

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

Sint Eustatius

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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 Sint Eustatius.
- 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 Sint Eustatius. The three separate reports are accompanied by an overarching summary concerning the Caribbean Netherlands altogether.



Legal and policy context

- Sint Eustatius 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 Sint Eustatius 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.statiagovernment.com/governance>).
- As part of the Caribbean Netherlands, Sint Eustatius 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 Sint Eustatius, 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 Sint Eustatius 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 Sint Eustatius

- In February 2023, a delegation of the research team (TL, JM, and JK) visited Sint Eustatius 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 met with a total of 26 professionals (all working with youth and/or parents) and a group of 7 adolescents (youth panel). The professionals were representatives of the following organizations: the Public Entity, youth debate group, Expertise Centre St. Eustatius, Voogdijraad, Stichting Reclassering Caribisch Nederland (SRCN), Golden Rock basisschool Seventh Day Adventist primary school Governor de Graaff primary school, Bethel Methodist primary school, Gwendoline van Putten dsecondary school, two Commissioners.
- The main issues raised during the team visit to Sint Eustatius 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 7 of 26 professionals the team talked to were born on Sint Eustatius);
 - » 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 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 Sint Eustatius.
- Participants asked to report about their impression of family life on the island (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



94 participants started the survey



60 participants completed the survey

Response rate: ca 3-4% of adult population on St. Eustatius*

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

Sample sizes per topic



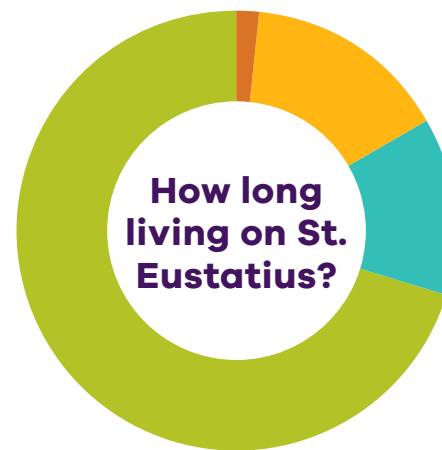
94 parenting questions



64 Family and partner questions

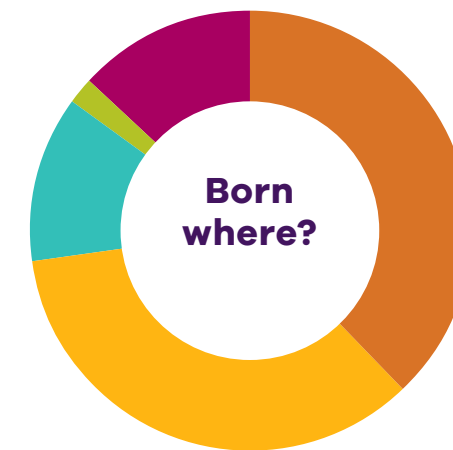


60 Background questions



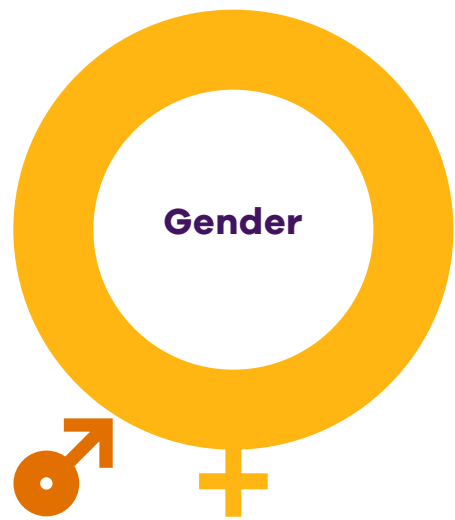
1,7% Less than 2 years
15% 2-5 years
13% 6-10 years
70% More than 10 years

- The majority of participants have lived on Sint Eustatius for more than 10 years.



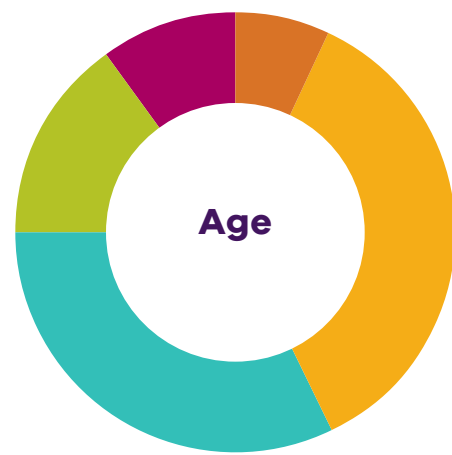
38% Sint Eustatius
35% Other Caribbean Island
12% Netherlands
2% Mainland South America
13% Other

- 38% of participants were born on Sint Eustatius itself (in the total Sint Eustatius population this is 33%).
- 35% of participants were born on another Caribbean island (in the total Sint Eustatius population this is about 30%).
- 12% of participants were born in the Netherlands (in the total Sint Eustatius population this is about 6%).
- Based on island statistics, the category 'other' is likely to refer to people born in the US or Europe.



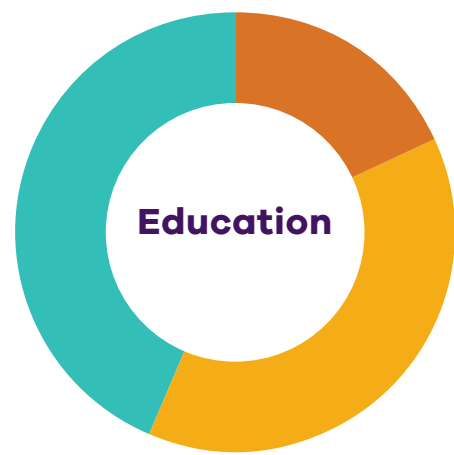
13% men 87% women

- Women were overrepresented among the participants.



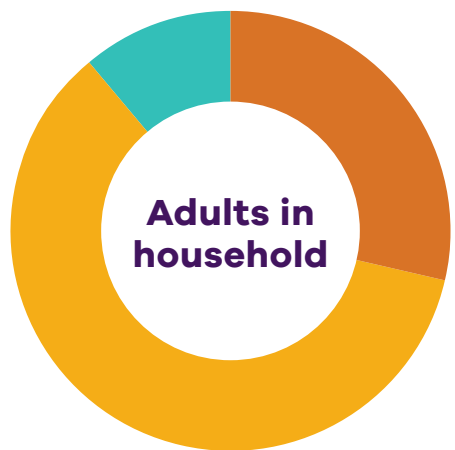
7% 20-30 32% 41-50
36% 31-40 15% 51-60
10% 60+

- The majority of participants were between 31 and 50 years old.



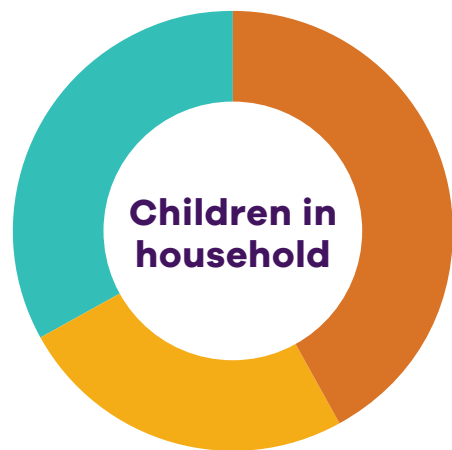
18% Low 43% High
38% Middle

- Almost half of the participants had a high educational level (for the total Sint Eustatius population this is 20%).



29% One 11% Three or more
61% Two

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



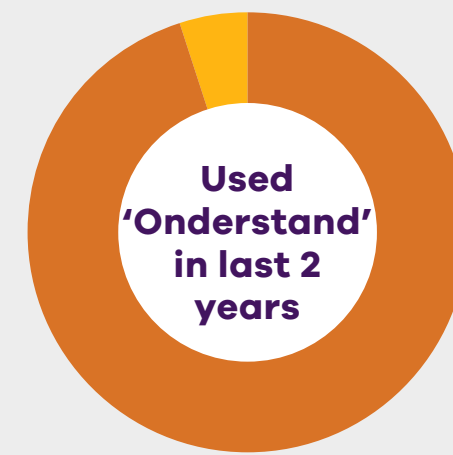
42% None 33% Two or more
25% One

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



27% None 28% Some
23% Minimal 22% A lot

- The participants are not representative of the Sint Eustatius population in terms of financial situation
- Almost half of the participants experienced at least some financial problems, only 27% had no financial problems at all



95% No 5% Yes

- However, only very few participants had made use of the 'Onderstand' in the past 2 years

Women were overrepresented among the participants.

Description of interview participants



14

Adults

- 9 women, 5 men
- Age 31 – 65 years
- 5 born on Sint Eustatius
- All have children
- 2 with high educational level



5

Youth

- 4 girls, 1 boy
- Age 15-19 years
- 3 born on Sint Eustatius
- All on Sint Eustatius 10+ years



10

Professionals

- 9 women, 1 man
- Age 34 – 59 years
- 1 born on Sint Eustatius
- 5 with high education level

Description of focus group participants



7

Adults

- 4 women, 3 men



2

Youth

- 2 girls,
- 19 years



6

Professionals

- 5 women, 1 man

Limitations of the study

The study's samples on Sint Eustatius 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.
 - Only about 10% of the participants were men. In research on families, men are typically underrepresented, which might also reflect the involvement of men in families more generally as will be discussed later on in this report.
 - The sample size of the survey on Sint Eustatius (60-94 people) constitutes a very good response rate for a small-island population, but these numbers are sometimes too small for statistical analyses.
 - This lack of statistical power 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

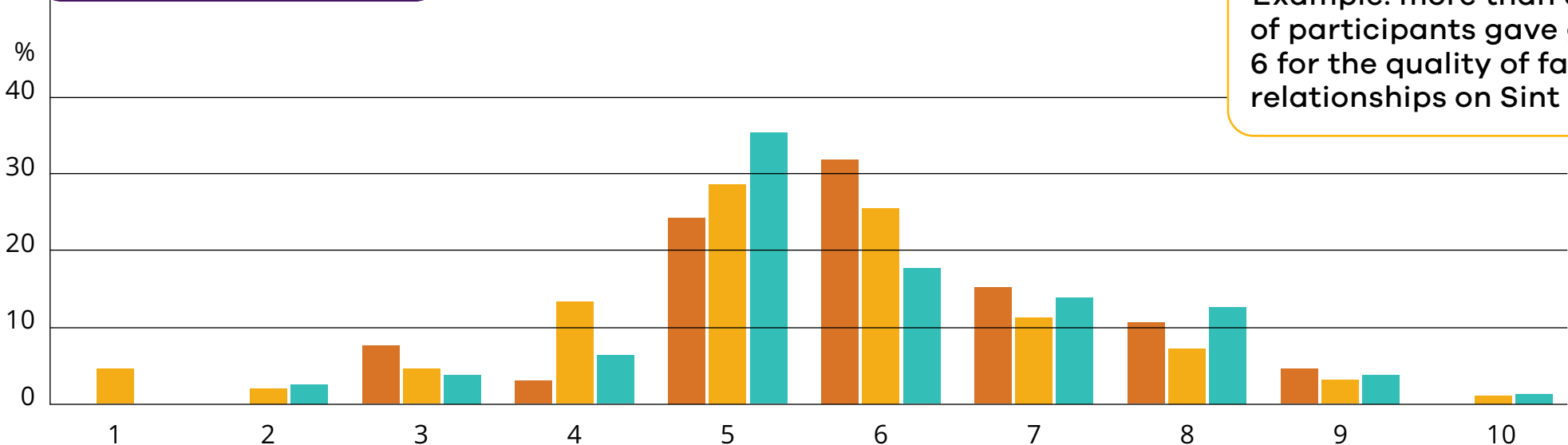
Survey: Grade 1-10 for the quality of...

Overall evaluation of family life on Sint Eustatius

Before diving into the results on specific topics regarding family life on Sint Eustatius, 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 Sint Eustatius.

Legend
→ Family relationships
→ Partner relationships
→ Parenting



Example: more than 30% of participants gave grade 6 for the quality of family relationships on Sint Eustatius.

Clarification

- The average grades are very close to 6 (just sufficient) for the quality of family relationships, and parenting on Sint Eustatius. The average grade for partner relationships was lower at 5.3.
- About a quarter of participants were (very) positive (grade 7 and higher) about the quality of family relationships, partner relationships, and parenting on Sint Eustatius.
- Very few participants were (very) negative (grade 3 or lower) about the quality of family relationships, partner relationships, and parenting on Sint Eustatius.
- Most participants chose a grade 5 or 6 for the three different domains of family life on Sint Eustatius. 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 Sint Eustatius will be presented.

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

The general structure of these sections consists of:

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

Parts 1 to 5 concern the substantive strengths and challenges concerning families on Sint Eustatius, 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 Sint Eustatius as well as for Bonaire and Saba.

Part 1

The strengths of family life on Sint Eustatius

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 Sint Eustatius. Many participants reflected on the positive sides of the fact that Sint Eustatius is a small island with a small community:

"And I feel like it's safe. Because everyone knows each other,"

(adult)

"I believe that one of the pros is the simple fact that it is a safe community."

(adult)

"Sint Eustatius is small and with us everyone is family. We help each other."

(adult)

"The small scale of this island, the coach or the leader or the supervisor, they know the parents, they see the parents every day."

(professional)

"You know everybody. Even if you're not related, they basically are family member to you already."

(youth)

"You can have a lot of freedom because Statia is a pretty safe place."

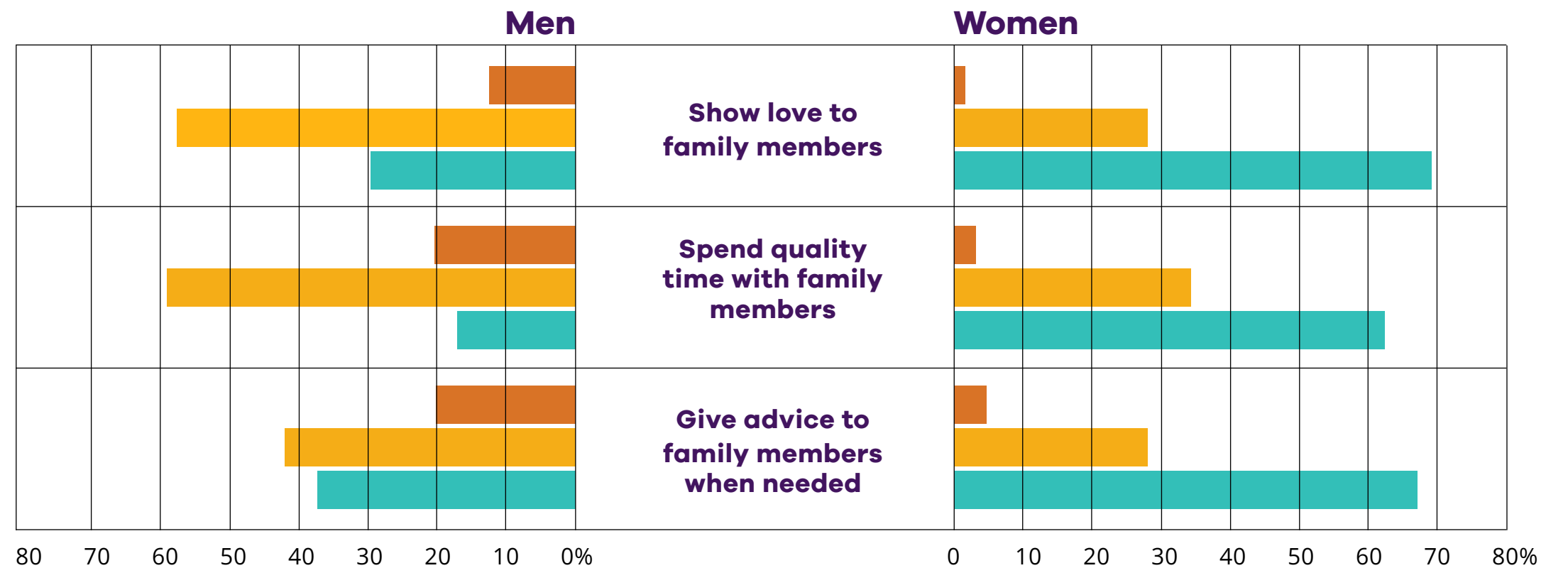
(youth)

"It takes a village to raise a child applies to Sint Eustatius."

(all sources)

Data from Sint Eustatius

Family life



Legend

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

Example: only 2% of participants reported that it is not common for women on Sint Eustatius to show love to their family members.

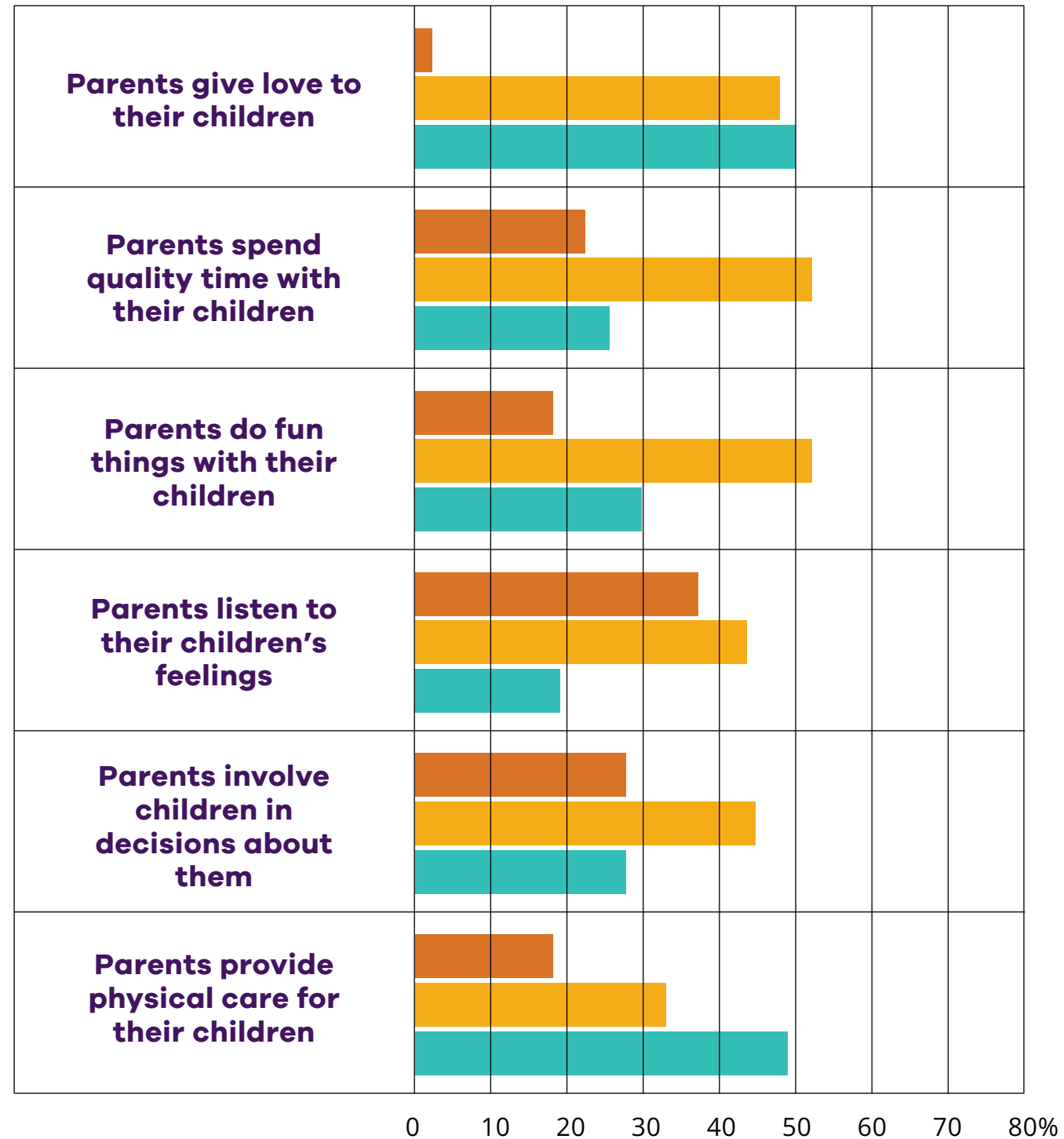
- Most participants reported that on Sint Eustatius women show more love, spend more quality time with their family, and are more likely to give advice to family members than men do (this is true for both male and female participants, but it has to be noted that there were only few male participants).
- Each of these aspects of family involvement were reported to be very common among women and mostly somewhat common among men on Sint Eustatius.

Data from Sint Eustatius

Parenting on Sint Eustatius

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

Example: 50% of participants reported that it is (very) common that parents on Sint Eustatius give love to their children.



Clarification

- Most participants reported that it is at least somewhat common for parents on Sint Eustatius to give love to their children, to spend quality time and do fun things with them.
- Quality time and doing fun things were reported to be less common on Sint Eustatius than giving love.
- Most participants reported that it is not that common for parents on Sint Eustatius to listen to their children's feelings, or to involve them in decisions about things that are important to the children's lives
- Most participants reported that it is somewhat to very common for parents on Sint Eustatius to provide physical care for their children.

Voices from Sint Eustatius

“The love of family is actually strong, no matter the circumstances.”

(adult)

“The family relationships are very strong here.”

(professional)

“Families have each others back no matter what.”

(youth)

“I see some children have a rough time with their parents, because the parents don't have enough time to spend with the children.”

(professional)

“One of the biggest problems we have in parenting is that people don't stay together.”

(adult)

“So you would always have this family member or family members that would always downplay you, make you feel like you're less than anything else.”

(youth)

Reflection

- Families on Sint Eustatius are seen as warm and loving and can rely on a network of close (extended) family 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 family life on Sint Eustatius.
- Yet, participants noticed some challenges in family life on Sint Eustatius as well. They note that women are more involved than men in family life and raising children, and that parents often do not have enough time to spend it with their children and have a listening ear. These challenges will be discussed in more detail in the next sections.
- The research team noticed during its visit to Sint Eustatius 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 researchers also met professionals who portrayed parents differently. These somewhat contrasting patterns are important to address (see also part 6 on support services).
- Although the small island also comes with challenges (“Some are very narrow minded, not open to other ways of life, other beliefs” - Adult), the strength of the island community on Sint Eustatius is clearly something to build on.

Recommendation 1

Make use of the strong warm bonds within families on Sint Eustatius 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.
- Make sure that Sint Eustatius and its 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 Sint Eustatius in close collaboration with community stakeholders (e.g. schools).

Part 2

The financial context of family life on Sint Eustatius

Financial hardship on Sint Eustatius

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 Sint Eustatius and many mentioned that there is substantial financial hardship on Sint Eustatius.

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

"We have a lot of hidden poverty. You would not believe that when you land here."

(professional)

"Poverty is a problem in Statia."

(professional)

"We do have poverty. Because everything is imported, food wise, and the rent is high and you can only pay your rent."

(adult)

"People get put out of their house because they don't pay their bills."

(youth)

"Because you are working for a salary, but the cost of living goes with everything.

So there's no room for savings, no room for vacations."

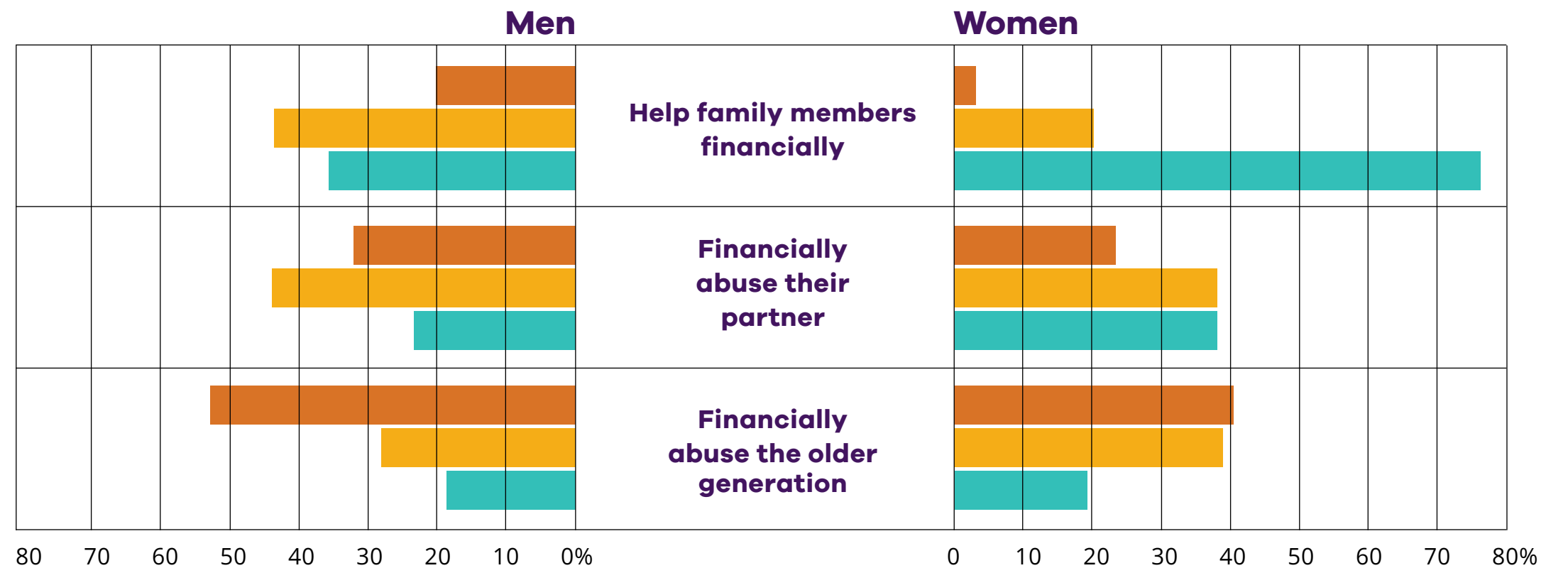
(professional)

"People have more than one job in order to make ends meet."

(professional)

Data from Sint Eustatius

Family finance



Legend

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

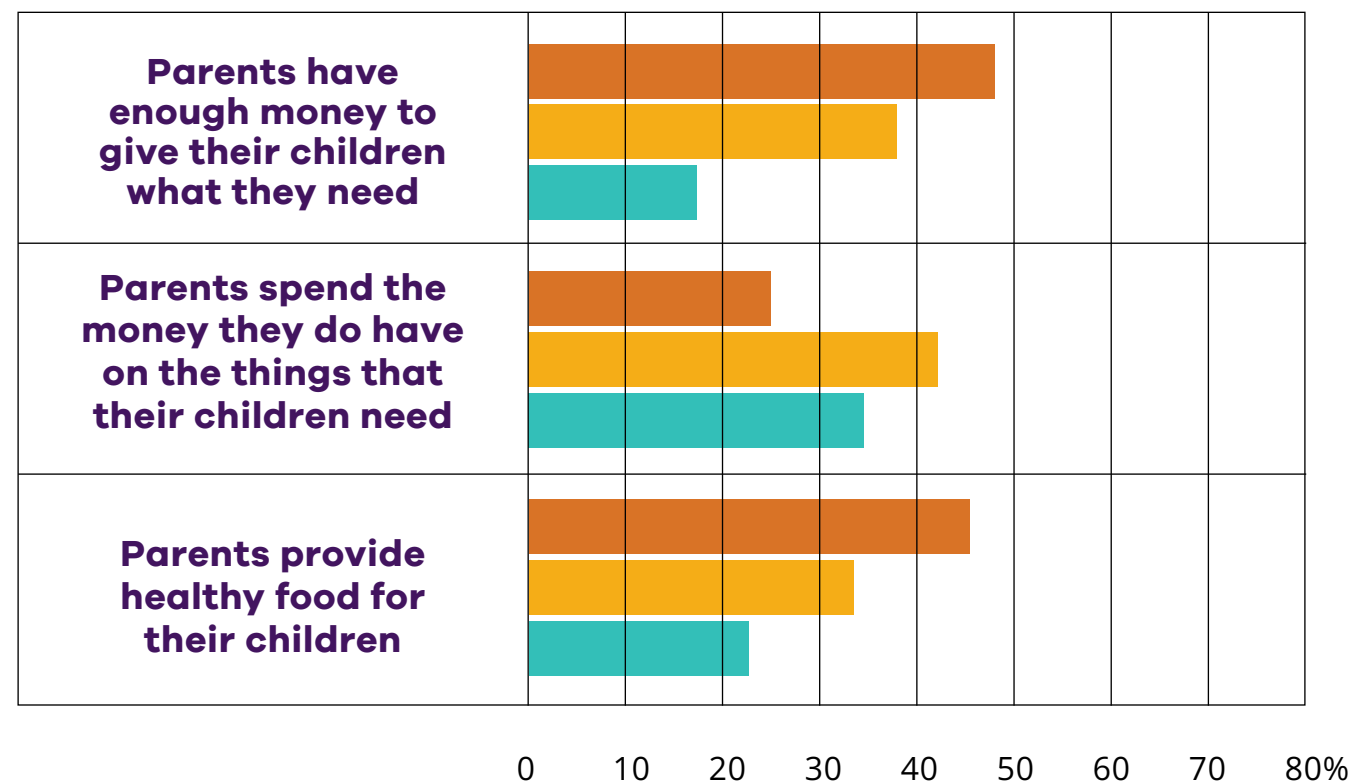
Example: about 35% of participants reported that it is (very) common for men on Sint Eustatius to help their family members financially.

Clarification

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

Data from Sint Eustatius

Family finance



Clarification

- Most participants said that it is not that common for parents on Sint Eustatius to have enough money to give their children what they need.
- Most participants said that it is not that common for parents on Sint Eustatius to spend the money they do have on what their children need.
- Most participants reported that it is not that common for parents on Sint Eustatius 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 45% of participants reported that it is not common for parents on Sint Eustatius to have enough money for their children.

Voices from Sint Eustatius

What people observe

“Parents will spend \$300 on buying the child sneakers, but don’t have money for food.”

(professional)

“You have some children that maybe go to school without breakfast.”

(professional)

“So you realize that you are not able to give the children what they need, not even once.”

(professional)

“It’s very hard to find a good job here on the island.”

(youth)

“It is very difficult because a lot of people who have a lot of kids are at minimum wage or lower.”

(youth)

“Salary is small and then cost of living is high, this is the reason some parents have two or three jobs.”

(adult)

What people would like to see improved

Professionals, adults, and youth all mentioned the importance of improving the financial situation of families on Sint Eustatius:

- More educational and training opportunities on Sint Eustatius so that the people living there can meet the requirements of local jobs that now often go to people from outside. That 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.
- Reduce taxes on products, because the import costs are too high and basic shopping is too expensive.
- 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 Sint Eustatius struggle financially. Although helping family members financially is very common on Sint Eustatius, 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 Sint Eustatius can lead to both supportive actions (helping) and abusive actions (taking advantage).
- When it comes to raising children, most families on Sint Eustatius do not always have enough money to give their children what they need, including healthy food.
- There are also concerns about budgeting skills on Sint Eustatius. 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 Sint Eustatius could have a positive impact on the financial situation of families on the island.

Recommendation 2

Invest in the financial health of Sint Eustatius, 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 work on Sint Eustatius. Because of the small scale of the island, 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 Sint Eustatius in close collaboration with community groups and key stakeholders.

Part 3

Maltreatment in family life on Sint Eustatius

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 Sint Eustatius.

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 Sint Eustatius

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 Sint Eustatius.
- 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 Sint Eustatius

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 can be verbal, it can be physical, mentally too."

(adult)

"Domestic violence is when a partner, when your partner, mentally, physically, verbally abuses you and you have no control over it."

(youth)

"So child abuse is when a child by anybody could be physically abused, emotionally, verbally, mentally."

(youth)

"Domestic violence is when it happens every day or every week, could be verbal, or hitting, then I call it relational violence."

(professional)

"For me, anything that makes a child feel as though the parent is bullying them, that makes them feel like they are stupid or worthless."

(professional)

"Child abuse could also be bad treatment, not feeding your child, purposely not feeding them as a form of punishment."

(adult)

"It was pretty normal in my generation, so I never once felt abused physically. If it stems from a place of love, it is not abuse."

(adult)

"I don't believe in European parenting, I believe in Caribbean parenting."

(adult)

Data from Sint Eustatius

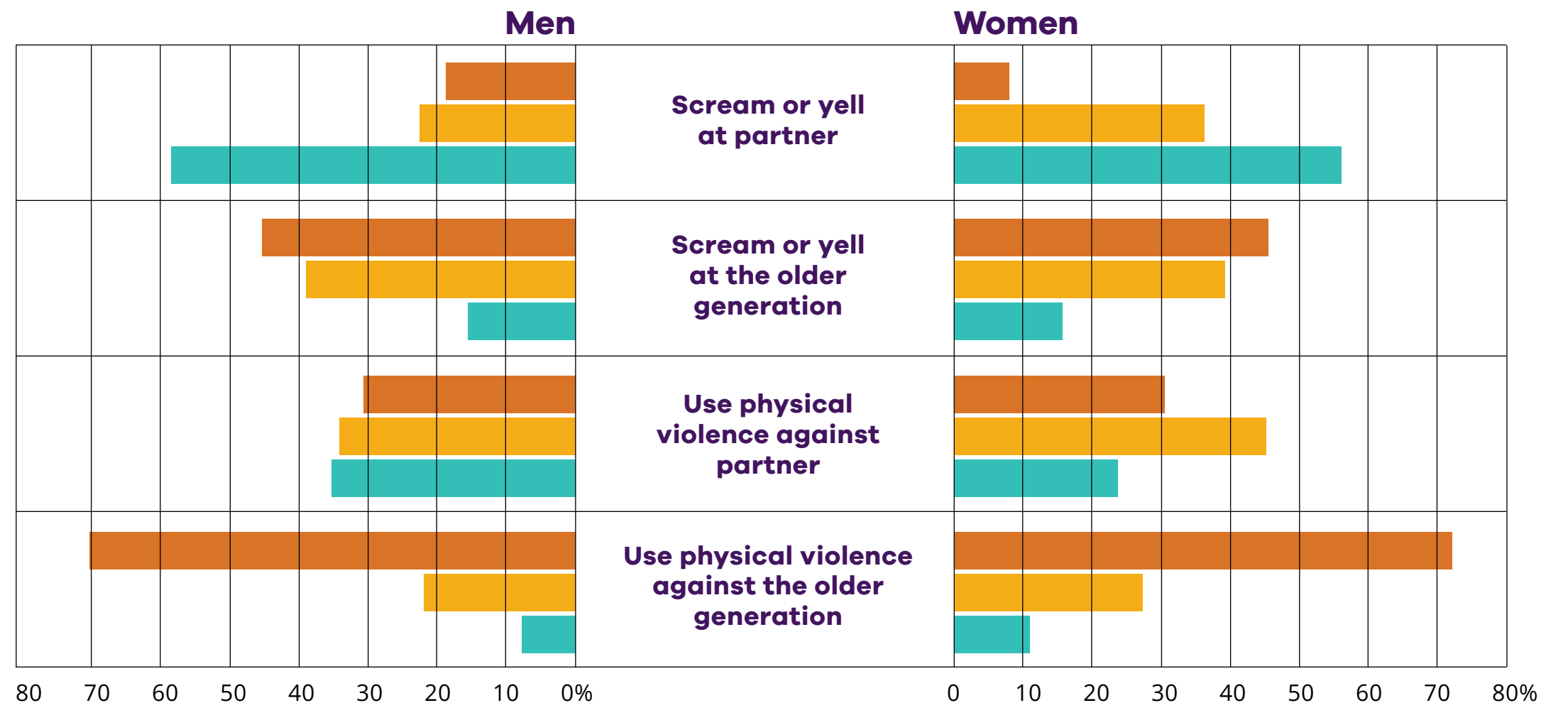
Emotional & physical maltreatment

Legend

→ Not common (scores 1-3)

→ Somewhat common (scores 4-6)

→ (Very) common (scores 7-10)



Example: close to 60% of participants reported that it is (very) common for men on Sint Eustatius to scream or yell at their partners.

Clarification

- Most participants reported that screaming at partners is (very) common among both men and women on Sint Eustatius.
- More than half of participants reported that it is (somewhat) common for men and women on Sint Eustatius to scream at the older generation.
- Participants were divided about how common physical violence among partners is on Sint Eustatius, but the majority did report that it is at least somewhat common among men and women.
- Participants reported that physical violence against the older generation is not common, although about a third reported that this does happen on Sint Eustatius.

Data from Sint Eustatius

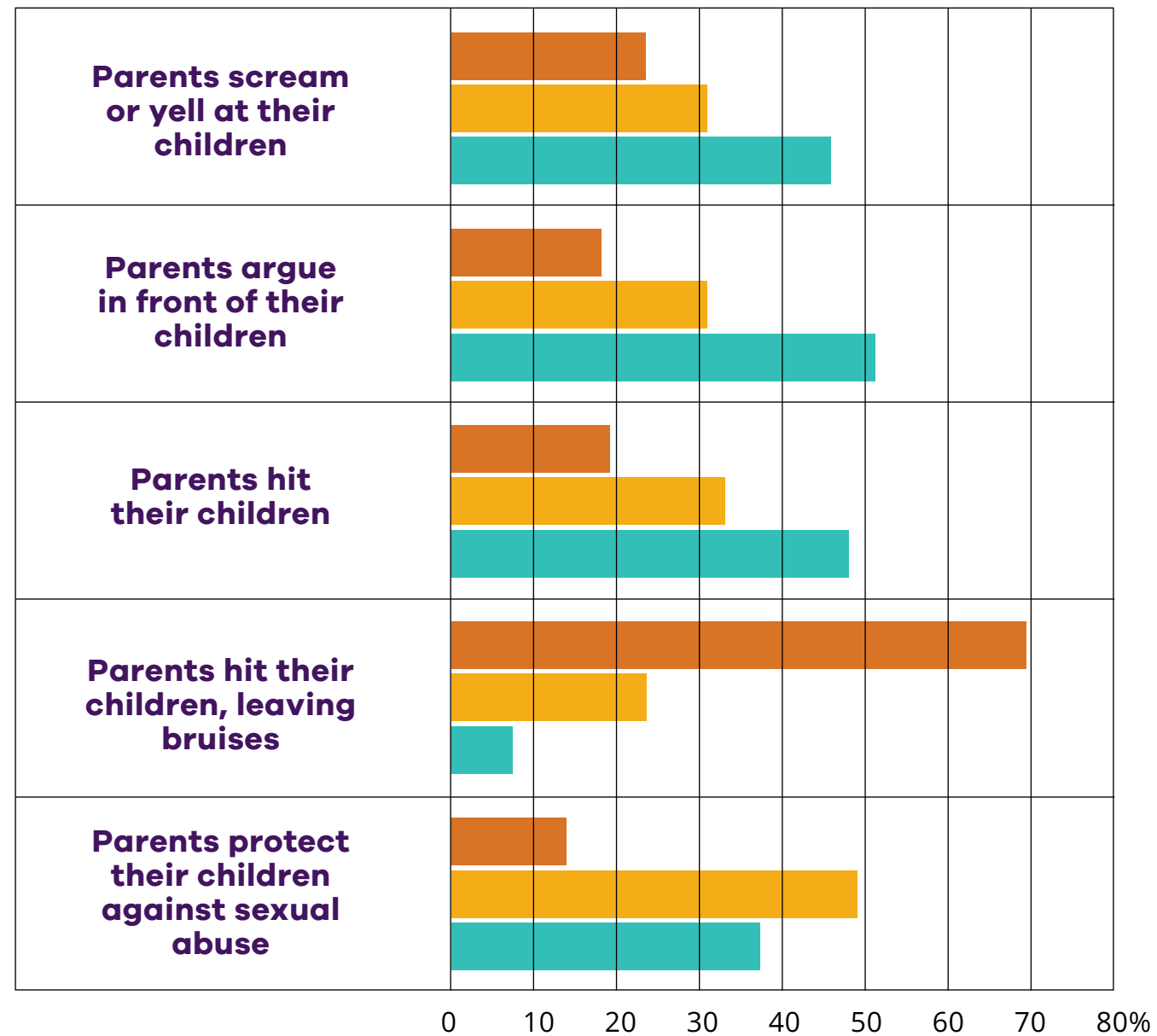
Emotional & physical maltreatment

Legend

→ Not common (scores 1-3)

→ Somewhat common (scores 4-6)

→ (Very) common (scores 7-10)



Clarification

- Almost half of participants reported that it is (very) common on Sint Eustatius for parents to scream or yell at their children.
- Just over half of participants reported that it is (very) common on Sint Eustatius for parents to argue in front of their children.
- The majority of participants reported that it is somewhat to very common for parents on Sint Eustatius to hit their children.
- Most participants reported that it is not common for parents on Sint Eustatius to hit their children leaving bruises. Still, about 25% mention that this does occur on Sint Eustatius.
- Most participants reported that it is at least somewhat common for parents on Sint Eustatius to protect their children against sexual abuse. About 14% of participants did not think this was common.

Voices from Sint Eustatius

What people observe

"We do have domestic violence on Statia, unfortunately, maybe a very high level of it as well."

(adult)

"I believe we have a lot of sexual abuse that is going on at the moment. It is something that is silent, that a lot of people like to say, don't hang your dirty laundry outside."

(professional)

"Domestic violence, you do hear about it, maybe parents in the home and that they beat each other."

(youth)

"Here, it's mostly verbal abuse, but also everybody does get, as we say, licks, beatings for punishment."

(youth)

"At times I see a lot of abusive parents. But I see parents being abused by children more."

(adult)

"The older generation would just hit for every small, stupid little infraction, and it doesn't really help. So I guess our generation probably knows better."

(adult)

"Our parents would get harsh beatings, but nowadays it's just a small tap on your hand."

(youth)

"Some have evolved a bit, who got beaten really badly and choose to raise their children differently, but most of them continue and they do it and I don't know why."

(adult)

"So smacking, hitting, licking, we call it licks, all of those things. It's a part of the culture."

(professional)

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 Sint Eustatius:

- The cycle of abuse within families should be ended, changing mindsets.
- It would be good to increase the focus on more gentle parenting as an alternative for harsh parenting.
- The taboo of talking about family problems and mental health should be addressed so that there is more openness.
- Parents should be more aligned in their norms and values before they have children so they are more likely to stay together.
- Parents need to understand the consequences of their parenting choices
- Children need to be allowed to have a voice in families.

Reflection

- Domestic violence in the form of verbal abuse is seen as quite common on Sint Eustatius. 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 Sint Eustatius. Hitting children is a culturally accepted part of regular discipline and was reported to be more common than on Saba and Bonaire.
- 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 Sint Eustatius 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.
- 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 Sint Eustatius.

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 Sint Eustatius 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 Sint Eustatius 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 Sint Eustatius (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 Sint Eustatius to foster non-violent parenting and communication norms.

Make use of lessons learned from previous initiatives taken by the Public Entity of Sint Eustatius, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports (ZJCN) and UNICEF to address violence against children and to provide comprehensive family support.

Invite UNICEF and other stakeholders to support these initiatives.

Target group: Public Entity of Sint Eustatius, in close collaboration with community groups and key stakeholders, and with the assistance of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports and UNICEF.



Part 4

Gender inequalities on Sint Eustatius

Gender roles

In the conversations during the research team's visit to Sint Eustatius, it was clear that there are several concerns regarding gender roles on the island. People mentioned the fact that women on Sint Eustatius 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 Sint Eustatius show that about half 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).

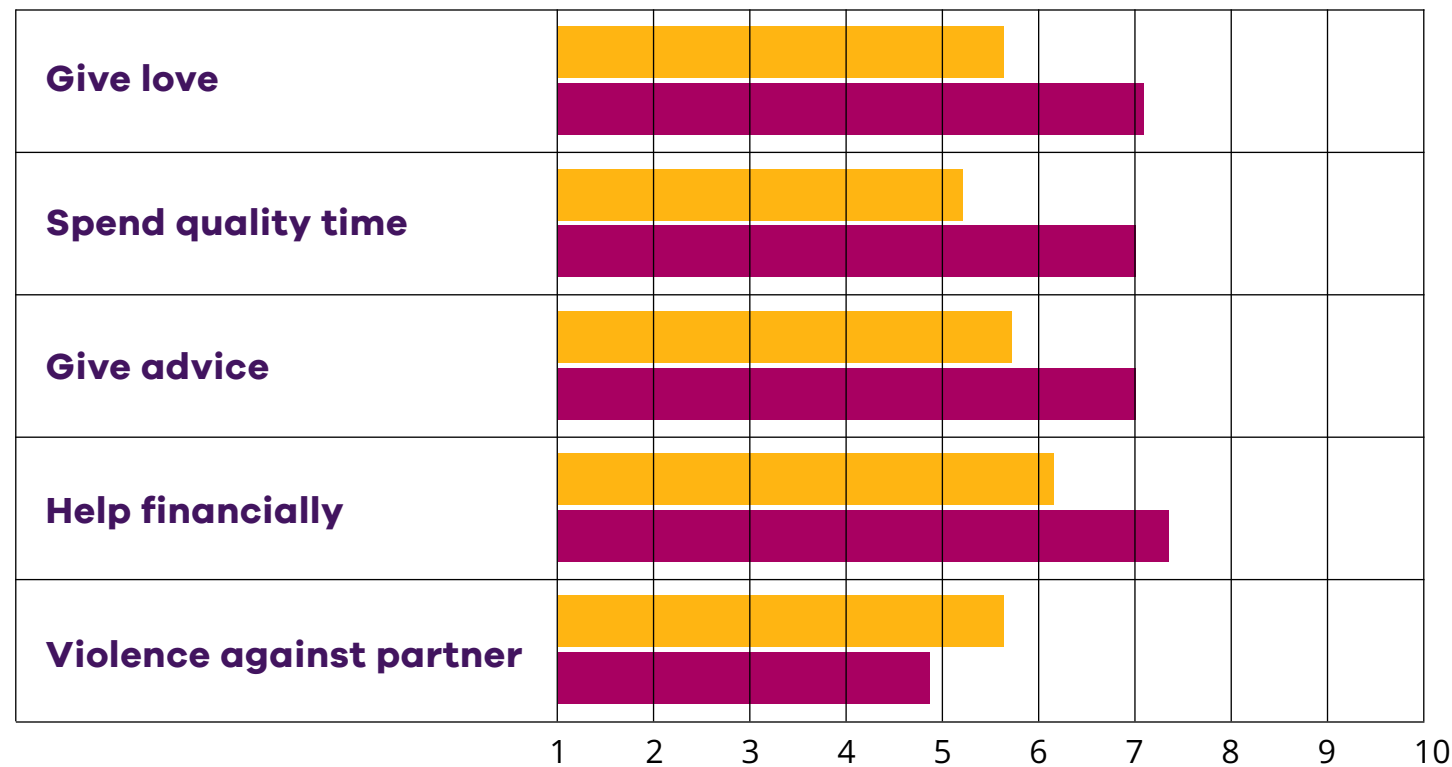
In both the survey and the interviews, participants were asked about differences in family involvement between men and women, and about differences in how boys and girls are raised.

Data from Sint Eustatius

Men and women

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

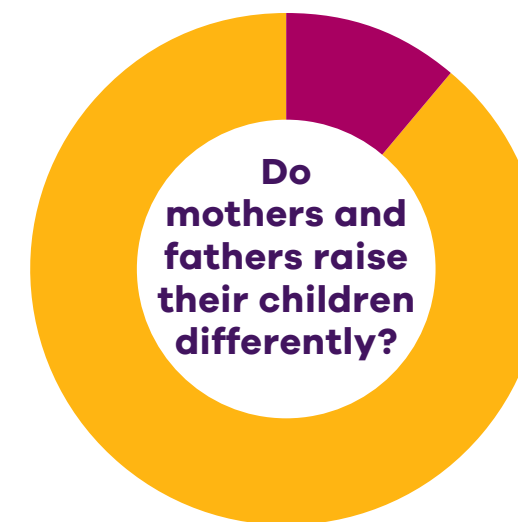
The figures below summarize the gender differences in a different way by comparing the average scores (on a 10-point scale) for men and women regarding some key aspects of family life. Only those behaviors where the difference between men and women were statistically significant are shown.



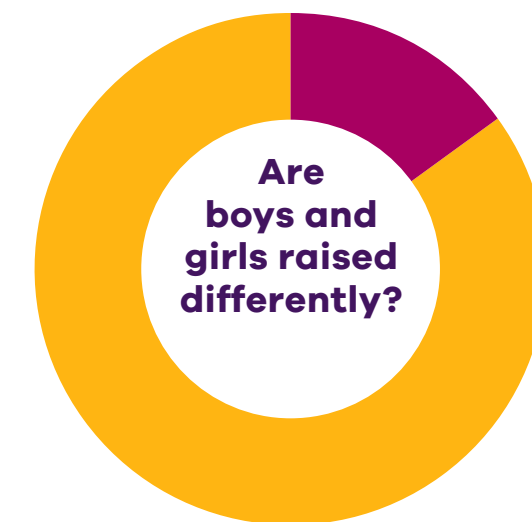
These results confirm the pattern from the earlier section on family relationships: according to the participants, in families on Sint Eustatius men are less likely to give love, spend quality time, give advice, or help financially. Men are seen as more likely to show physical violence against their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



6% No
94% Yes



15% No
85% Yes

Voices from Sint Eustatius

"Caribbean fathers seem more of the belief of providing and leaving the main task of parenting to the mothers."

(survey)

"Boys are able to go out and stay out late. Girls are needed in the house to help with chores."

(survey)

"Most fathers are more laid back, leave the child to do whatever it is pleased to do. Most mothers correct and try to fix their child's behavior."

(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 Sint Eustatius.*

"Fathers who do not live with their children often spoil their children to prove a point to their mothers in order to gain their children's love and affection."

(survey)

"Boys are raised to be tough, work hard, not be soft. Girls are raised to be a care taker."

(survey)

"What I see here on the island, females have to stay at home and their male family member gets to do what they want. I think that boys and girls should be treated equally, not differently."

(youth)

"Fathers are more strict and better at disciplining the children. Mothers compete for the affection of the child. Mothers baby the children too much."

(survey)

"What I'm seeing is, especially now, we are so much investing in women, and that is good. But we are leaving our men behind."

(professional)

" Mothers are strict and fathers are lenient."

(survey)

"This is what I see a lot on the island, being without a father can really hurt a child or being without the mother also could really hurt a child."

(youth)

"And boys are not supposed to cry, but then he becomes a man and he gets angry and doesn't know what to do with his emotions."

(professional).

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.
- This finding is consistent with results from many other studies in the Caribbean region.
- 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 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 Sint Eustatius

- 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 and encourage men to reflect on their role as fathers.
- 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 Sint Eustatius, 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 Sint Eustatius

Generations and migration

During the research team's visit to Sint Eustatius, local professionals often referred to a loss of traditions and norms and the experience of a generation gap. Children and adolescents in the current younger generation were described by adults as being disrespectful and disobedient and parents were described as incompetent to deal with those challenges. In addition, the young people expressed frustration about not being taken seriously by adults, and that they're considered disrespectful as soon as they try to voice their opinions.

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

Voices from Sint Eustatius

Generation gap

"We have a very rebellious generation at this point and some people are not prepared to say this is what life requires."

(adult)

"Their generation is different to ours. How they see stuff is not how it is today."

(youth)

"The older folks might be talking about things that are from their days, but then the child doesn't understand that."

(youth)

"I have noticed in the past year that the bonding is not as it used to be. And that's because everyone lives such busy lives."

(adult)

"I'm from a totally different generation. I believe parents should give the child what it needs, not what it wants."

(adult)

"Grandparents used to instill the normal values, but now it is fading away because more young people are left up to themselves and heading in a direction that is not so very nice."

(professional)

"The children nowadays, they don't have any respect anymore for the parents because of the rights of the child."

(adult)

"When the child rights came out, that was a whole story. People took it as an insult and are holding on to that traditional way of how it was done."

(professional)

Reflection

- Sint Eustatius community members from both the younger and the older generation are affected by what they experience as a generation gap. This lack of understanding between generations 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 could jeopardize the strength of the Sint Eustatius 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.
- Another potential source of changes in the culture of Sint Eustatius are the relatively high migration rates, with many young people leaving the island for education and work elsewhere and the arrival of groups of people mostly from other Caribbean islands, Latin America and the European Netherlands. Interestingly this topic was hardly ever mentioned during the research team's visit to Sint Eustatius or in the interviews.

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 Sint Eustatius (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 Sint Eustatius in the above-mentioned actions.

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

Part 6

Support services on Sint Eustatius

What is available on Sint Eustatius?

Support services and other stakeholders

The previous parts have shown that there are both strengths and challenges concerning family life on Sint Eustatius that ought to be addressed. Support services play a critical role in this regard. Several support services are available on Sint Eustatius 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:

- Safety netwerk
- Politie
- Slachtofferhulp
- Openbaar lichaam
- Opvoedwinkel
- SRCN
- Mental Health Caribbean
- ZJCN Jeugdzorg
- Maatschappelijk Werk
- SZW
- ECE
- Social Domain
- Kabinet Gezaghebber
- Voogdijraad

Voices from Sint Eustatius

What people observe

"Yes, we have help.

**We have the social domain,
social unit, social support."**

(youth)

**"We are missing
our orphanage for sure.**

**We have our women's shelter,
but it's not enough."**

(youth)

**"Yes, there are many
organizations that can give
care, but they don't
know about it."**

(professional)

**"The information is out there.
People are aware of it.**

What else can be done?"

(adult)

**"I don't feel like I can trust any
counselors or whatever here,
because you are not sure that
they wouldn't go out and tell
someone and it spreads
all over Sint Eustatius."**

(youth)

**"All stakeholders need to be
aware of what confidentiality is.
Information comes out that was
not supposed to come out.**

**And in a small community
it travels like hot bread**

(professional)

**"I think you also have a certain
group who just need to get over
the hump of being ashamed."**

(adult)

**"The preventive part is
important, if you start with
the children, once you
understand yourself better
then you get confident."**

(adult)

**"I think they're trying
their best. But I think our
community is too closed
and they're not open to the
fact that there are people
that can help you."**

(adult)

**"Nobody really wants to
spend money putting certain
departments here, so when
your child's finished,
you need to catch a plane
and go to Holland."**

(adult)

What people would like to see improved

- Youth, adults, and professionals mentioned the importance of more direct parenting support tailored to the local context. Youth also suggested parenting classes for people expecting their first child.
- Youth, adults, and professionals emphasized the importance of ensuring confidentiality in all services.
- Professionals mentioned the need for more professionals on Sint Eustatius in the social domain, even if it is for small numbers.
- Professionals mentioned that they would recommend more direct support for families, going door to door, and to make sure that support structures are cohesive and have continuity.
- Youth advocated for more organized leisure opportunities for young people on Sint Eustatius. This would help especially those young people whose parents are often away to work, and would potentially prevent them from using alcohol and drugs when unsupervised.

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 Sint Eustatius 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 Sint Eustatius, 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. *De Opvoedwinkel* could play an important role in this regard.
→ 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 on Saba and is a good example that may need to be advertised more on Sint Eustatius. This could be a blueprint for a similar service for adults.
- Make sure that all community members of Sint Eustatius 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 Sint Eustatius.
- 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 Sint Eustatius, 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 Sint Eustatius for professionals.
- Invite representatives of various generations, including young people, and migrant communities within the community of Sint Eustatius 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 Sint Eustatius, 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 Sint Eustatius, 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 Sint Eustatius, 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 sensitivities between the Caribbean Netherlands and the European part of the Netherlands. As the team was told during the visit to Sint Eustatius: "What is developed in the Netherlands is not always better. They don't know how things work here, so we should be involved from the beginning." (see also: Leslie, 2020).
- 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.

"What is developed in the Netherlands is not always better. They don't know how things work here, so we should be involved from the beginning."

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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