Activities and mechanisms

At the focus sessions our first question was an icebreaker exploring people's past times (present day for younger people and memories of their youth from older people). It was a good way to start and allowed participants to feel more relaxed sharing something about themselves. We explained the research aims and that we wanted to ask them about connections with younger / older people and thoughts on community safety. It was a fun question, and the idea can be used later in follow on research to make connections with activities that cut across all ages. This may allow the groups to connect across generations through linking experiences in their life stage and looking at their community together using an intergenerational lens. The response showed us that we can learn how times have changed and spaces in our community are populated differently with less active streets than when older people were younger.

### **Question 1. What did you / do you do with your time as a younger person / teenager?**

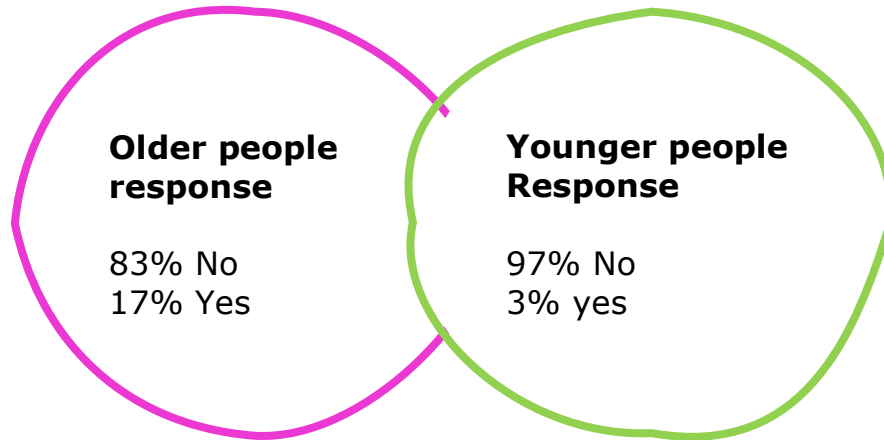
#### **Some things that older people did:**

Playing in the street, knew everyone, cycling, brownies and guides, dancing, jiving, ice skating, cafes and juke boxes, teenage boys wore suits, coca cola, did not have any money, Avoided gang warfare, football, swimming, worked as apprentice, junior shorthand typist, highland dancing, First job as baker, had jobs at 15 years old, Tomboy, factory work, joined the army, went to university, Smoking popular and glamourised, cinema, part time job in Barras, horse-riding, Sunday schools, Youth clubs, wee bit of drinking, Dating, working in Anniesland Sawmill, Left school at 15 expected to contribute to household income.

#### **Some things that younger people do:**

Youth Clubs, After school, Hang out with friends, Sports, Dance & Cheer, Netball, Rugby, Play in a band, Cooking, Reading, Youth Group, Boxing, Football, Tig, Swimming, Walking dog, Skipping, Hopping, Roller skating, Chess, Playing games, Drawing and colouring, Gymnastics, Sewing, Playing phone, IPAD, Basketball, Art, Travel, Singing.

**Question 2. Are you friends with people from a different generation who are not related to you?**



The response to Questions 2 told us that there was very little connection between younger and older people. The older people answering yes showed a much higher response than the younger people, and exploring this further their connections with younger people was either through knowing neighbours or through their grandchildren's friends.

**Some Comments from younger people**

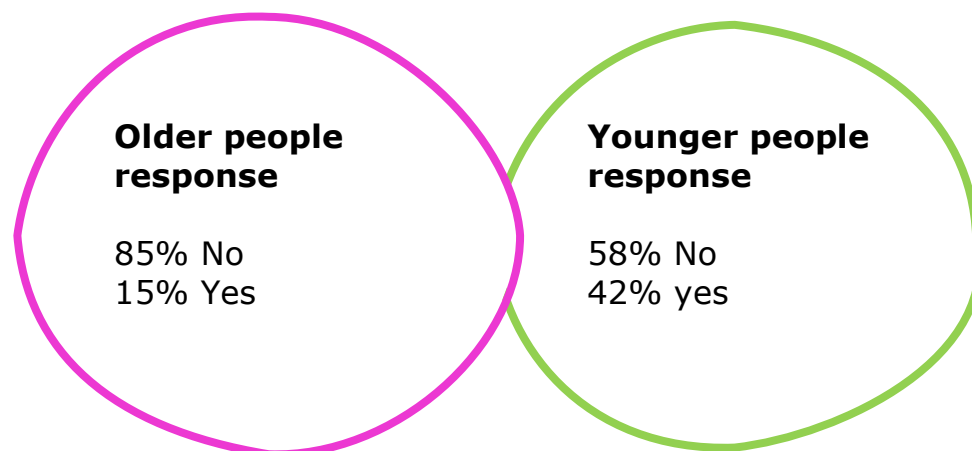
*'Not as much as I would like to. Mostly people my dad knows, but I don't know them'*

*'I would like to know more older people in my area'*

*'I know a few older people but I don't know what age they are'*

*'Older people can be rude'*

**Question 3. Do you know people of a different generation who live in your area / street?**



In response to this question both men's groups felt that it could be seen as strange if men connected or were talking to children. It is a concern for them and stops men from connecting with young people in case it is seen wrongly. Men feel that they need to be careful when talking to young people to young people.

**Some comments from older people**

*'I used to know a lot of the younger people in our street when my own children were Young. They would bring friends to the house and have sleepovers, and I will get to know their parents. But not now I don't know any of the families around me'*

*'We don't see any young people anymore, but we miss them'* (Older person talking about her teenagers and their friends who frequented her house when her family were growing up)

*'Kids nowadays are in all the time, not street wise'*

*'There is an element of mistrust between police and young people now and when we were young you had an understanding with police. There are kids who hang about maybe wanting to use facilities for football and maybe there is not enough for them to do outdoors now?'*

## Some comments from younger people

The response from younger people answering yes was much higher than from older people. This was from the group of younger people in the age range 8 – 14, with young people 15 – 24 saying they did not know any older people to talk to but knew them to see.

*'Next door neighbour gave us food and ice cream' 'Neighbour helped my dad to fix the car' 'older person lives in same block'*

*'a neighbour' 'friends grandmother' 'my dad knows them' 'mums pal' 'Yes, person who lives above Is 70 I say hello'*

**100% participants want to meet with others from another generation but do not know how to.**

### Question 4. Is there any where you feel unsafe in your community?

Looking at the response, both groups had different reasons and discussions with the feedback telling us both young and older people feel isolated in some ways from each other.

Older people said that they were streetwise and used their common sense to guide them. They spoke about the media displaying bad stories and that there are so many good stories never told. They people spoke about gangs and the number of boys in gangs, but media does not talk about the boys who were not in gangs. They quickly defended young people nowadays and said that even though there does not seem to be gang culture there is online texting and that is how we don't see it so much. We also talked about young people and alcohol but now with added disadvantage of drug dealing.

Participants said that lots of the young people have nowhere to go, youth clubs closed, parks are not safe or well-kept and this seems to have got worse since covid. Some participants felt that there is a real urban decline and there is an area in city centre called the 4 corners near the bus stops that has a KFC, McDonalds, Pizza hut and a Donut Place where young people hang around in the evening and there are a lot of homeless people there too.

## Situations where participants said they feel unsafe

### Younger People

Where I live is not the best place in the evening puts you off going out.  
Glasgow Green is unsafe in the evening.  
Would not go out on an old firm night (Rangers and Celtic match).  
Not safe to go out at night.  
Addicts hanging about the streets, don't feel safe.  
Unsafe tunnels when we walk to the Co-op.  
Park is unsafe due to older boys and bullying.  
Park is unsafe people in bushes.

### Older People

Drugs on bus, people taking drugs.  
Do not go out at night lack of public transport.  
Media tells horror stories.  
We feel safe but due to current mobility and health we do not go out as much.  
Cyclist route is unsafe for older people as it links with pavements and pedestrians in city centre.  
Dark as street lighting has changed. This stops people going out at night.  
Drug dealers on street and fear Graffiti.  
Clyde tunnel, graffiti, secondary school kids pizza boxes and rubbish they leave a mess.  
Young people drinking alcohol.

**100% participants said that they would like to the opportunity to do something in their community to look at making it a safer place and that connectedness would be a good thing.**

## 5. Where can we go next?

Follow on ideas transpired from four of the groups we met who were interested in future work to build community capacity and intergenerational connections and enhance community safety. Each group suggested some creative ideas to connect generations in their local area using an intergenerational lens;

- ideas to write and perform a drama young and old together.
- talk about graffiti and design a mural across generations to tackle graffiti.
- a workshop on community safety and design a poster to raise awareness for both generations.
- young people learning about film making and interviewing their peers and older people.

It was encouraging to hear participants looking for solutions to connect and their own ideas using creative methods to engage young and old. The next stage would be to bring generations together to meet each other and form relationships and learn how to talk to each other and work together in their community. These more in-depth ideas require a longer time frame to immerse the research in the community setting and enable connections to form.

## 7. Reflections and conclusions

Taking this short piece of exploratory participatory research to the community was an interesting groundbreaking process and at times it felt that we were not progressing and waited for the community to tell us what was next. It took time to contact potential supporters and partners and 6 months offered us limited time to get things up and running. Important factors in meeting with people in their community were taking time in getting to know them, going at their pace, building trust.

All of the above factors and the more qualitative nature of this first dip into participatory research has proven to be of great benefit in moving forward. Participants felt that they had been part of something that had meaning to them and had been able to talk about complex situations in their communities around disconnectedness, safe places and how they would like to connect and be understood by others from a different generation. Younger people did not offer as much information as the older people and more time would be required to carry out more in-depth research over a longer period. Older and younger people in this research told us:

- they do not know people of a different generation but 100% of them would like to.
- there are some barriers regarding gender with men feeling that they have more difficulty in connecting but are interested in helping if they can.
- all participants said that they welcome the opportunity to do something in their community to look at making it a safer place.

Taking ownership and coming up with solutions is a vital part of empowerment and the communities involved in this research have spoken with confidence in their ability to get their community involved. Each organisation and group that we have worked with has different ideas of what their community requires to do to raise awareness of community safety, intergenerational relationships and ideas to test and learn if new relationships between generations will break down barriers and ease perceived fear of crime. In a short space of time the research has shown that the project methodology has grown through reflection and flexibility to fit in with the needs of each specific community. It is through this exploratory (pilot) stage that a larger piece of community led participatory research can be realised. What the research has revealed is ideas for connection and the change taking place has started in people's thoughts and their own ideas of what may work in their community. This change is the beginning of raising awareness and building relationships that may provoke a new way of thinking about connecting in our communities. The time and effort involved in the 6 months has opened possibilities for further research and what we have learned is that younger and older people do not know each other, but they would like to, they care about their community and want to be sociable, learn from each other and make decisions together.

## Meet some of the co-investigators



Yoker Elderly Disable Project



Kingsway Connections Youth Group



Knightswood Model Boat Club



Garnethill Multicultural Centre



Active Seniors West



# Appendices

## Appendix 1.

<https://www.safercommunitiesscotland.org/2023/02/01/lets-talk-about-anti-social-behaviour/>

<https://www.safercommunitiesscotland.org/wp-content/uploads/Analytical-exchange-The-Scottish-picture-of-ASB-final.pdf>

<https://www.safercommunitiesscotland.org/scsn-fearless-org-campaign-encouraging-national-youth-conversation-on-anti-social-behaviour/>

<https://www.safercommunitiesscotland.org/2020/09/16/do-our-attitudes-to-crime-and-punishment-promote-safer-communities/>