

Family relationships, domestic violence and child maltreatment in the Caribbean Netherlands

Saba

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Background



Context of study

- On 11 May 2011, the Istanbul Convention was adopted: a human rights treaty of the Council of Europe opposing violence against women and domestic violence.
- For the European Netherlands, the Convention entered into force on March 1, 2016. The goal is to also put it into effect in the Caribbean Netherlands in the near future.
- This goal is closely related to the ambition to implement the rights of the child in the Caribbean Netherlands, as laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which is applicable to Saba.
- In 2022, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport commissioned a study into attitudes about the use of violence in families in the Caribbean Netherlands (State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sports 2022a).
- The main research question of this study was: *What are the attitudes of residents of the Caribbean Netherlands regarding parenting children and in particular the use of violence in childrearing or in family and partner relationships?*
- The study is intended as a baseline assessment that can be used as a starting point for evaluating the effectiveness of new policies in the upcoming years.
- The research team consisted of Ton Liefwaard and Judi Mesman (Leiden University), Merel Griffith-Lendering and Tamara Salsbach (University of Curaçao, Caribbean Center for Children's Rights), and Johan Kruip (UNICEF The Netherlands).
- The study resulted in three separate reports for each of the islands of the Caribbean Netherlands. This is the report specifically about Saba. The three separate reports are accompanied by an overarching summary concerning the Caribbean Netherlands altogether.



Legal and policy context

- Saba is a 'special municipality' of the country the Netherlands, with its capital in The Hague. It forms part of the 'Caribbean Netherlands' (Art. 132a Dutch Constitution).
- The Public Entity of Saba governs the island and reports to the Dutch government in the capital. Some of the governmental tasks are carried out by the National Office of the Caribbean Netherlands ('Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland') including taxation, policing, immigration, health, education and social security (<https://www.sabagov.com/our-organization>).
- As part of the Caribbean Netherlands, Saba falls under Dutch law. Yet, some laws have been or are in the process of being adjusted to the Caribbean context (Van Rijn 2022, p. 518).
- On the 1st of January 2022, the Civil Code for the Caribbean Netherlands ('Burgerlijk Wetboek BES') was changed in order to include a prohibition of violence against children in the upbringing (art. 1:247 (2) BW BES). Domestic violence and violence against women is protected under the Criminal Code for the Caribbean Netherlands ('Wetboek van Strafrecht BES'; art. 313 ff).
- The Dutch Constitution contains a 'differentiation clause', which allows for differentiation between the European part and the Caribbean parts of the country, because of significant geographical, cultural and economic differences (art. 132a (4) Dutch Constitution). The practical implications of this clause are not clear and it has been argued that it has not been favorable to the Caribbean Netherlands, for example in the context of social security and an adequate standard of living (Van Rijn 2022, p. 519-521; Oostindie & Veenendaal, 2022, p. 165).
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is applicable to Saba, whereas the Istanbul Convention is likely to take effect for the Caribbean Netherlands in the near future (State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sports 2022a).
- There is a policy basis concerning family relationships, domestic violence and child maltreatment, which recognizes international legal requirements flowing from the CRC, the Istanbul Convention and related international standards (e.g. European Convention of Human Rights).
- Existing policies and professional practices on Saba find their basis in domestic legislation and the Policy Agreement concerning Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment for the Caribbean Netherlands 2021-2024 ('Bestuursakkoord').
- The Policy Agreement sets the following priorities (State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sports 2022a):
 - » Prevention focused on awareness and information on the theme of domestic violence and child maltreatment;
 - » Professional development of the professionals involved on the islands;
 - » Strengthening assistance and cooperation in support services, including safe shelter for victims of domestic violence and child maltreatment and cooperation between healthcare, police and justice partners to break the cycle of violence for victims and perpetrators;
 - » A well-functioning, accessible reporting structure for professionals and citizens to obtain advice about and report (suspected) situations of domestic violence and child maltreatment;
 - » A legal framework in which existing legislation and regulations in the Caribbean Netherlands regarding the approach to domestic violence and child abuse are supplemented where necessary to promote and support the above priorities.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

What does the CRC stand for?

- The rights and freedoms of the child must be respected, protected and fulfilled;
- A child is defined as 'every human being below the age of eighteen years' (art. 1 CRC);
- Each child has to be protected against discrimination or exclusion (art. 2 CRC);
- The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children (art. 3 (1) CRC);
- The right to life, survival and development of every child must be safeguarded (art. 6 CRC);
- A child has the right to be heard in all matters affecting the child and the child's views must be taken seriously, which has implications for the development of laws and policies and for decision-making at an individual level (art. 12 CRC).

What about the CRC and family relationships?

- Each child should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding, which is considered essential for the child's full and harmonious development (preamble of the CRC);
- The state should support parents in their role primary caregivers (art. 18 (1) CRC), which includes the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children (art. 18 (2) CRC; see also art. 3 (3) CRC), and material assistance and support programs, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing (art. 27 (3) CRC);
- Every child has the right to be protected against all forms of violence and the state must take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures (art. 19 CRC).



Challenges for the Caribbean Netherlands identified by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (the CRC Committee)* in 2022

The CRC Committee expressed its concerns regarding:

- the existing disparities within the Kingdom of the Netherlands between the countries and the Caribbean Netherlands regarding children's access to health and youth services, education, social assistance and support in response to child abuse and neglect (CRC Committee 2022, para. 15 (a));
- the lack of legislative measures to protect children from abuse, domestic violence and corporal punishment in Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius, bearing in mind the 'high prevalence of violence against children (...) in the State party' (CRC Committee 2022, para. 21).

The CRC Committee recommended:

- to set up a child protection infrastructure (legislative and administrative matters) to better protect the rights and interests of children (CRC Committee 2022, para. 22(b));
- to provide for 'explicit prohibition of corporal punishment by law in alternative care settings, day care and schools' in the Caribbean Netherlands (CRC Committee 2022, para. 22(g));
- to 'strengthen awareness-raising campaigns aimed at promoting positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing and discipline and underscoring the adverse consequences of corporal punishment' (CRC Committee 2022, para. 22(g)).

* The CRC Committee monitors the implementation of the CRC in the Kingdom of the Netherlands and all other States Parties, periodically.

Follow up

- In response to the CRC Committee's recommendations, the Dutch government has confirmed its commitment to promote positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child rearing in the Caribbean Netherlands. More specifically it announced further legislative guidance on the matter, the promotion of accessible support services for children and the implementation of a protection code, as part of the strategy concerning the prevention of violence against children (State Secretary of Health, Welfare and Sports, 2022b, p. 15-16).
- UNICEF has developed a new policy plan '*Kinderen in hun kracht. Kinderrechten in Caribisch Nederland*', in partnership with the Public Entities of Bonaire, Saba and Sint Eustatius and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, to support the Islands in this regard. This program runs from 2023 until 2025 and focuses on:
 - » Positive parenting;
 - » Social, emotional resilience and youth skills;
 - » Participation;
 - » Child protection: signaling, reporting and follow up ('*signaleren, melden en opvolgen*');
 - » Child poverty;
 - » Linking and learning.

Istanbul Convention

What does the Istanbul Convention stand for?

- Official name: Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
- The Istanbul Convention aims to eliminate violence against women and the protection of women against all forms of violence (art. 1(a)).
- It expects States Parties 'take the necessary legislative and other measures to promote and protect the right for everyone, particularly women, to live free from violence in both the public and the private sphere' (art. 4 (1)).

More specifically the Istanbul Convention aims to:

Ensure prevention of domestic violence and violence against women by:

- changing 'social and cultural patterns of behavior of women and men with a view to eradicating prejudices, customs, traditions and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority of women or on stereotyped roles for women and men' (art. 12 (1) and
- by taking legislative and other measures to prevent all forms of violence (art. 13 (2)).
- Other measures include (art. 13-17):
 - » Awareness raising;
 - » Education;
 - » Training of professionals;
 - » Preventive interventions and treatment programs;
 - » Participation of the private sector and the media.

- Ensure the protection of victims from further acts of violence through legislation and other measures, including information, support and specialist services, individual remedies, support to child witnesses and victims of sexual violence (see also art. 56), reporting mechanisms, and protective measures, including telephone helplines and shelters (art. 18ff);
- Ensure adequate and speedy investigation and prosecution of all forms of violence through legislative and other measures (art. 49ff); and
- Ensure comprehensive and coordinated policies and data collection (art. 7ff; Niemi et al. 2020, p. 8-9).

Local context of Saba

- In February 2023, a delegation of the research team (TL, JM, and JK) visited Saba to get acquainted with the local context and learn about the challenges that professionals in the family and youth domain have identified.
- The research team had meetings with a total of 24 professionals, all working with youth and/or parents. These included people from organizations represented in the Safety Network (Caribbean Netherlands Police Force, Caribbean Netherlands Youth and Care, Mental Health Caribbean, Caribbean Netherlands, Stichting Reclassering Caribisch Nederland (SRCN), the Guardianship Council, and the Saba Health Care Foundation), and with Parenting in action, the principals of the local primary and secondary schools, representatives of the Public Entity of Saba and the Island Governor and one of Saba's Commissioners.
- The main issues raised during the team visit to Saba were concerns about:
 - » The quality of parenting, especially lack of time spent with children due to working multiple jobs;
 - » The high cost of living and the fact that many families struggle with poverty, affecting family life negatively;
 - » Changing times and norms, a sense of loss by the older generation, the experience of a generation gap;
 - » The predominance of non-local professionals (only 4 of 24 professionals the team talked to were born on Saba);
 - » The lack of leisure activities for young people, and a lack of career opportunities for adults;
 - » The relationship with the European Netherlands whose policies do not always fit the local context.
- These issues were incorporated in the data collection phase to make sure they were addressed in the study.





Methods



Overview

Desk research

- Analysis of relevant policy reports, legal sources and academic literature to provide context to the current study.

Quantitative study

- Online survey among the adult population of the island, with questions about specific aspects of family relationships, partner relationships and parenting.
- For each topic, participants were asked to report on a 1-10 scale how common they think certain behaviors are on Saba.
- Participants asked to report about their impression of family life on the island (i.e. not their own behavior).

Qualitative study

Interviews

- Individual interviews conducted by telephone with adults, young people aged 16-19 years, and professionals.
- Questions about family relationships, partner relationships and parenting.

Focus groups

- Focus group interviews conducted in person with adults, young people aged 16-19 years, and professionals
- Questions about recommendations for policy and practice.

Ethical review

- The study has been approved by the Committee Ethics and Data of Leiden Law School, Leiden University, the Netherlands.

Description of survey participants

Total sample size



47 participants started the survey



33 participants completed the survey

Response rate: ca 2-3% of adult population on Saba*

** This response rate would amount to close to half a million participants in the European part of the Netherlands.*

Sample sizes per topic



47 parenting questions



34-38 Family and partner questions

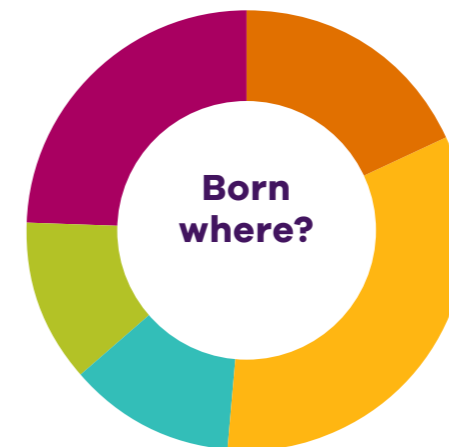


33 Background questions



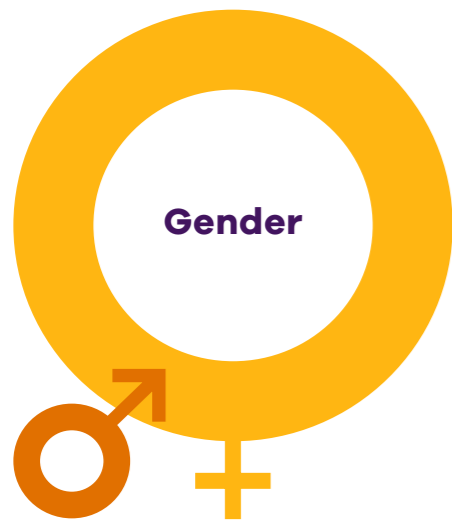
15% Less than 2 years
15% 2-5 years
12% 6-10 years
58% More than 10 years

- More than half of participants have lived on Saba for more than 10 years.



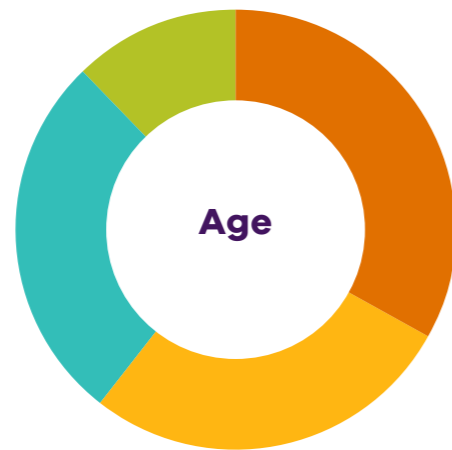
18% Saba
33% Other Caribbean Island
12% Netherlands
12% Mainland South America
24% Other

- 18% of participants were born on Saba itself (in the total Saba population this is 24%).
- 33% of participants were born on another Caribbean island (in the total Saba population this is 31%).
- 12% of participants were born in the Netherlands (in the total Saba population this is 5%).
- Based on island statistics, the category 'other' is likely to refer to people born in the US or the Philippines, who constitute the biggest 'other' groups on Saba.



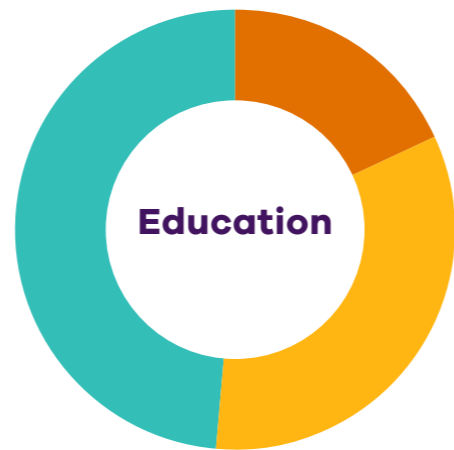
21% men 79% women

- Women were overrepresented among the participants.



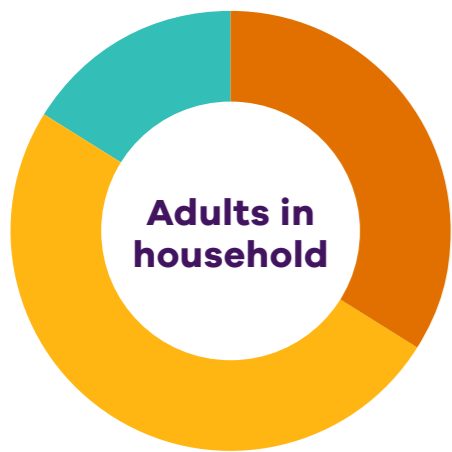
33% 20-30 27% 31-40 27% 41-50 12% 51-60

- The majority of participants were between 20 and 50 years old.



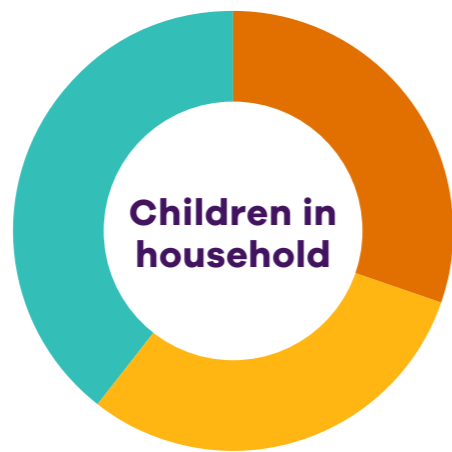
18% Low 33% Middle 49% High

- Almost half of the participants had a high educational level (for the total Saba population this is 37%).



34% One 50% Two 16% Three or more

- The number of adults in most participant households was 1 or 2.



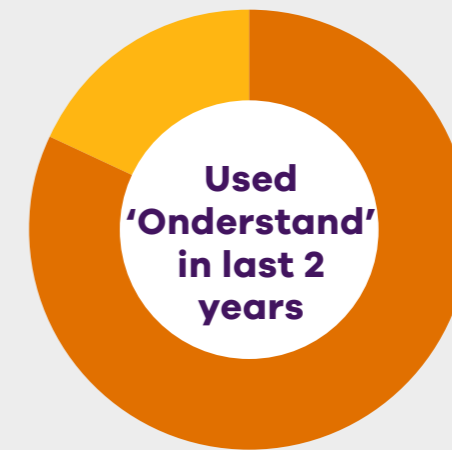
30% None 30% One 40% Two or more

- The majority of participants lived in households with one or more children.



6% None 49% Minimal 39% Some

- The participants are not representative of the Saba population in terms of financial situation.
- Most participants experienced few financial problems, although 39% did report having some problems making ends meet.



82% No 18% Yes

- The vast majority of participants had not made use of the 'Understand' in the past 2 years.

Women were overrepresented among the participants.

Description of interview participants



Adults

- 6 women
- Age 33 – 54 years
- 4 born on Saba
- All have children
- 2 with high educational level



Youth

- 2 girls, 2 boys
- Age 16 – 19 years
- 1 born on Saba
- All on Saba 10+ years



Professionals

- 8 women, 1 man
- Age 26 – 62 years
- 1 born on Saba
- 4 on Saba for 5 or more years
- 8 with high educational level

Description of focus group participants



Adults

- 3 women



Youth

- 2 girls, 7 boys,
- Age 16-19 years



Professionals

- 1 woman, 2 man

Limitations of the study

The study's samples on Saba are not fully representative of the island's population.

The following groups were underrepresented:

- » Men;
 - » People with lower educational and income levels;
 - » People from migrant groups who might not be comfortable enough in English or Dutch or Papiamentu to participate in the study.
- The underrepresentation of people from more challenged socio-economic backgrounds is common in this type of research. However, the individual and focus group interviews partly made up for this limitation, as these included more socio-economically diverse samples than the survey.
 - The sample size of the survey on Saba (33-47 people) constitutes a very good response rate for a small-island population, but these numbers are often too small for statistical analyses.
 - This lack of statistical power also meant that it was not possible to test whether men and women gave different answers. This was especially relevant when looking at the questions concerning gender. Although the general answer patterns were the same for male and female participants, this comparison could not be tested statistically.
 - The study has not specifically focused on the issue of sexual abuse. This issue does, however, deserve attention in future studies.



Results and

recommendations

Results

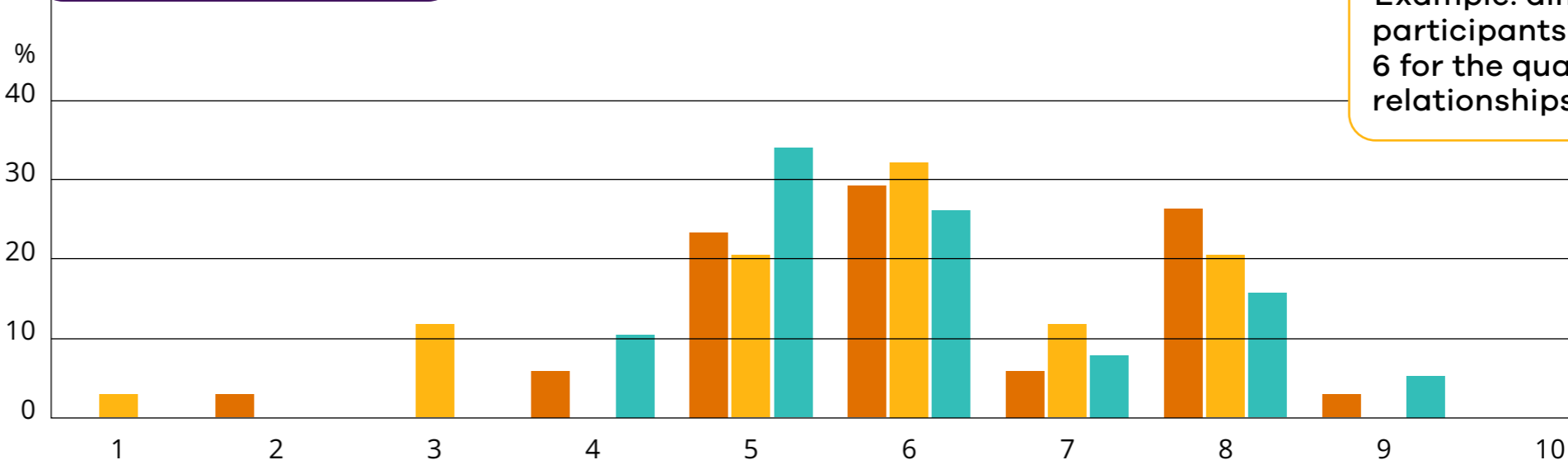
Survey: Grade 1-10 for the quality of...

Overall evaluation of family life on Saba

Before diving into the results on specific topics regarding family life on Saba, this section reports on overall evaluations of family life by the participants to show their general impressions as a starting point for further specification of strengths and challenges.

Survey participants were asked to give a 'report card grade' to the quality of family relationships, partner relationships and parenting on Saba.

Legend
→ Family relationships
→ Partner relationships
→ Parenting



Example: almost 30% of participants gave grade 6 for the quality of family relationships on Saba.

Clarification

- The average grades are very close to 6 (just sufficient) for the quality of family relationships, partner relationships, and parenting on Saba. There are no significant differences in grades between the three domains.
- A notable group of about a third of participants was (very) positive (grade 7 and higher) about the quality of family relationships, partner relationships, and parenting on Saba.
- Very few participants were (very) negative (grade 4 or lower) about the quality of family relationships, partner relationships, and parenting on Saba.
- Most participants chose a grade 5 or 6 for the three different domains of family life on Saba. This means that most of them see a mix of positive and negative aspects.

Structure of the results

In the following sections, the specific areas of strengths and challenges of families on Saba will be presented.

- **Part 1:** The strengths of family life on Saba;
- **Part 2:** The financial context of family life on Saba;
- **Part 3:** Maltreatment in family life on Saba;
- **Part 4:** Gender inequalities on Saba;
- **Part 5:** Changing times on Saba;
- **Part 6:** Support services on Saba.

The general structure of these sections consists of:

- **A brief introduction to the topic;**
- **The relevant survey results** (data from Saba);
- **Relevant quotes from the interviews** (voices from Saba);
- **A reflection, and**
- **A recommendation.**

Parts 1 to 5 concern the substantive strengths and challenges concerning families on Saba, whereas part 6 focuses on the role of support services in addressing the strengths and challenges.

After the presentation of the study's results, the report continues with some overarching recommendations relevant for Saba as well as for Bonaire and Sint Eustatius.

Part 1

The strengths of family life on Saba

A small-island community

The participants in the individual and focus group interviews were asked to reflect on the positive sides and strengths of (family) life on Saba. Many participants reflected on the advantages of living on a small island with a small community:

“Very small community, very safe.”
(professional)

“A small community, so there is always somebody to help.”
(adult)

“I always say Saba is one big playground. The kids are safe, for the most part.”
(adult)

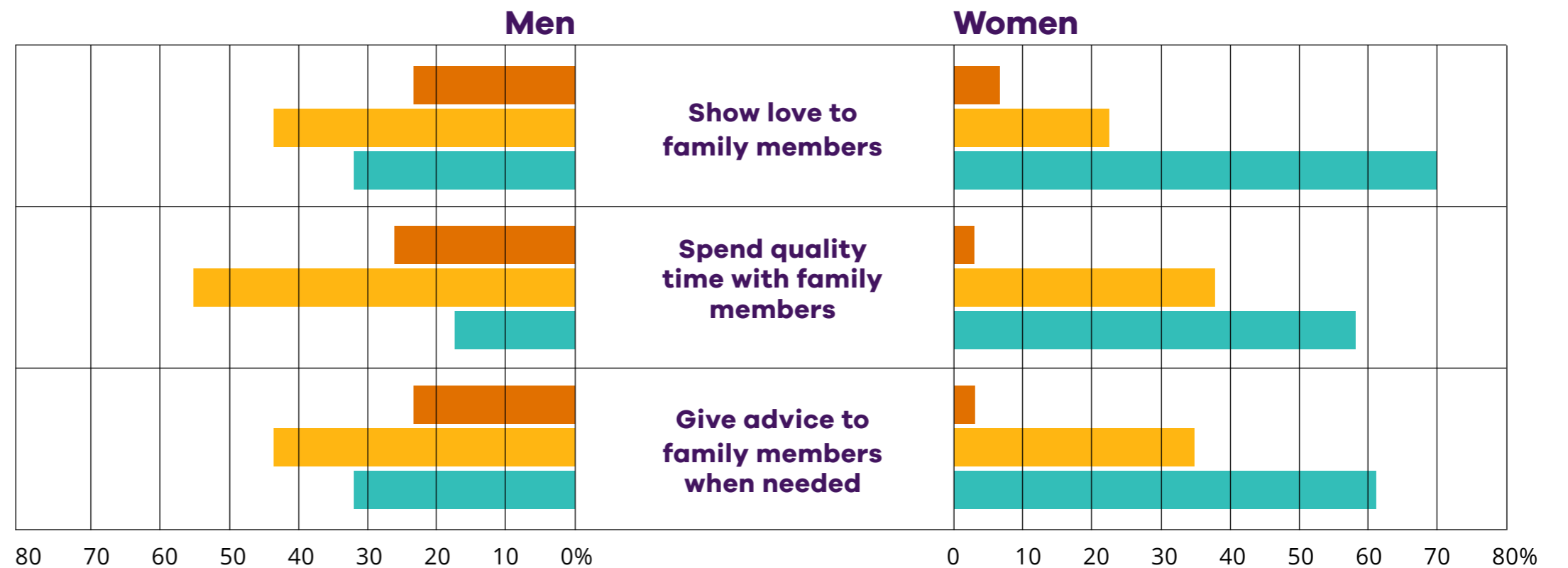
“The community is very small. The love and the bond will be extra strong because you know this person for a very long time.”
(professional)

“There’s always someone to watch and you want to try your best at all times to make your family proud, but not only your family, but your island proud.”
(youth)

“The support of the community. Like, if you lose a loved one or something, it’s not only your loss, it’s the loss of the community.”
(professional)

Data from Saba

Family life



Legend

- Not common (scores 1-3)
- Somewhat common (scores 4-6)
- (Very) common (scores 7-10)

Example: almost 10% of participants reported that women on Saba do not commonly show much love to their family members.

Clarification

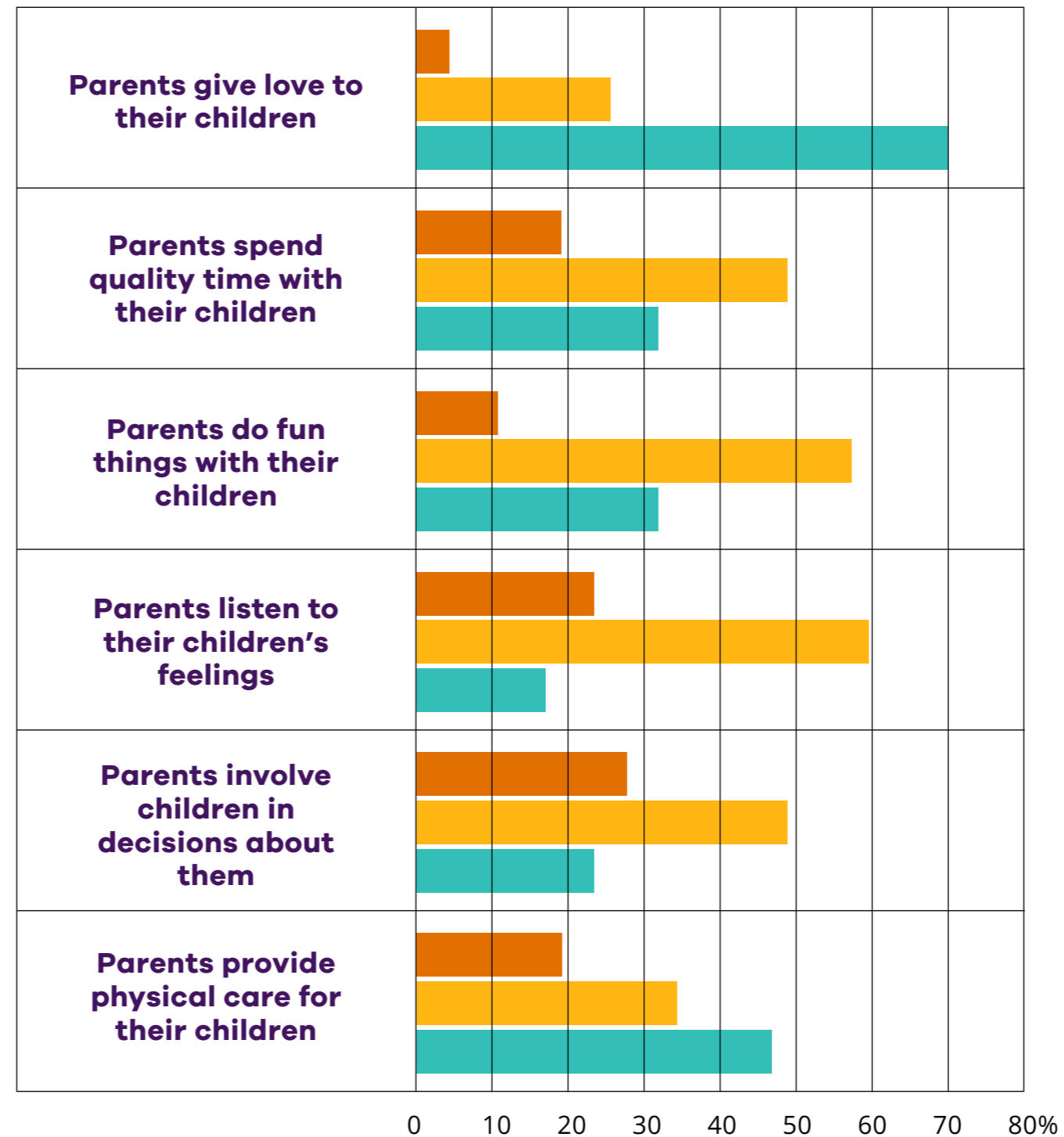
- Most participants reported that in families on Saba it is somewhat to (very) common to show love, spend quality time and give advice.
- Most participants reported that in families on Saba women do these things more than men (both male and female participants say this, but it has to be noted that there were only very few male participants).

Data from Saba

Parenting on Saba

Legend
 → Not common (scores 1-3)
 → Somewhat common (scores 4-6)
 → (Very) common (scores 7-10)

Example: About 70% of participants reported that it is common that parents on Saba give love to their children.



Clarification

- Most participants reported that it is (very) common for parents on Saba to give love to their children.
- Most participants reported that it is (somewhat) common for parents on Saba to spend quality time with their children.
- Most participants reported that it is (somewhat) common for parents on Saba to do fun things with their children.
- More than half of participants reported that it is somewhat common for parents on Saba to listen to their children's feelings.
- Almost half of participants reported that it is somewhat common for parents on Saba to involve their children in decisions about the children.
- Most participants reported that this it is (somewhat) common for parents on Saba to provide physical care for their children.

Voices from Saba

“The good aspects of family is always being there for each other.”

(adult)

“They have a loyalty to family and partner.”

(professional)

“You would find parents bonding with their children and taking them on adventures or family trips.”

(youth)

“I see that many parents are overwhelmed and don’t know what to do.”

(professional)

“You don’t see most families interacting with each other the way they’re supposed to.”

(adult)

“We come home, everybody tired. Everybody got to do the homework, everybody got to sleep. There’s really no time unless it’s vacation. Let’s say I got a vacation from school, she’s working still.”

(youth)

Reflection

- Families on Saba are generally warm and often part of close extended (family) networks of people who take care of each other in a context of a safe small island community. Parents show love to their children and provide them with the necessary physical care. These are all very important strengths of Saba family life.
- Yet, participants noticed some challenges in family life on Saba as well. They reported a gender imbalance in family life, with women being more involved than men, and parents not always having enough quality time and a listening ear for children. These challenges will be discussed in more detail in the next sections.
- During its visit to Saba, the research team noticed that parents were criticized, by professionals, for being absent, difficult to reach, not engaged, passive (i.e. waiting for the government or schools to provide (financial) help instead of feeling empowered to address challenges themselves) or even irresponsible. The team also met professionals who portrayed parents differently. These somewhat contrasting patterns are important to address (see also part 6 on support services).
- The clear strengths of the community were also mentioned in the conversations the research team had with professionals during the visit to Saba.
- Although the small island also comes with challenges (“It’s a small community and it creates a bubble.” (youth); “Too small. A lot of people have not left the island, so they’re not open to things that are normal in the rest of the world.” (adult)), the strength of the island community on Saba is clearly something to build on.

Recommendation 1

Make use of the warmth and love within families on Saba and the strength of the island community to address the challenges in family life that will be discussed in the next sections.

- Emphasize that children, parents, the elderly and other community members essentially care about good family relationships and deserve to be respected in their role within families and within the wider community.
- Invest in community engagement as a means to empower communities, community leaders and community organizations to play a role in improving family life and protecting family member against domestic violence and child maltreatment (UNICEF 2020).
- **More specifically:**
 - » Recognize communities as meaningful stakeholders in policy reform;
 - » Make sure that community members know and claim their rights;
 - » Ensure participation without exclusion or discrimination, bearing in mind power inequalities;
 - » Align policies, programs and projects with community needs, values and cultures, while recognizing national and international laws and policies;
 - » Involve communities in the monitoring and evaluation of policies, programs and projects that impact them (see e.g. the program ‘Island(er)s at the Helm’ concerning social adaptation to climate challenges in the (Dutch) Caribbean).
- Make sure that Saba and Sabean community are in the lead concerning the development of policies, programs and projects, while the Government of the Netherlands plays a supportive role and local values and cultures are respected.

Target group: Public Entity of Saba in close collaboration with community stakeholders.

Part 2

The financial context of family life on Saba

Financial hardship on Saba

The literature shows that financial problems and poverty are important factors when it comes to family problems such as domestic violence (Jewkes, 2002) and child maltreatment (Skinner et al., 2022). The study also asked participants about the financial situation of families on Saba and many mentioned that there is substantial financial hardship on Saba.

These financial problems and struggles with poverty can also be seen in what participants from Saba reported in the survey about financial problems in family relationships and in raising children.

"People already work a lot, People have two or sometimes more jobs."

(professional)

"Kids here, they usually tend to get side jobs to help out with their family."

(professional)

"The shop prices are going up every week. It's no way you can afford to live here. It's too expensive."

(adult)

"There's also persons that have to do two or three jobs just to be able to make ends meet. All are struggling on the island."

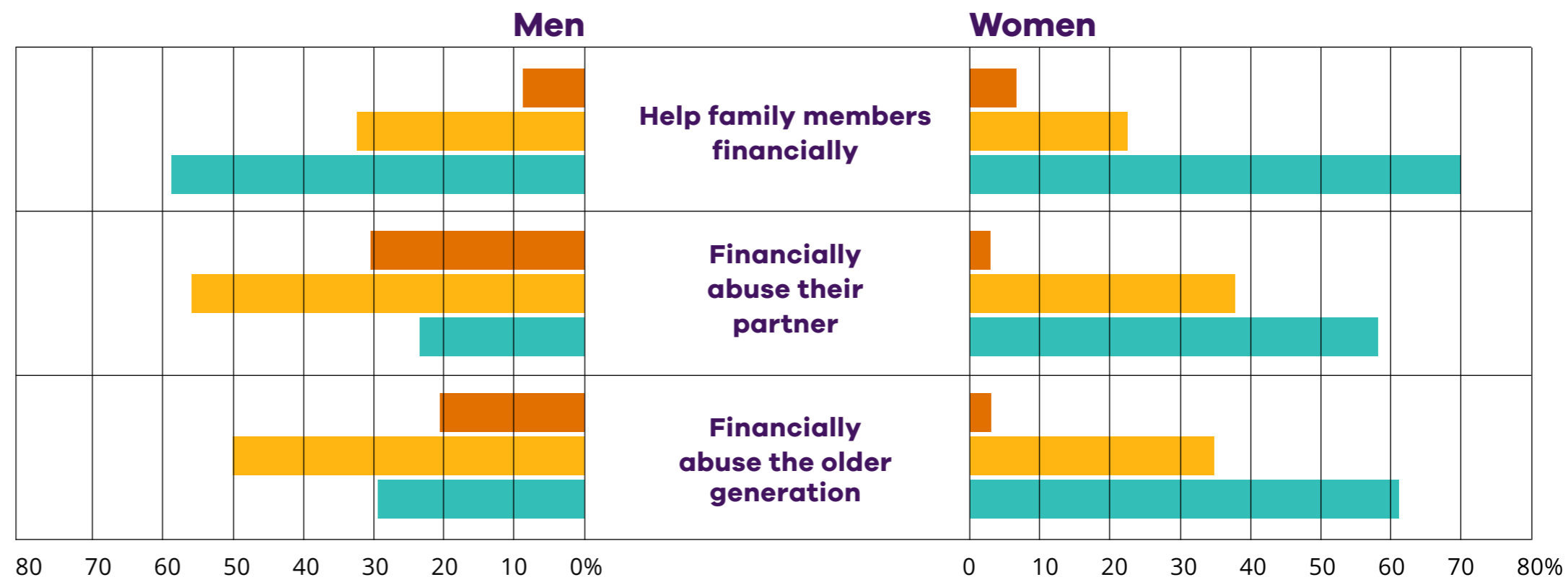
(youth)

"Poverty on Saba is hidden. So if you come here, you have an illusion that there's no poverty because everyone has a house."

(professional)

Data from Saba

Family finance



Legend
 → Not common (scores 1-3)
 → Somewhat common (scores 4-6)
 → (Very) common (scores 7-10)

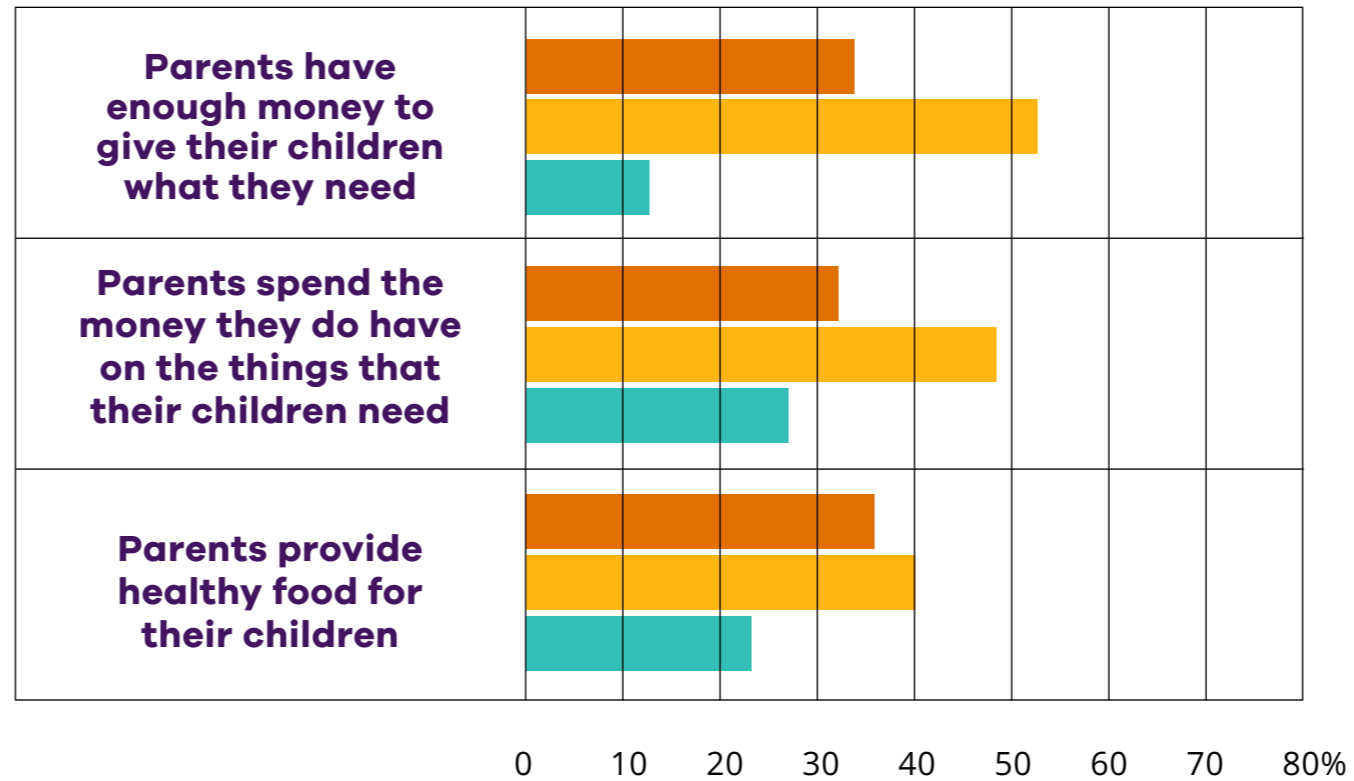
Example: more than half of participants reported that it is (very) common for men on Saba to help their family members financially.

Clarification

- Most participants reported that men and women on Saba commonly help their family members financially if needed.
- Most participants reported that it is (somewhat) common for men and women on Saba to abuse their partners financially.
- Most participants reported that it is (somewhat) common for men and women on Saba to abuse their own parents financially.

Data from Saba

Family finance



Clarification

- Most participants reported that parents on Saba usually do not have enough money to give their children what they need.
- Participants were divided about whether parents on Saba spend the money they have on what their children need.
- Most participants reported that it is not that common for parents on Saba to provide healthy food for their children.

Legend

- Not common (scores 1-3)
- Somewhat common (scores 4-6)
- (Very) common (scores 7-10)

Example: About 35% of participants reported that it is not common for parents on Saba to have enough money for their children.

Voices from Saba

What people observe

"Families are struggling, especially with paying bills."

(professional)

"I think lack of finances puts a very heavy burden on family."

(professional)

"If you are so pushed to meet the needs and you're not seeing, okay, I'm not able to provide dinner tonight, then instantly as a parent, you feel inadequate."

(professional)

"So bringing up a child on Saba is very difficult because the foods are expensive."

(adult)

"Then they buy the biggest tv and another Iphone, a car. That is not necessary. While they don't have enough food on the table."

(professional)

"Say I wanted something that I saw my friend have, but my mom doesn't have the money for it. So I would just feel maybe sad or mad and upset."

(youth)

"If one of the basic human needs aren't being met, all the other relationships suffer."

(professional)

What people would like to see improved

Professionals, adults, and youth all mentioned the importance of improving the financial situation of families on Saba and came up with several ideas for doing so:

- More educational and training opportunities on Saba so that the people living there can meet the requirements of local jobs that now often go to people from outside. This can also give the island more stability.
- Increase in wages so that people do not have to work 2-3 jobs to make ends meet. This is especially important for parents who end up not having enough time for their children.
- Training budgeting skills so that the income that people have will be spent on the right things, especially in families with children.



Reflection

- Many families on Saba struggle financially. Although helping family members financially is very common on Saba, there are also concerns about people taking advantage of family members when it comes to finances.
- There seems to be an imbalance between wages and the cost of living for families.
- It seems that the financial struggles on Saba can lead to both supportive actions (helping) and abusive actions (taking advantage).
- When it comes to raising children, most families on Saba do not always have enough money to give their children what they need, including healthy food.
- There are also concerns about budgeting skills on Saba. People do not always spend the money they have wisely, which impacts their financial room for providing basic needs to their children.
- The literature shows that financial worries and poverty are strong predictors of many different problems in families, including violence in general and violence against women in particular (Stephenson, 2021). All policies that contribute to poverty relief will improve the general quality of life, which in turn will benefit overall family functioning (Jones et al., 2017).
- Previous studies and reports concerning the Caribbean Netherlands have also pointed at the impact of financial concerns and poverty on family relationships (Nationale Ombudsman 2020), and more specifically on the prevalence of domestic violence and/or child maltreatment (Kloosterboer, 2013; De Bruijn, Kriek & De Vaan, 2014; UNICEF, 2019; Kinderombudsman, 2021; CRC Committee, 2022).
- The literature also shows that unconditional cash transfers can be beneficial to poverty reduction, development of community and autonomy and dignity of community members (Peterman, Yablonski & Daidone, 2017).
- The recently announced increase of the social minimum on Saba could have a positive impact on the financial situation of families on the island.

Recommendation 2

Invest in the financial health of Saba, including attention to education and employment opportunities, and promoting budgeting skills.

- Closely monitor the impact of the recently announced increase of the social minimum;
- Consider implementing additional measures (e.g. specific cash transfer programs) where needed to provide relief for families with persistent financial struggles;
- Invest in training for local people in order for them to qualify for more skilled work on Saba. Because of the small scale of the island, considering online international options might be helpful;
- Continue to invest in employment and appropriate wages, also in light of the imbalance between income and cost of living;
- Offer budgeting skills training, in schools and community centers;
- Pay special attention to the issue of financial abuse of the older generation within families. Increasing financial security and financial skills may be significant first steps.

Target group: Public Entity of Saba, in close collaboration with community groups and key stakeholders.

Part 3

Maltreatment in family life on Saba

When family life is not safe

This section zooms in on maltreatment in family relations (incl. partner relations), which is relevant to consider in addition to the strengths of the community and the precarious financial context of family life on Saba.

The Istanbul Convention, the CRC and legislation in the Caribbean Netherlands reject domestic violence and violence against children. This finds support in the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and related standards from the Council of Europe (see preamble of the Istanbul Convention; Niemi et al. 2020, p. 4-5).

Relevant legal definitions in international law:

- *Domestic violence* includes 'all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim' (art. 3 (b) Istanbul Convention). It enshrines violence against women and girls (art. 3 (a), (d) and (f) Istanbul Convention).
- *Violence against children* includes 'all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse' (art. 19 CRC) and also encompasses exposure to domestic violence (CRC Committee, 2011).

Relevant legal definitions in Dutch law:

- Child maltreatment (*kindermishandeling*): 'elke vorm van voor een minderjarige bedreigende of gewelddadige interactie van fysieke, psychische of seksuele aard, die de ouders of andere personen ten opzichte van wie de minderjarige in een relatie van afhankelijkheid of van onvrijheid staat, actief of passief opdringen, waardoor ernstige schade wordt berokkend of dreigt te worden berokkend aan de minderjarige in de vorm van fysiek of psychisch letsel' (art. 1.1.1 (1) Wet maatschappelijke ondersteuning 2015).
- Domestic violence (*huiselijk geweld*): 'lichamelijk, geestelijk of seksueel geweld of bedreiging daarmee door iemand uit de huiselijke kring' (art. 1.1.1 (1) Wet maatschappelijke ondersteuning 2015); 'huiselijke kring' (domestic): 'een familielid, een huisgenoot, de echtgenoot of voormalig echtgenoot of een mantelzorger' (Ibid.).

Maltreatment in family life on Saba

According to the State Secretary of Health, Welfare and Sports the term 'domestic violence' does not really fit the Caribbean context, where 'domestic' includes a much wider range of community members, in addition to immediate family members (State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sports 2022a, p. 2). A special Governmental Decree (*Algemene Maatregel van Bestuur*) aims to provide rules concerning domestic violence and child maltreatment in the context of the Caribbean Netherlands (*Besluit maatschappelijke ondersteuning en bestrijding huiselijk geweld en kindermishandeling BES*; State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sports 2023). This Decree, which is expected to enter into force on 1 July 2024 as far as domestic violence and child maltreatment is concerned, provides a broader definition of domestic ('huiselijke kring'): *'de partner of voormalige partner, een familielid, een huisgenoot of een persoon die regelmatig de woning bezoekt'*.

- This report refers to violence and maltreatment interchangeably. It also uses the terms domestic violence, violence against children or child maltreatment. Unless specified, these terms refer to all kinds of forms of violence, including physical, emotional and sexual maltreatment or abuse, neglect and witnessing violence, among others.
- In the interviews, participants were invited to define 'maltreatment' and reflect on it, also in light of the local, cultural context of Saba.
- In both the survey and the interviews, participants were asked about their perceptions concerning maltreatment and violence. A wide range of forms of maltreatment were identified: between partners, against the elderly and between parents and children. This also includes forms of emotional and physical violence.



Defining maltreatment on Saba

In the interviews participants generally defined domestic violence and child maltreatment according to international legal norms, including physical and emotional abuse and neglect in their descriptions. This shows general awareness of international definitions, which are incorporated in domestic laws and policies, even if the local reality is different.

"Domestic violence is neglect, physical violence, verbal violence."

(professional)

"It's child abuse when parents are beating their kids, or when a family member is constantly drunk in the house with children watching."

(adult)

"Yes, any use of force onto another is a form of abuse. But you have also the cultural aspect, a little tick here or there, that is common for our culture."

(adult)

"It is unfair treatment. It's a treatment within the family when those persons are not being treated as human."

(youth)

"Child abuse is verbal abuse, physical abuse, mental abuse. And those happen in relationships also."

(youth)

"For me, domestic violence is any type of unwanted force directed to a person in a domestic situation."

(professional)

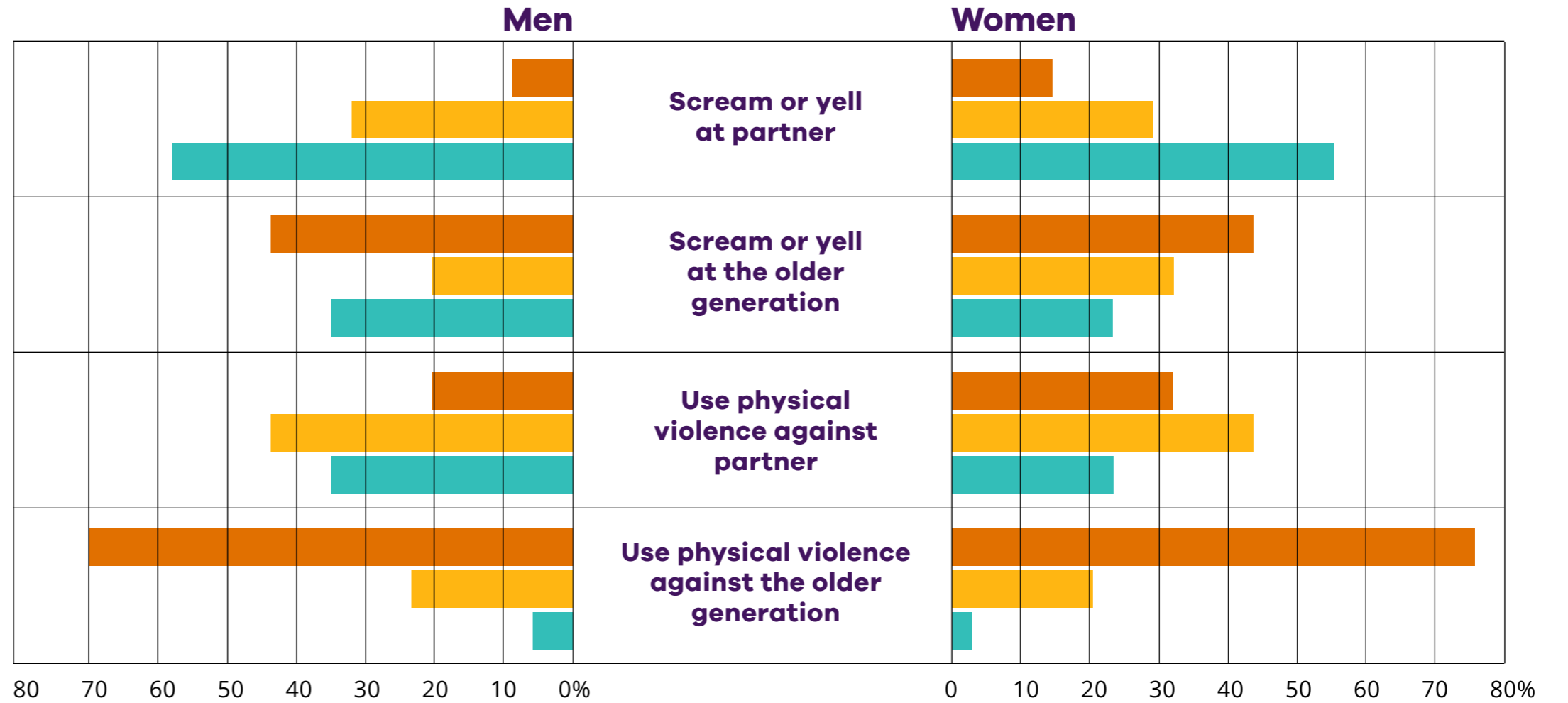
"A lot of people think abuse is just physical or verbal, but you feeding your child burgers and hot dogs every day is a form of abuse."

(professional)

Data from Saba

Emotional & physical maltreatment

Legend
 → Not common (scores 1-3)
 → Somewhat common (scores 4-6)
 → (Very) common (scores 7-10)



Example: almost 60% of participants reported that it is (very) common for men on Saba to scream at their partner.

Example: more than 40% of participants reported that it is somewhat common for men on Saba to use physical violence against their partner.

Clarification

- Participants reported that screaming and yelling between partners is very common in families on Saba.
- More than half of participants reported that it is (somewhat) common for men and women to scream at the older generation of (grand)parents.
- Most participants reported that physical violence between partners is (somewhat) common between partners on Saba.
- Physical violence against the older generation is not common, although a sizable minority of over 20% does report that it is (somewhat) common.

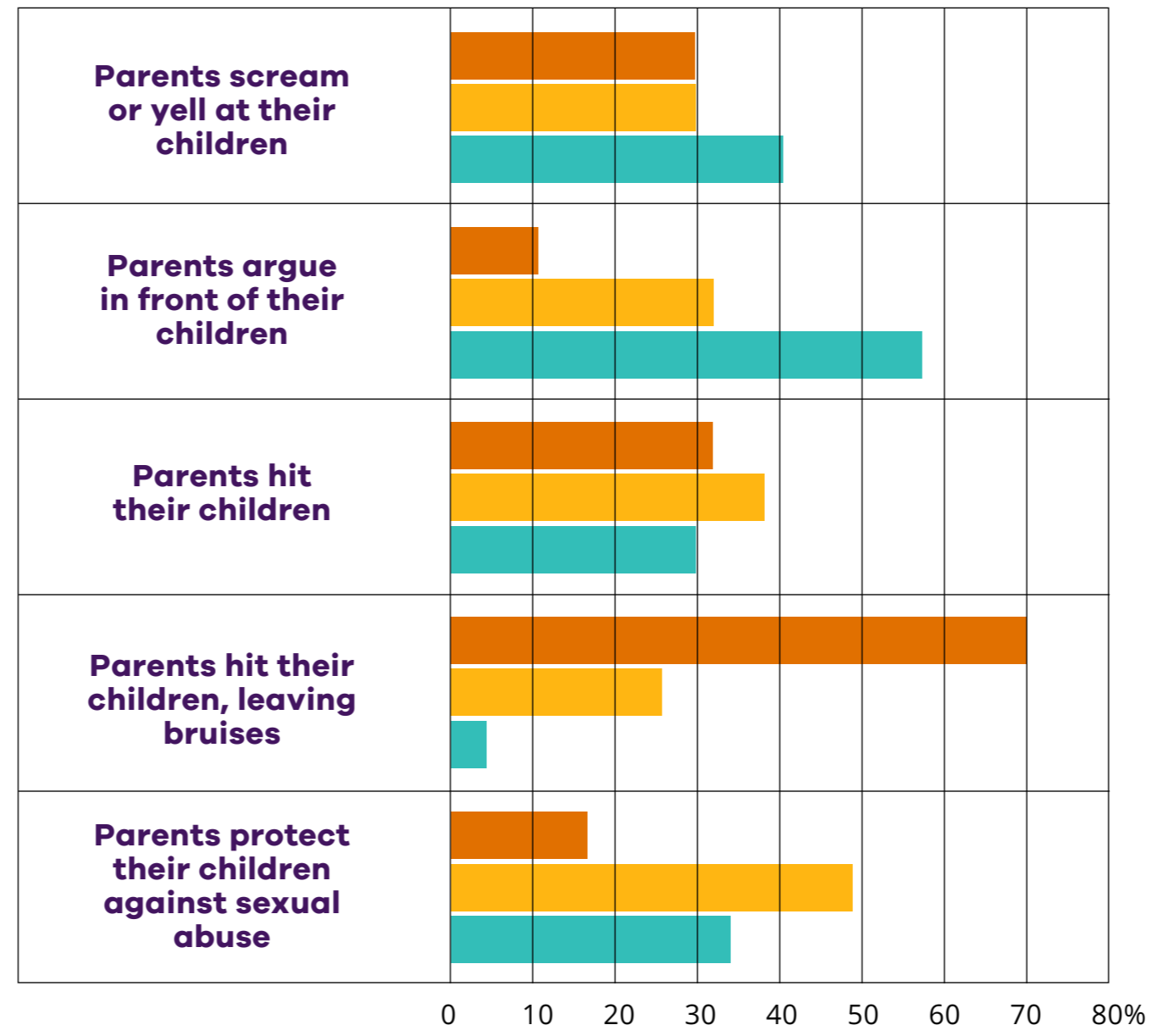
Data from Saba

Emotional & physical maltreatment

Legend
 → Not common (scores 1-3)
 → Somewhat common (scores 4-6)
 → (Very) common (scores 7-10)

Example: 30% of participants reported that it is not common for parents on Saba to scream at their children.

Example: more than 30% of participants reported that it is not common for parents on Saba to hit their children.



Clarification

- Over half of participants reported that it is (somewhat) common for parents to scream or yell at their children.
- Most participants reported that it is (very) common for parents to argue in front of their children.
- The majority of participants reported that hitting children is (somewhat) common on Saba.
- Most participants reported that it is not common for parents on Saba to hit their children leaving bruises. Still, about 25% mentioned that this does occur on Saba.
- Most participants reported that it is (somewhat) common for parents on Saba to protect their children against sexual abuse. The fact that this is not clearly very common is noteworthy.

Voices from Saba

What people observe

“Kids are just home hungry and getting abused from parents because they’re frustrated. They have nothing to give the kids.”

(adult)

“Some parents, too, they’ve been raised so rough. They just take it (out) on their child.”

(youth)

“I definitely know about child abuse, physically or verbally, and especially being Caribbean, this is how we are raised.”

(youth)

“In love relationships you see a lot of jealousy and insecurities, and that creates issues, verbal mostly, but sometimes physical.”

(professional)

“I think we have a cultural thing that we’re very loud which can be interpreted as yelling, and often it is yelling”

(professional)

“Sometimes you and your spouse have an argument, and even though you think the kids are playing, they do hear. And that also affects children.”

(professional)

“A lot of families fight over some of the most basic stuff, and in relationships, there is toxicness amongst people, like manipulation and stuff like that on the island.”

(youth)

What people would like to see improved

Professionals, adults, and youth all emphasized the need for more awareness campaigns about improving family communication and preventing family violence on Saba.

- Parents should not use hitting as a discipline tool for their children;
- Parents should avoid having to raise their voice to children, but learn other ways to communicate;
- Adults should not blame children for problems, but take responsibility for their own role;
- Find ways to motivate parents to want to change;
- Children should be given more opportunities to have their voices heard, be respected;
- The taboo on talking about family problems and abuse should be removed.

These observations are closely connected to the recommendations concerning support services (see part 6).

Reflection

- Domestic violence in the form of verbal abuse is seen as quite common on Saba. Physical abuse seems far less common, but is still a concern, especially in partner relationships.
- Child maltreatment in the form of verbal abuse or hitting is seen as quite common on Saba. Hitting children is a culturally accepted part of regular discipline.
- The pattern of quite harsh parenting and not so much room for children to express their opinions points towards a generally authoritarian parenting style (common in the Caribbean) as opposed to a more authoritative parenting style that favors non-violent communication with room for children's voices (Roopnarine & Jin, 2016).
- This finding is consistent with research showing that authoritarian parenting and domestic violence are widespread in the Caribbean region (Bissessar & Huggins, 2022; Fry et al., 2021). Scholars have noted that the historical background of the wider region can explain some of these patterns (e.g., Brereton, 2010).
- Participants on Saba did show that they are aware of other parenting norms in the Netherlands and elsewhere, in relation to international children's rights and legislation in the Caribbean Netherlands. They are also generally able to describe domestic violence and child maltreatment in those terms.
- There appears to be growing support for non-violent alternatives and better parent-child and family communication with more room for children to voice their opinions. However, it is seen as a challenge to put this development into practice because it contrasts with traditional Caribbean parenting that is more authoritarian in nature.
- Although the survey and interviews did not explicitly address alcohol and drug abuse, this topic did come up during the conversations with professionals and adults as an important factor in problematic communication in the family context. They suggested to pay more attention to raising awareness about the dangers of alcohol and drugs for both adults and youth on Saba, and to more consistently enforce the alcohol ban for youth.
- Previous reports on domestic violence and/or child maltreatment have underscored the importance of awareness raising as part of a comprehensive strategy to address and prevent violence in family relations (Kloosterboer, 2013; De Bruijn, Kriek & De Vaan, 2014; UNICEF, 2019).

Recommendation 3

Confirming norms concerning non-violent parenting and family communication on Saba.

Confirm the norm that all forms of violence against women, children and anyone else in the domestic environment and wider community are unjustifiable and need to be prevented.

- Carry out this norm in culturally appropriate public awareness campaigns on Saba in offline and online form;
- Repeat and reconfirm this norm in all relevant policies, protocols, working methods, trainings and other measures to implement laws and policies;
- Invite community role models and influencers from Saba to support the norm confirmation and public campaigning around it;
- Invest in comprehensive education about children's rights, women's rights and related issues around human dignity, (gender) equality and intergenerational social justice on Saba (primary and secondary schools);
- Organize local professionally mediated broadcasts of roundtable dialogues with participants from different age groups, including young people, to create better intergenerational understanding in general and constructive discussions about changing norms favoring non-violent parenting and family relationships and lifting the taboo on discussing these topics;
- Pay specific attention to the ambivalence concerning the transition to non-violent forms of child-rearing and family communication in light of the still widely present more traditional Caribbean authoritarian parenting style;
- Develop preventive training programs on Saba to foster non-violent parenting and communication norms.

Make use of lessons learned from previous initiatives taken by the Public Entity of Saba, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (ZJCN) and UNICEF to address violence against children and to provide comprehensive family support (see e.g. the COMBI-plan developed by UNICEF The Netherlands in close collaboration with the Public Entity of Saba).

Invite UNICEF and other stakeholders to support these initiatives.

Target group: Public Entity of Saba, in close collaboration with community groups and key stakeholders, and with the assistance of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (ZJCN), Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and UNICEF.



Part 4

Gender inequalities on Saba

Gender roles

In the conversations during the research team's visit to Saba, it was clear that there are several concerns regarding gender roles on the island. People mentioned the fact that women on Saba take on most of the care for children and other family responsibilities, and that children often do not spend much time with their fathers. Statistics from Saba show that about a third of young people (aged 0-25 years) live in a single-parent home (CBS, 2018/2021), mostly headed by mothers according to locals.

Research shows that such gender roles in the Caribbean context are learned from a young age and that parents play an important role in how boys and girls learn about what is and is not expected of them in family life (Roopnarine & Jin, 2016).

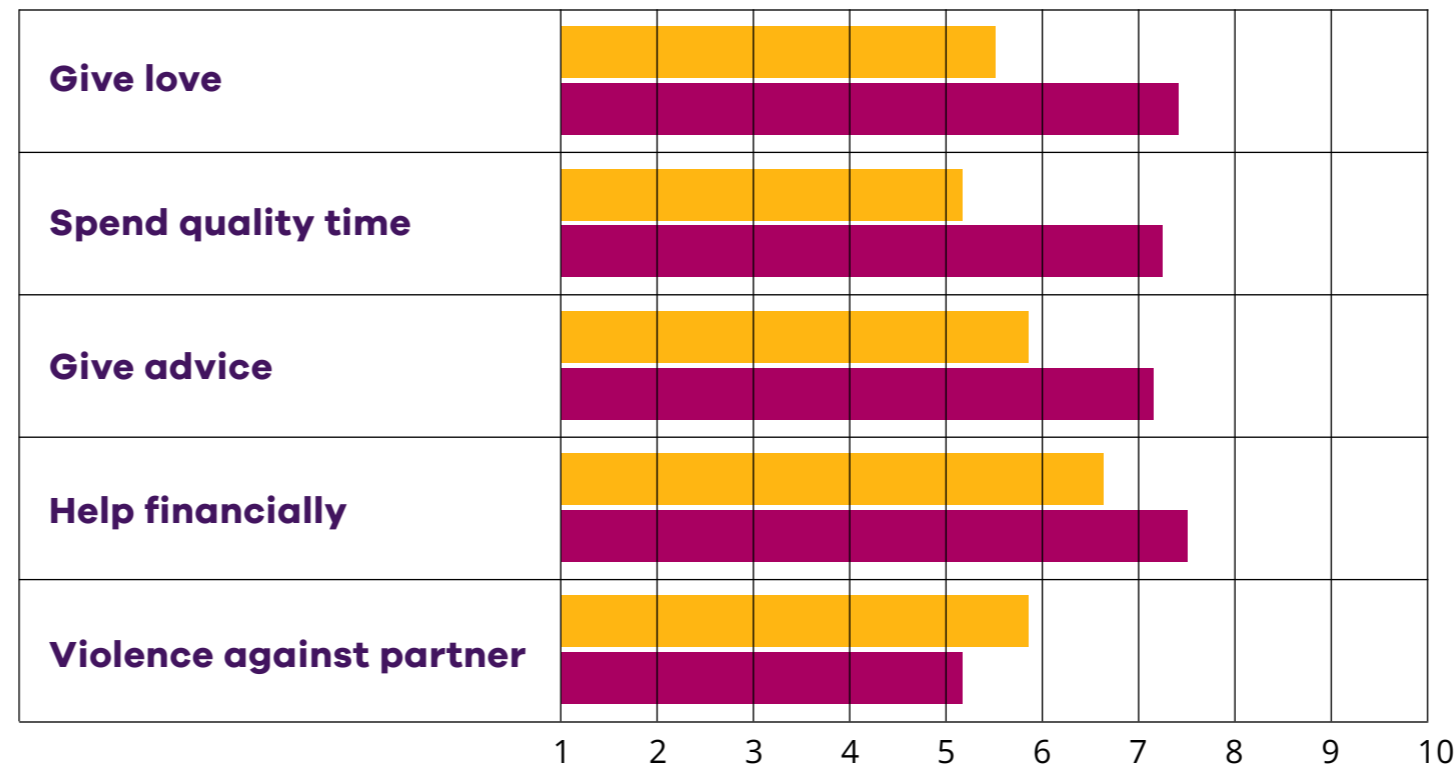
In both the survey and the interviews, participants were asked about differences in family involvement between men and women, and about differences in how boys and girls are raised.

Data from Saba

In the survey, participants reported their impressions of how men and women on Saba engage in family life. The results for men and women were shown in the previous parts of this report.

The figures summarize the gender differences in a different way by comparing the average scores (on a 10-point scale) for men and women regarding some key aspects of family life. Only those behaviors where the difference between men and women were statistically significant are shown.

Men and women



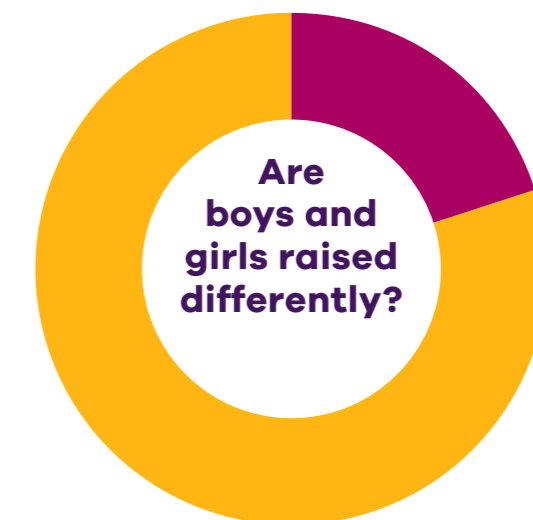
These results confirm the pattern from the earlier section on family relationships: according to the participants, in families on Saba men are less likely to give love, spend quality time, give advice, or help financially. Men are seen as more likely to show physical violence against their partner than women.

Parenting differences

In the survey, participants were asked whether they think there are differences between mothers and fathers in how they raise children, and whether there are differences between how boys and girls are raised on Saba.



4% No
96% Yes



20% No
80% Yes

Voices from Saba

"I can see that the burden is often too much on the mothers in the Caribbean, the Dutch Caribbean, maybe Caribbean in general. The fathers are not involved and the kids are missing that part of their lives."

(adult)

"Fathers are never present, you walk around Saba 95% kids are with their mums, their dads are always too busy."

(survey)

** The quotes shown here are from the interviews but also from the survey section where participants could write down their impressions of gender differences on Saba.*

"Mothers are stricter. Fathers are more lenient partly because they feel they need to make up for lack of being actively involved in the upbringing of their child."

(survey)

"In this community, it seems that the mother is expected to do most of the caring for the child and the father's primary responsibility is to discipline."

(survey)

"A lot of single moms on Saba, without receiving support from the fathers."

(survey)

"The amount of affection and love is more seen with females than males."

(survey)

"Boys are given more freedom in movement whereas girls are more supervised. Less love is shown to boys and they are taught to be "tough", whereas girls allowed to have emotions."

(survey)

"Boys get more freedom, tend to get away with more rule breaking while girls are more restricted and allowed less."

(survey)

"Girls are given less independence and the emotional needs of boys are rarely taken into consideration."

(survey)

Reflection

- The general observation by participants is that women take on the lion share of caring tasks in family life, both in relation to family members in general and when it comes to raising children.
- It has been shown by various scholars that current gender norms and roles in the region are strongly related to the history of the region (e.g., Blank, 2013).
- The fact that there are clear indications that boys and girls are being raised differently suggests that these patterns are transferred from one generation to the next, with girls learning to take family responsibility and boys being encouraged to have freedom. This is consistent with previous research findings (Endendijk et al., 2018).
- Studies also show that fathers in the Caribbean are more likely to be take on caring family roles when relationships are stable and socioeconomic conditions are favorable (Roopnarine, 2012), suggesting that contextual factors need to be taken into account in policy making.
- A related concern is that poverty rates are particularly high in single-mother families (Nationale Ombudsman, 2022), so that the absence of fathers also has an indirect negative influence on children through financial struggles of the mothers.
- Although the participants did not specifically formulate suggestions for improvement in this area, many expressed frustration with the current gendered division of tasks in families.
- The promotion of gender equality (in law and practice) and the prevention of stereotyped roles for women and men are considered key elements in the prevention of domestic violence and violence against women, including girls (see preamble and art. 12 Istanbul Convention; CRC Committee 2011, para. 72 (b)).

Recommendation 4

Promoting gender equality on Saba

- Invest in culturally appropriate awareness campaigns about gender stereotypes and how they perpetuate the gendered division of labor in families that puts the burden mostly on women.
- Provide support to women specifically, given their primary role as caregivers in families.
- Acknowledge and support men who do want to be more involved but do not know how. Encourage men to reflect on their role as fathers. Someone on Saba suggested to the research team to use local role models for children. This idea could also be applied specifically to male role models for more involved fathering.
- Invest in policies that promote gender equality, among others with regard to parental leave, custodial arrangements after separation and assumed parental responsibilities, building on the guidance provided by international legal provisions laid down in the Istanbul Convention, and related Council of Europe recommendations, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Target group: Public Entity of Saba, in close collaboration with community groups and key stakeholders – where relevant with the assistance of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (ZJCN).



Part 5

Changing times on Saba

Generations and migration

During the research team's visit to Saba, local professionals often referred to the experience of a generation gap. Children and adolescents in the current younger generation were described as being difficult and disobedient and parents were described as incompetent to deal with those challenges. In addition, there was a sense of nostalgia about the olden days in which families seemed to have been closer and children more respectful.

Another theme that came up during these conversations is the fact that the culture on Saba is also changing because the migration rates are high. Many local Sabans leave the island to study and work elsewhere, and new people come to Saba from other countries, in recent years mostly from Latin America and from the European Netherlands.

The study did not collect survey data on generational differences or migration, but these topics were mentioned quite frequently in the interviews.

Voices from Saba

Generation gap

“With these children, they just simply don’t listen. It’s a whole other generation, we’re struggling at what to do with a generation of today.”

(professional)

“Nowadays, we see a difference in children. They really don’t have no responsibility. They get up in the morning, they bathe, they dress, they go to school, they come back home. They don’t do anything.”

(adult)

“Okay. Yeah, love isn’t love anymore. I don’t know what type of love are they calling it nowadays because years ago, love was love. If you said to somebody you love them, it’s only them, but nowadays things are different.”

(adult)

“There is a huge generational gap between us. It’s hard to understand this generation the way they’re thinking.”

(adult)

“The village, the message, the raising a child that is something I grew up with here, you find it a little bit still, not so much now. So everyone is doing their own thing, which is a bit sad.”

(adult)

“Children got a lot more rights in these days than back in the day. No matter what you tell parents, there is a certain way that they think children should be raised and they got that in their head.”

(youth)

Voices from Saba

Migration and change

“Manners and respect used to be instilled in you. But now because the local population is shrinking and international population is growing, their cultures and beliefs are overriding the local ones.”

(adult)

“So if there’s coming a lot of influence from abroad, the core of Saba can be vanished.”

(adult)

“I would say the Filipino community in particular, they’re more of a reserved, closed community. They don’t really interact very much with locals.”

(professional)

“You need to ensure that you’re not going out with an immigrant, a good family tree is always important. But I think that was more like maybe 30 years ago, 40 years ago. Now we’re quite integrated.”

(professional)

“The high migration rate does something to people here. They’re very friendly, but only up to a point because they’re thinking: you may be nice, but you will leave again.”

(professional)

“So if a lot of immigrants come with their own culture. We’re very open. We listen to each other. I mean, we celebrate the Dominican Republic independence, Jamaican independence, Colombian independence.”

(professional)

“We have a lot of different cultures on a small island. And of course, families are interracial a lot, especially with Spanish, white, black, almost all of the kids. Sometimes it can be good or sometimes bad because there’s a little bit of racism that still goes on to which race gets more opportunities.”

(professional)

Reflection

- It is clear that the generation gap and culture change that are experienced on Saba can be challenges to community cohesion. This is important to address in the design and implementation of support services for families and community members.
- The generation gap is also reflected in the finding that older generations feel they need to be strict and clear to young people who in their eyes misbehave or do not show respect. Strict discipline is often considered an essential element in this regard, which may not be conducive to inclusive and non-violent family and community communication that is also deemed important.
- These observations also speak to the finding that youth do not feel taken seriously. It is important to note that not giving children a voice in decisions that are important to their lives conflicts with their right to be heard (art. 12 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child).
- The generation gap that is experienced by both the older and the younger generations could jeopardize the strength of the Saba community and its families that was highlighted at the beginning of the results section. It could also hamper attempts to effectively address domestic violence and child maltreatment.
- The influence of migration is also a theme that is related to feelings of nostalgia when there were less influences from outside, and a stronger mainstream Saba culture. In addition, there are concerns about the instability of the community with so many people leaving and arriving.
- On the one hand there is mixing of cultures which can bring different groups together in a family bond, but can also cause tensions when the cultural divides between the two merging families is difficult to bridge.
- The general feeling during the research team's visit to Saba was that there was uncertainty on how to engage and reach some of the more recent migrant groups.

Recommendation 5

Give voice to different generations, including children, in all family-related policies and practices, and in community engagement.

- As part of the investment in community engagement (see recommendation 1), it is important to engage and empower community members from different generations at the same time. This can be done through local roundtable dialogues (town hall meetings) with participants from different age groups, including young people, to create better intergenerational understanding on family life on Saba (see also recommendation 3).
- Moreover, all recommendations should be translated into concrete policy and practice in close collaboration with various generations of community members, and in particular also young people by giving them opportunities to express their views and by giving due weight to their views in accordance with article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Age should not be a limiting factor in this regard; younger children (e.g. primary school age) should be invited as well (CRC Committee, 2009, para. 20; see e.g. Kinderombudsman, 2021).
- Ensure the involvement of representatives of specific migrant groups in the society of Saba (e.g. Filipino community) in the above-mentioned actions.

Target group: Public Entity of Saba, in close collaboration with community groups and key stakeholders.

Part 6

Support services on Saba

What is available on Saba?

Support services and other stakeholders

The previous parts have shown that there are both strengths and challenges concerning family life on Saba that ought to be addressed. Support services play a critical role in this regard. Several support services are available on Saba to offer help, care, assistance and protection to families and community members. These services are generally very much appreciated. There are, however, also some concerns that require attention.

List of services and stakeholders:

- **Multidisciplinair overleg**
- **Politie**
- **Slachtofferhulp**
- **SRCN**
- **ZJCN Jeugdzorg**
- **Voogdijraad**
- **Mental Health Caribbean**
- **Legal Advisor OLS**
- **OLS**
- **Gezag**

Voices from Saba

What people observe

“Here on the island, there are many organisations that can give care and aid to people, but they don’t know about it.”

(professional)

“Nobody trusts, because you go to the doctor the next day, within 10 minutes, everybody knows why you were there.”

(professional)

“Well, everyone will know what you’ve done because it’s a small community.”

(adult)

“A lot of people are very prideful, stubborn, would not want to ask for help.”

(youth)

“Because some of them just don’t trust them. A social worker is a social worker to take your child away.”

(youth)

“Social workers on the island are very, very, very helpful.”

(adult)

If you needed, like a child psychologist or child therapist, we don’t have that expertise.”

(professional)

“It is important to have consistency that there are certain people that are giving the information not for once and then go. People need a face. They know, okay, I can rely on you. I can come to you. But if today you are there, tomorrow it’s me, there’s no trust.”

(professional)

What people would like to see improved

- Youth on Saba suggested that it is important to make people more aware of the support options on Saba.
- Youth also advocated for more organized leisure opportunities for young people on Saba. This would help them spend their free time constructively (and away from alcohol and drugs).
- Both adults and youth emphasized the importance of ensuring confidentiality in all services; Guana Chat was mentioned as good example.
- Adults and professionals mentioned that it would be good to increase training opportunities for local people on Saba in the social domain, so that it is less necessary to hire people from outside.
- Professionals also noted that longer opening hours for childcare would be helpful to parents who have to work multiple jobs and cannot always be home in time to take care of the children.
- Professionals mentioned that they would recommend more communication with people from the community, not just through Facebook, but to really visit homes, churches, etc.

Reflection

Support services are vital for the support of families and are considered part of the implementation of the obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights to support parents and others responsible for the upbringing of children (see art. 18 (2) and 27 (3) CRC; see also art. 3 (3) CRC).

Support services are also key for the prevention of and protection against domestic violence (art. 16 Istanbul Convention) and child maltreatment (art. 19 CRC).

- In order to effectively promote non-violent alternatives for child-rearing and better parent-child and family communication with more room for children to voice their opinions, support services should provide concrete examples to parents and other family members that will foster the growing support for non-violence family interactions.

Support services are present on Saba and are also appreciated by the participants, but there are concerns about several issues:

- People's lack of familiarity with services, not knowing where to find them;
- Lack of confidentiality because of the small island community;
- Lack of continuity in support relationships because of high migration rates;
- Lack of specialized services because of the small scale of the island.

Earlier research and reports also pointed to the importance of accessible and anonymous support services for both adults and children (Kloosterboer, 2013; De Bruijn, Kriek & De Vaan, 2014; UNICEF, 2019; Kinderombudsman, 2021; CRC Committee 2022; see also Zijlstra et al., 2021). The same is true for specific groups in the society of Saba, including migrant communities.

The sometimes negative perceptions towards parents among professionals may stand in the way of the effectiveness of the services provided to families, parents and children.



Recommendation 6

Strengthen support services for youth and adults

- The role and functioning of support services should be clearly defined in legislation and policies. The recently developed Government Decree (*Besluit maatschappelijke ondersteuning en bestrijding huiselijk geweld en kindermishandeling BES*) providing a legal basis for the '*Advies- en meldpunt huiselijk geweld en kindermishandeling*' and the compulsory '*beschermingscode huiselijk geweld en kindermishandeling*' can make an important contribution.
- Develop intensive and 'hands on' (possibly door to door) personalized support services within the community. The small size of the population provides opportunities for highly individualized support and care. Such an approach also fosters sustainable job opportunities on the island for social services and mental health professionals, benefitting both youth and adults. → *continuation*

Recommendation 6

- Provide training for professionals in the social domain regarding confidentiality and invest in anonymous off-shore support services for youth and adults alike, where confidentiality is guaranteed. Guana Chat seems quite successful and is a good example. This could be a blueprint for a similar service for adults.
- Make sure that all community members of Saba know about the existence of support services and understand how to effectively and privately access these. The earlier recommendation about fostering openness about family problems (part 3 of the results) would hopefully also increase the use of the appropriate services.
- Invest in sustainability of services, for example through more training and job opportunities in the social domain, in light of the high migration rates of professionals on Saba. Invest in more opportunities for leisure activities for young people to prevent them being home or on the streets unsupervised after school, especially in the context of many parents working multiple jobs to make ends meet.
- Make sure that support services work within a comprehensive framework of family support and collaborate where appropriate and relevant. And invest in education and training concerning the role and responsibilities of each service provider and other key stakeholders (government, judiciary, police, among others) and the prevention of feeling unequipped to act.
- Ensure that support services offer concrete ways to parents and families for non-violent child-rearing and better parent-child and family communication with more room for children to voice their opinions, while building on previous initiatives taken by the Public Entity of Saba, different Ministries and UNICEF.

- Invest in comprehensive education about children's rights, women rights and related issues around human dignity, (gender) equality and intergenerational social justice on Saba for professionals.
- Invite representatives of various generations, including young people, and migrant communities within the community of Saba to provide input for the process of continuous learning and improvement of services.
- Make use of lessons learned from previous initiatives taken by the Public Entity of Saba, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (ZJCN) and UNICEF to provide comprehensive family support and invite UNICEF and other stakeholders to support these initiatives.

Target group: Public Entity of Saba, in close collaboration with community groups and key stakeholders, and with the assistance of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (ZJCN), Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and UNICEF.



Overarching

recommendations

General points of attention

After having presented the study's findings, reflections and recommendations on Saba, the report concludes with a number of general points of attention, which bear relevance for all three islands in the Caribbean Netherlands, as well as some overarching recommendations.

- Because of the strong overlap in the identified areas for improvement across the Caribbean Netherlands, sharing best practices and co-developing new initiatives across the three islands is recommended to strengthen systematic changes. The newly developed strategy for the Intercountry Taskforce on Children's Rights (*Interlandelijke Taskforce Kinderrechten*) comes with an opportunity to exchange knowledge, experiences and good practices to promote the protection of children against all forms of violence. A similar strategy could be developed in the future concerning domestic violence and violence against women, under the realm of the Istanbul Convention.
- All recommendations need to be integrated in the overarching, comprehensive strategy for the Caribbean Netherlands on family relationships, domestic violence and child maltreatment. More specifically, the renewal of the *Bestuursakkoord* in 2024 provides an opportunity in this regard.
- All actions should be guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Istanbul Convention and related international standards.
- All actions should be supported – financially and otherwise – by the Dutch government in ways that acknowledge and respect local needs and wishes, also considering the sensitivity between the Caribbean Netherlands and the European part of the Netherlands – As the research team was told during the visit to Saba: "Certain things that fit in the European Netherlands just simply do not fit here and then they fail, which is not good for local motivation."
- To aid efficiency, the practical implementation of the recommendations would ideally build on structures, plans and policies already present, formalizing and putting into practice what might already be there informally or just on paper, and, thus, consolidating and furthering local strength.

"Certain things that fit in the European Netherlands just simply do not fit here and then they fail, which is not good for local motivation."

Recommendation 7

Periodic collection of disaggregated data

- Repeat this study every five years.
- Assess how this periodic data collection can be connected to existing or future data collection and monitoring instruments, including the Youth Monitor for the Caribbean Netherlands (Netherlands Statistics), the reports of the National Ombudsman and Children's Ombudsman, UNICEF and the Interagency Taskforce on Children's Rights.
- Consider conducting smaller and more specific measurements, tailored to the island's needs, in the interim, for example on the impact of the recently announced increase of the social minimum, or on the issue of sexual abuse.

Target audience: the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (ZJCN) and other relevant Ministries (Interior and Kingdom Relations; Social Affairs; Justice and Security), together with the Public Entities.

Recommendation 8

Entry into force of the Istanbul Convention for the Caribbean Netherlands

- Set a specific date for the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention in the near future and continue to prepare its implementation, as explained in the letter to Parliament by the State Secretary of Health, Welfare and Sports in February 2022 (State Secretary of Health, Welfare and Sports, 2022a).
- Continue to invest in the required general measures of implementation of this and other relevant international legal instruments.

Target audience: Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (ZJCN) together with other relevant Ministries of the Dutch Government.



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Zorg en Jeugd Caribisch Nederland
Ministerie van Volksgezondheid,
Welzijn en Sport

Saba

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