

A case for the curriculum: health geography

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Download B: Perceptions of space – mental mapping activity

Activity 1: Mental mapping

- Students distribute base maps of their local area to 10 research participants, e.g. friends, family or members of the wider school community.
- The maps should demarcate areas for the research participants to consider (examples: the park, the high street, the east of the town, the west of the town).
- The participants reflect on how the different areas on the map make them feel and annotate the map using a key:

This place is always unsafe – 1

This place is sometimes unsafe – 2

I don't know this place – 3

This place is mostly safe – 4

This place is always safe – 5

- Students pool their data as a class to generate a larger sample size (it is important that all students have used the same base map with the same demarcations and key).
- They then can calculate the modal value for each demarcated area on the base map to assess whether it is a location where people feel safe.
- Individual maps can also be compared alongside each other to see how perceptions of local spaces are similar or different between participants.
- To extend their investigation further, students could also ask participants to complete 'before' maps (thinking retrospectively about how spaces made them feel before the COVID-19 pandemic) – and compare these to the current responses.

Methodology adapted from the Fieldwork Studies Council website: <https://www.geography-fieldwork.org/a-level/place/placemaking/method/#mental>