Community Confidence Action Research – Irvine Fullarton Evaluation

Contents

Executive Summary

This report summarises the findings of the evaluation in Irvine Fullarton as part of the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland's [Community Confidence Action Research Project](#).

Since beginning initial engagement in the area in December 2022, we have conducted a survey gathering views on confidence in policing in Irvine Fullarton in February - March 2023 and held several events to gather ideas on how confidence in policing could be enhanced in the local area.

In Summer 2023 local policing in North Ayrshire implemented a range of initiatives based on this community feedback. After an initial 3-month period the project team engaged the community again to evaluate the community's feedback and thoughts.

To evaluate the initiatives a three-pronged approach has been taken:

- A survey conducted in November 2023 with those 16 and over mirroring one conducted in Feb-March 2023;
- Questions with under 16s in schools mirroring questions from Feb-March 2023; and
- Conversations with community representatives.

It should be noted that due to small sample sizes and the non-representative nature of the samples the findings of these surveys cannot be generalised to the entire Irvine Fullarton population and should be considered indicative only.

Key findings:

16 and Over Survey

- Just over half of respondents were unaware of initiatives undertaken by local policing.
- There was an upward shift in responses for confidence in policing 'in general' from a majority 'medium' to 'high' level between Feb-March 2023 and Oct-Nov 2023.
- Overall, rates of confidence and trust decreased across a range of indicators between Feb-March 2023 and Oct-Nov 2023. This is similar to the downward trend in confidence documented in [SPA national polling](#) between July 2022 and 2023.
- Awareness of initiatives seemed to have no impact on confidence or trust in policing.
- While a higher proportion still feel Irvine Fullarton has a sense of community, there was a decrease in those who 'strongly agreed/agreed' and an increase in those who 'disagreed/strongly disagreed' between Feb-March 2023 and Oct-Nov 2023.
- Comments on Irvine Fullarton largely centred around the area having a strong community, anti-social behaviour, mention of resources on physical police visibility, and wider public services response.

Under 16 Survey

- Overall, most of the pupils who responded appeared to view policing positively with little variation from Feb-March 2023.
- There was limited awareness of initiatives that had been implemented in Irvine Fullarton.
- The most notable change was in relation to having 'a general worry or problem outside of school', with a higher proportion of pupils reporting they would not speak to the police or being unsure of what to do.

Community Group Input

- Stakeholders commended communication approach used by project team in the area; but stakeholders noted that communication methods for public could perhaps have been further diverse to improve engagement.
- In terms of timeframes, feedback was noted that "ideas presented by community were put in place really quickly" but some people highlighted three months is perhaps not enough time for the test of change to be noticed.
- Many stakeholders noted that having events during the day may exclude those who work during this time.
- It was noted by multiple stakeholders that individuals in the community started off interested, however this interest tailed off.
- It was felt that the local police should make more of an effort to publicise the good things they are doing in the community.
- Overall people reported that it was good to see the police listening and responding to community needs.

Community Confidence Action Research – Irvine Fullarton Evaluation

Introduction

This report summarises the findings of the evaluation in Irvine Fullarton as part of the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland Community Confidence Action Research Project.

Using a range of data (such as Scottish Government statistics) Irvine Fullarton was identified as an area for this project. Since December 2022, we have conducted a survey gathering views on confidence in policing in Irvine Fullarton in Spring and held a number of events over 2023 to gather ideas on how confidence in policing could be enhanced in the local area.

In Summer 2023 local policing in North Ayrshire implemented a range of initiatives based on this community feedback.

These new ways of working as part of the test of change are as follows:

- enhanced social media posting related to area,
- leaflets and emails given out to stakeholders,
- officers equipped with quadbikes in the area,
- campus officers having more frequent school visits and,
- creating a presentation giving an overview of policing.

To evaluate the initiatives a three-pronged approach has been taken:

- A survey conducted in November 2023 with those 16 and over mirroring one conducted in Feb-March 2023;
- Questions with under 16s in a schools mirroring questions from Feb-March 2023; and
- Conversations with community representatives.

It should be noted that due to small sample sizes and the non-representative nature of the samples the findings of this survey cannot be generalised to the entire Irvine Fullarton population and should be considered indicative only.

Community Confidence Action Research – Irvine Fullarton Evaluation Survey 16 and Over

To gain insights into the impact of Police Scotland's initiatives in Irvine Fullarton from those aged 16 and over, the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland designed a survey to gather views on these initiatives and views on confidence in policing (mirroring the questions asked in Feb-March 2022). Hosted on the Scottish Police Authority's Citizen Space site, the survey contained 15 questions and ran from 31st October 2023 to 27th November 2023. In total 23 responses were received.

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents lived in the Irvine Fullarton area (70%, n=16). The highest proportion of respondents were aged 35-44 (35%, n=8) and the lowest aged 16-24, 65+, or 'prefer not to say' (all 9%, n=2). The sample is predominantly female at 74% (n=17), and the majority had no

contact with police in the six months prior to survey (83%, n=19). It should be noted that in comparison to the initial survey carried out in Spring, a slightly higher proportion had had contact (30%, n=12) - in Feb-March 2023 compared to 17% (n=4) in Oct-Nov 2022.

Table 1: Sample demographics (n=27)

Reason for being in/visiting Irvine Fullarton?		
I have family/friends in the area	6	26%
I live in the area	16	70%
Other	1	4%
Age		
16-24	2	9%
25-34	3	13%
35-44	8	35%
45-54	4	17%
55-64	4	17%
65+	2	9%
Prefer not to say	2	9%
Gender		
Female	17	74%
Male	4	17%
Prefer not to say	2	9%
Contact with police - 6 months		
No	19	83%
Yes	4	17%

Awareness of Initiatives

Figure 1 shows that just over half of respondents were unaware of the initiatives put in place by local policing. In total 12 respondents (52%) were not aware of any initiatives, whereas 11 (48%) were aware of at least one.

Respondents were more likely to be familiar with the enhanced social media posting related to area (30%, n=7).

When asked to give their views on initiatives if they had been aware of them, seven responses were received. Two responses noted presentations at the Fullarton Hub, however, both commented on the lack of attendance to these events. Three other responses noted that local policing's physical presence in communities could be stronger (e.g. "Police units like porta cabins in area", or more regularly "walk the beat").

If respondents were not aware of the initiatives, they were asked as to how they could be made aware in future. In total 13 comments were received, with 11 containing suggestions. Many suggestions noted improved communication "through local schools and community groups", or "by local press bulletins, in Irvine Times, Irvine Herald". Eight responses also mentioned community

visibility and physical presence (e.g. "community want police on the streets, not meetings in the community centre", "get back to walk[ing] the beat and interact[ing] with the public" etc.). Two mentioned "police officers being seen more often might make a difference to some of the minor incidents" and being situated in the "community in busy areas providing info & gaining feedback from public".

Figure 1: Based on feedback from the community earlier in this project, Police Scotland have recently implemented initiatives to try and enhance confidence in policing in Irvine Fullarton. Have you noticed any of these initiatives in the area in the last few months? (n=23)

	Enhanced social media posting related to area	Leaflets and/or emails given out to stakeholders	Officers equipped with quadbikes in area	Campus officers having more frequent school visits	Creating a presentation giving an overview of policing
■ Yes	30%	9%	26%	17%	13%
■ No	70%	91%	74%	78%	87%
■ Not answered	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%

■ Yes   ■ No   ■ Not answered
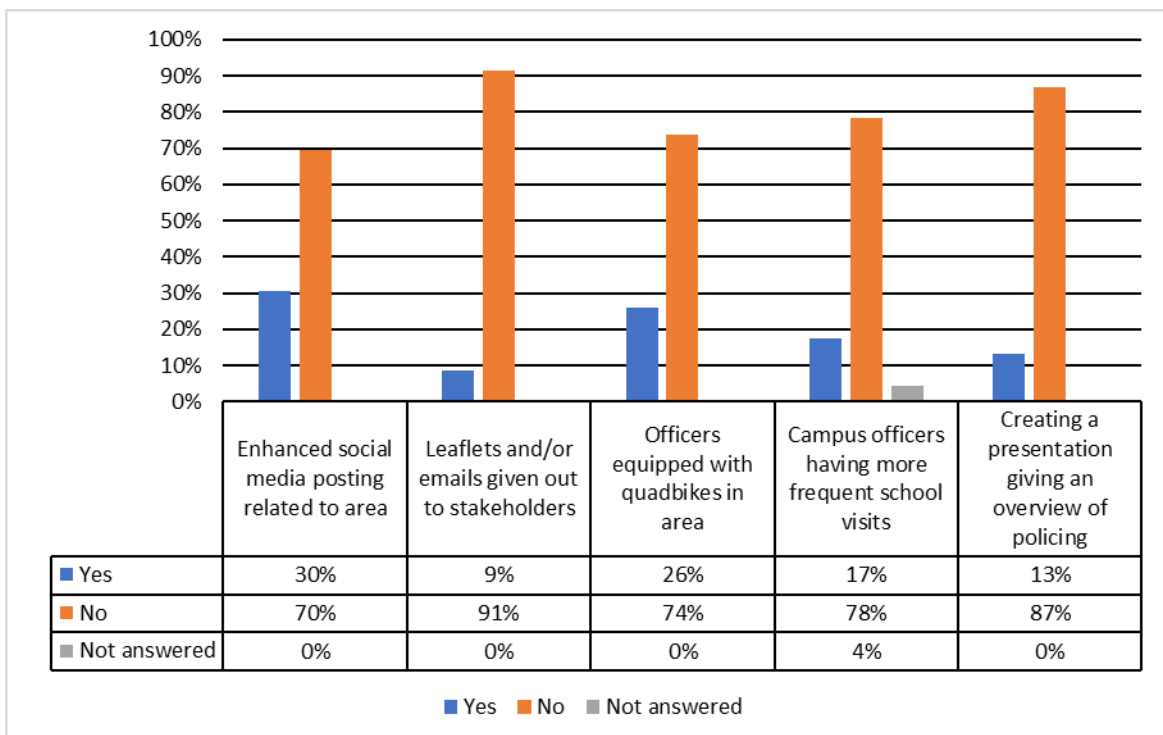
Confidence in Policing

In terms of confidence in policing in the area, the majority of respondents had 'high' levels of confidence for policing 'in general' (39%, n=8) – see **Figure 2**. Following this, the largest proportion of responses to 'tackling antisocial behaviour' were equally split across 'Medium' and Low' confidence levels (both receiving 48%, n=11).

Across a range of five indicators a higher proportion of respondents scored 'Low' – see **Figure 2**:

- Responding quickly (48%, n=11)
- Tackling crime (48%, n=11)
- Preventing crime (48%, n=11)
- Being there when you need them (48%, n=11)
- Providing an appropriate and timely response (57%, n=13)

When comparing the recent Oct-Nov 2023 survey results to Feb-Mar 2023 survey, the majority of respondents had 'high' levels of confidence for policing 'in general' (39%, n=8) which is an shift upward from the Feb-Mar 2023 results for confidence in policing 'in general' where the majority of respondents reported 'medium' levels of confidence (40%, n=20).

The majority of respondents scored 'Medium' confidence levels across 6 of the indicators in Spring (Preventing crime, keeping your area safe, being there when you need them, tackling crime, general, and responding quickly). For five of these indicators the highest proportion of responses shifted from 'Medium' confidence levels seen in Feb-March 2023, to 'Low' in Oct-Nov 2023: 'responding quickly', 'tackling crime', 'preventing crime', 'being there when you need them' and 'providing a timely response'. A similar downward trend in feelings of confidence in policing has been documented in the SPA national polling between July 2022 and 2023.

Figure 3 and **Figure 4** show confidence levels across the indicators broken down by whether individuals were aware of at least one initiative rolled out as part of the Test of Change (see Figure 3), or if they had no awareness (see Figure 4). Awareness of initiatives seemed to have no impact on confidence levels of survey respondents in Irvine Fullarton.

Figure 2: How much confidence do you have in the police in your local area (0-10, where 0 is 'No confidence at all' and 10 is 'complete confidence') – Oct-Nov 2023 - n=23; Feb-Mar 2023 – n=50
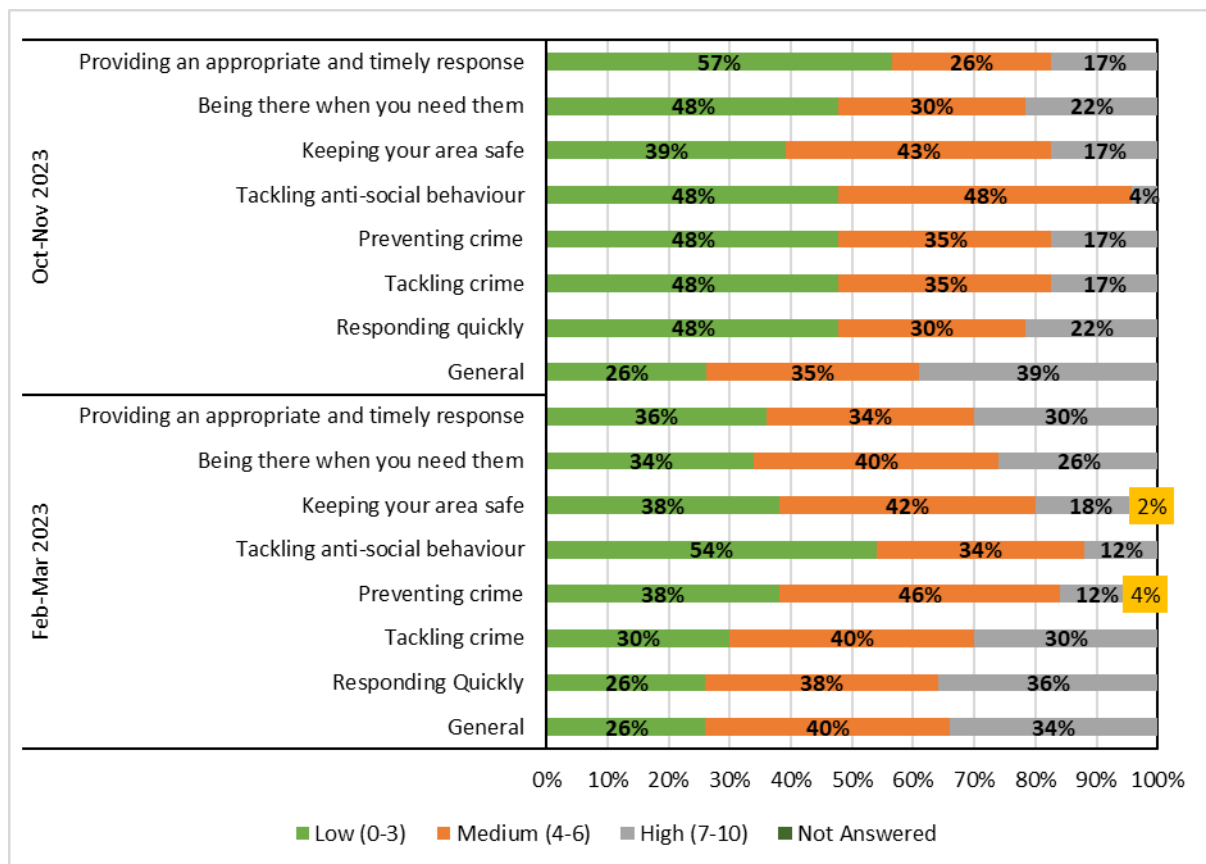

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Figure 3: How much confidence do you have in the police in your local area (0-10, where 0 is 'No confidence at all' and 10 is 'complete confidence') – Oct-Nov 2023 – Awareness of one or more initiatives (n=11).

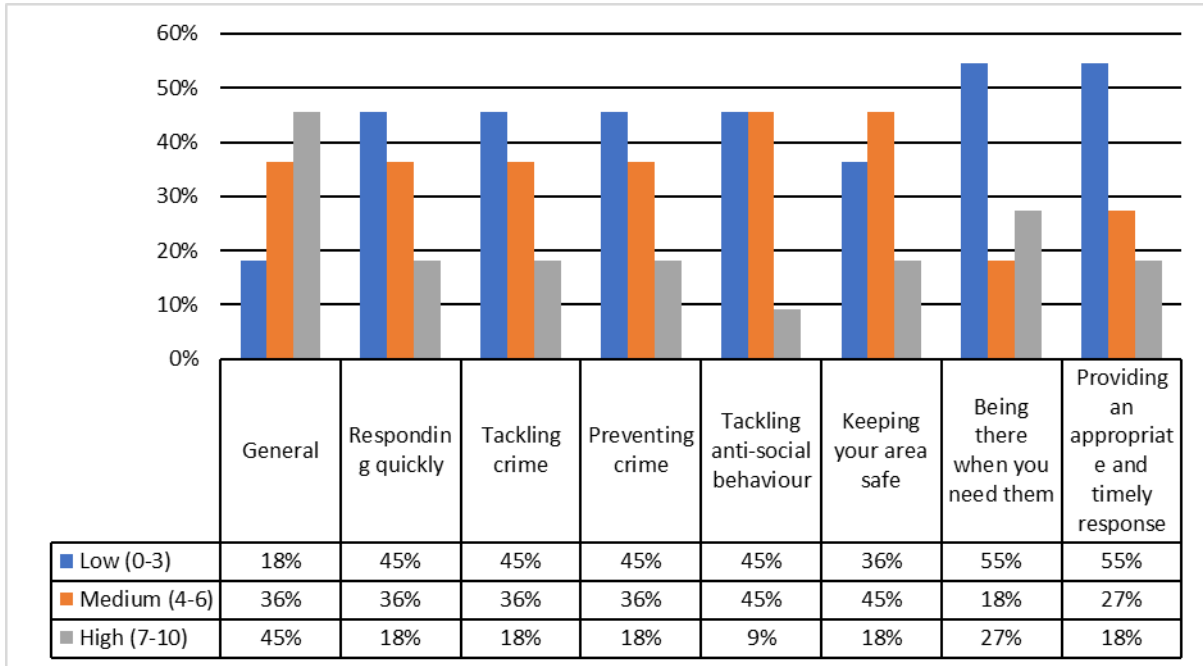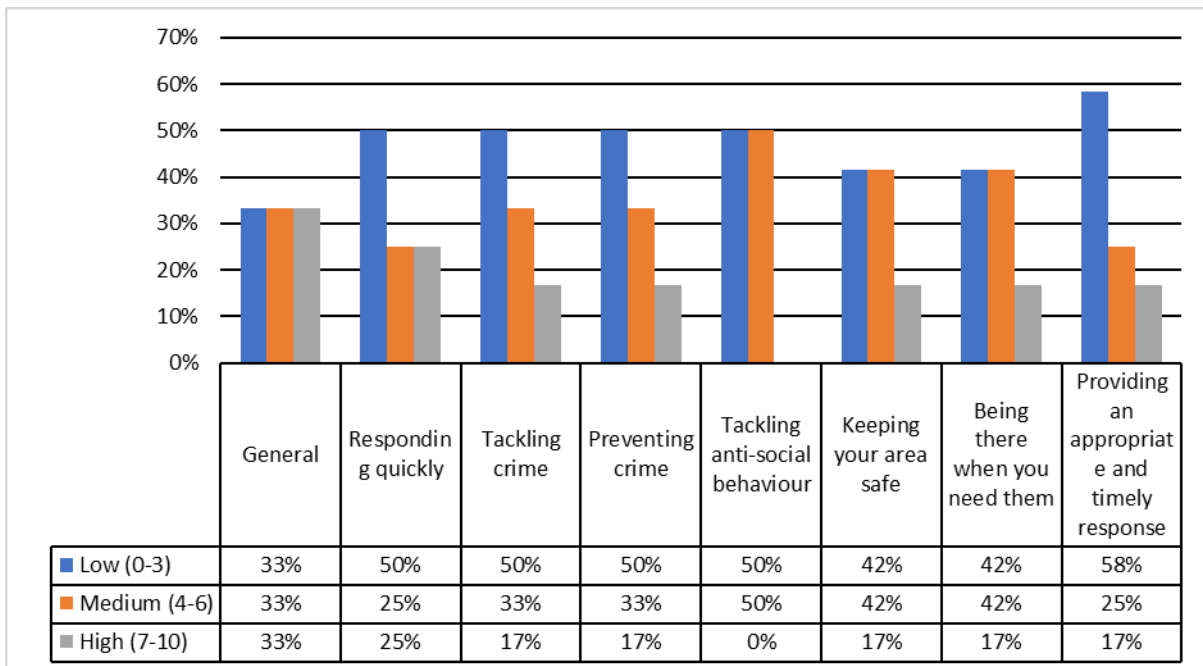|	General	Responding quickly	Tackling crime	Preventing crime	Tackling anti-social behaviour	Keeping your area safe	Being there when you need them	Providing an appropriate and timely response
Low (0-3)	18%	45%	45%	45%	45%	36%	55%	55%
Medium (4-6)	36%	36%	36%	36%	45%	45%	18%	27%
High (7-10)	45%	18%	18%	18%	9%	18%	27%	18%

Figure 4: How much confidence do you have in the police in your local area (0-10, where 0 is 'No confidence at all' and 10 is 'complete confidence') – Oct-Nov 2023 – No awareness of initiatives (n=12)

	General	Responding quickly	Tackling crime	Preventing crime	Tackling anti-social behaviour	Keeping your area safe	Being there when you need them	Providing an appropriate and timely response
Low (0-3)	33%	50%	50%	50%	50%	42%	42%	58%
Medium (4-6)	33%	25%	33%	33%	50%	42%	42%	25%
High (7-10)	33%	25%	17%	17%	0%	17%	17%	17%

Trust in Policing

When asked about levels of trust in policing, **Figure 5** shows that the highest proportion of respondents scored 'low' across three categories ('To protect you', 'To care about people like you', and 'To listen to and respond to your needs'). This is represents a downward trend from Feb-Mar 2023 where the highest proportion scored 'Medium' for 'To listen and respond to your needs', and 'To protect you'. For 'In general' in Oct-Nov 2023, the most common response was 'Medium' – a shift in trend from 'High' being the common response earlier in the year.

A similar downward trend in feelings of trust in policing has been documented in the SPA national polling between July 2022 and 2023.

Figure 6 shows no relationship between those who were aware of at least one of the initiatives and having higher trust levels. Those who were not aware of any initiative tended to score 'Low' across all indicators apart from 'In general' – see **Figure 7**.

Figure 5: How much trust do you have in the police in your local area (0-10, where 0 is 'Do not trust at all' and 10 is 'Trust completely') - Oct-Nov 2023 - n=23; Feb-Mar 2023 – n=50
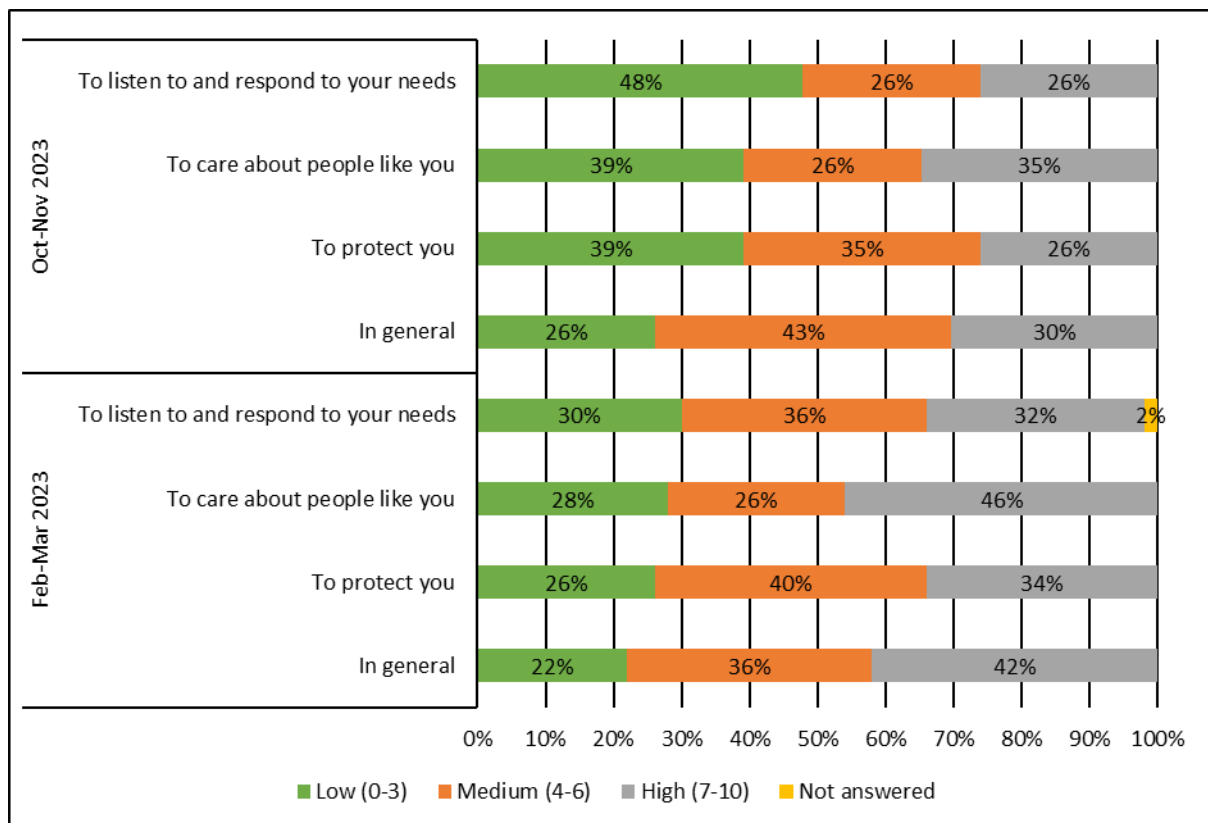
Figure 6: How much trust do you have in the police in your local area (0-10, where 0 is 'Do not trust at all' and 10 is 'Trust completely') – Oct-Nov 2023 – Awareness of one or more initiatives (n=11)

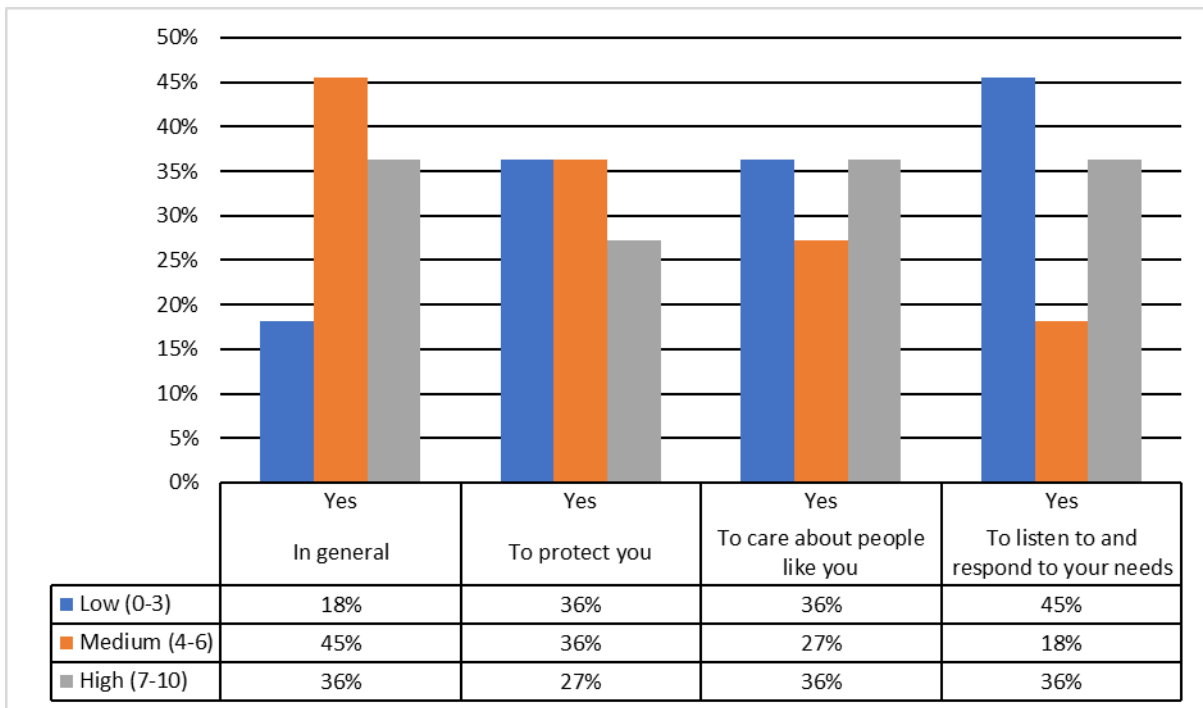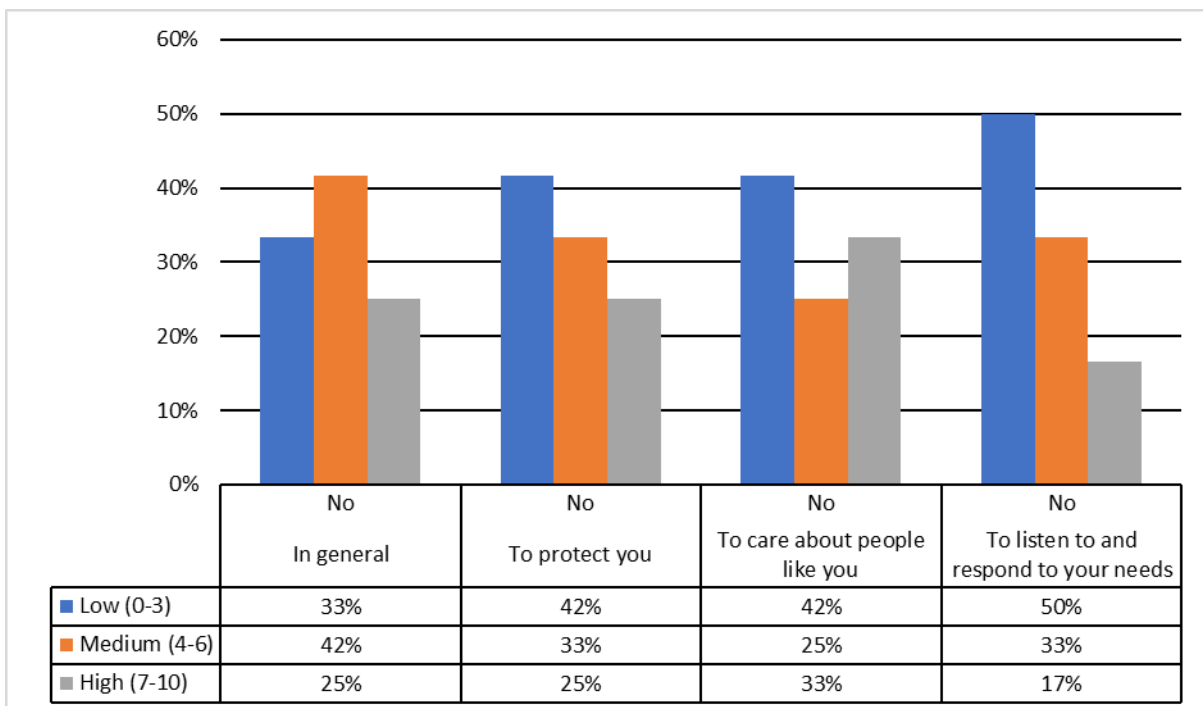|	Yes — In general	Yes — To protect you	Yes — To care about people like you	Yes — To listen to and respond to your needs
Low (0-3)	18%	36%	36%	45%
Medium (4-6)	45%	36%	27%	18%
High (7-10)	36%	27%	36%	36%

Figure 7: How much trust do you have in the police in your local area (0-10, where 0 is 'Do not trust at all' and 10 is 'Trust completely') – Oct-Nov 2023 – No awareness of initiatives (n=12)

	No — In general	No — To protect you	No — To care about people like you	No — To listen to and respond to your needs
Low (0-3)	33%	42%	42%	50%
Medium (4-6)	42%	33%	25%	33%
High (7-10)	25%	25%	33%	17%

Performance

Regarding the performance of police in their local area, the highest proportion of respondents selected 'a neither good nor poor job' across all scenarios except 'keeping your area safe' which scored 39% (n=7) for a 'somewhat poor/very poor job' – see **Figure 8**.

In comparison, in Feb-Mar 2023, a higher proportion of respondents selected a 'Somewhat poor/very poor job' for 'tackling anti-social behaviour' (46%, n=23) whereas in Oct-Nov 2023 a majority of respondents felt the police were doing 'a neither good nor poor job' (39%, n=9). Sentiments regarding policing 'In general' have fallen between the two timeframes, with the majority of Feb-March respondents believing the police were going a 'Very good/somewhat good job' (42%, n=21), and the more recent survey showing the majority think the police are doing 'a neither good nor poor job' (39%, n=9).

Figure 9 shows that a higher proportion of respondents who were aware of one or more initiatives felt police in their local area were doing a 'a neither good nor bad job' across three of the five indicators. However, **Figure 10** shows that 'a somewhat poor/very poor' was the highest response across two of the indicators ('tackling crime' at 42% and 'bringing the community closer together' at 58%).

Figure 8: How good or poor a job do you think the police in your local area are doing at the moment in the following regards? – Oct-Nov 2023 - n=23; Feb-Mar 2023 – n=50
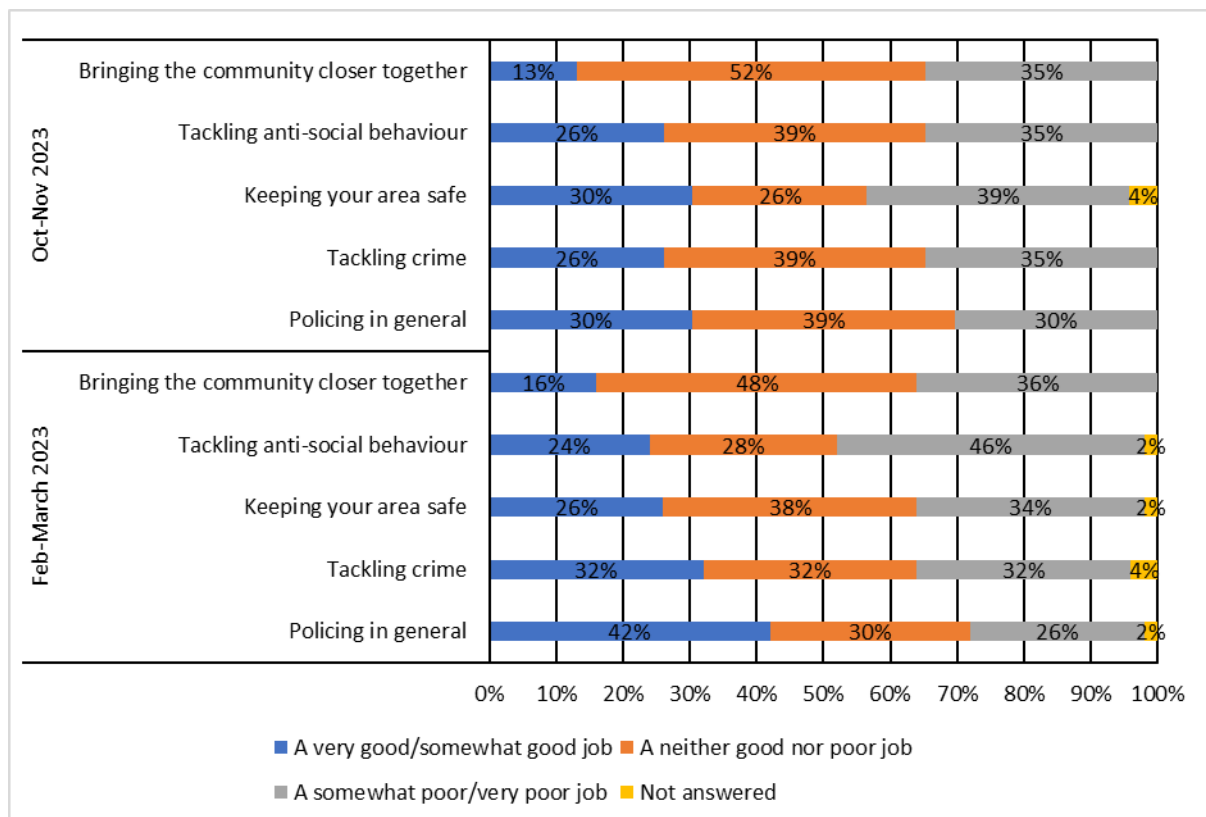
Figure 9: How good or poor a job do you think the police in your local area are doing at the moment in the following regards? – Oct-Nov 2023 – Awareness of one or more initiatives (n=11)

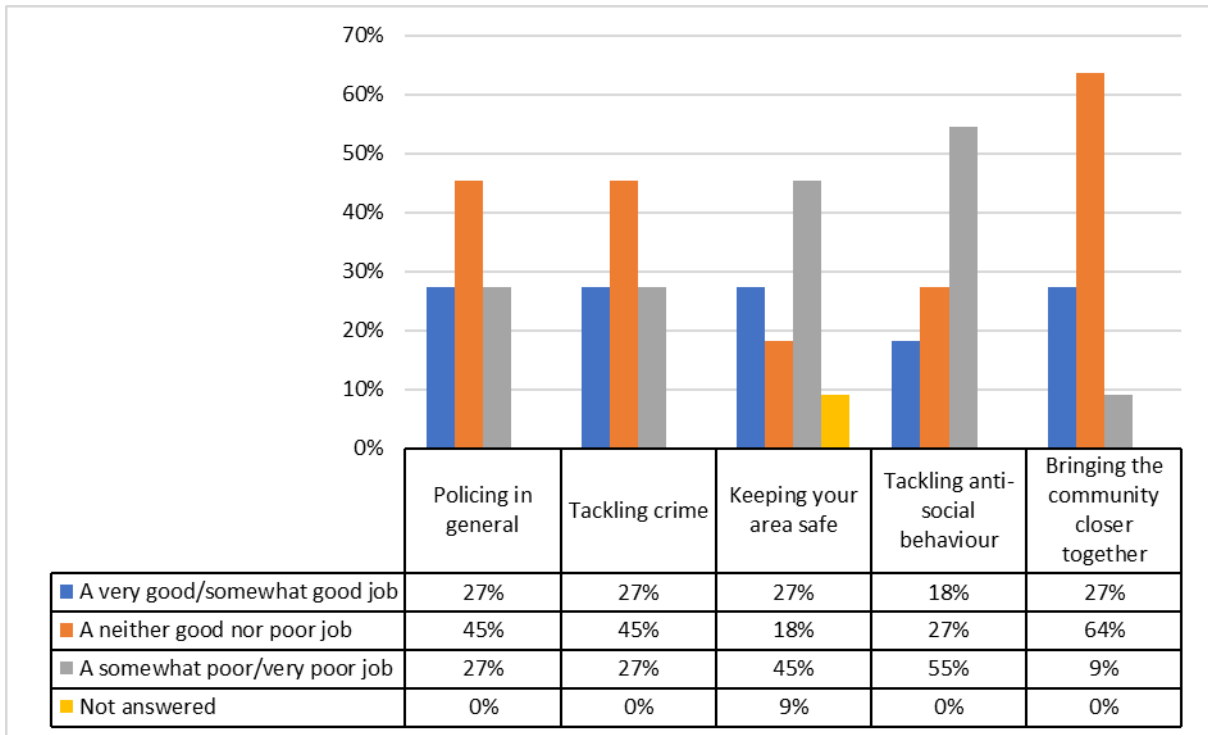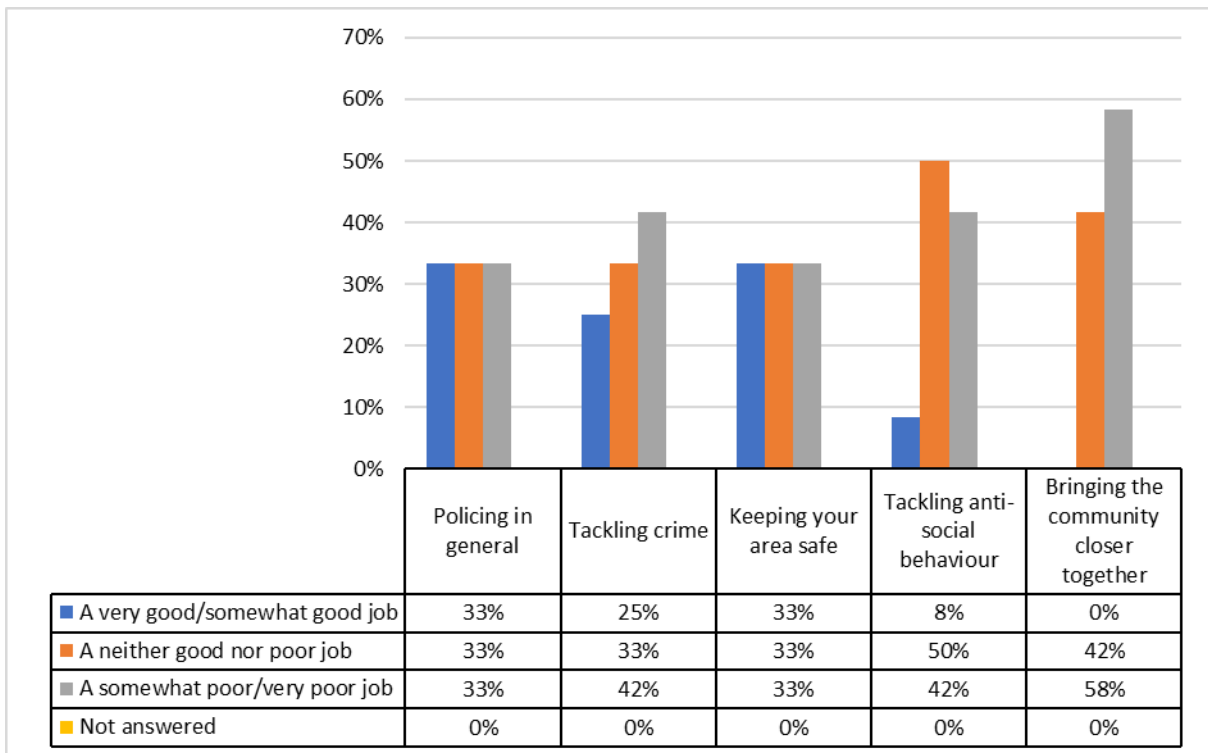|	Policing in general	Tackling crime	Keeping your area safe	Tackling anti-social behaviour	Bringing the community closer together
■ A very good/somewhat good job	27%	27%	27%	18%	27%
■ A neither good nor poor job	45%	45%	18%	27%	64%
■ A somewhat poor/very poor job	27%	27%	45%	55%	9%
■ Not answered	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%

Figure 10: How good or poor a job do you think the police in your local area are doing at the moment in the following regards? – Oct-Nov 2023 – No awareness of initiatives (n=12)

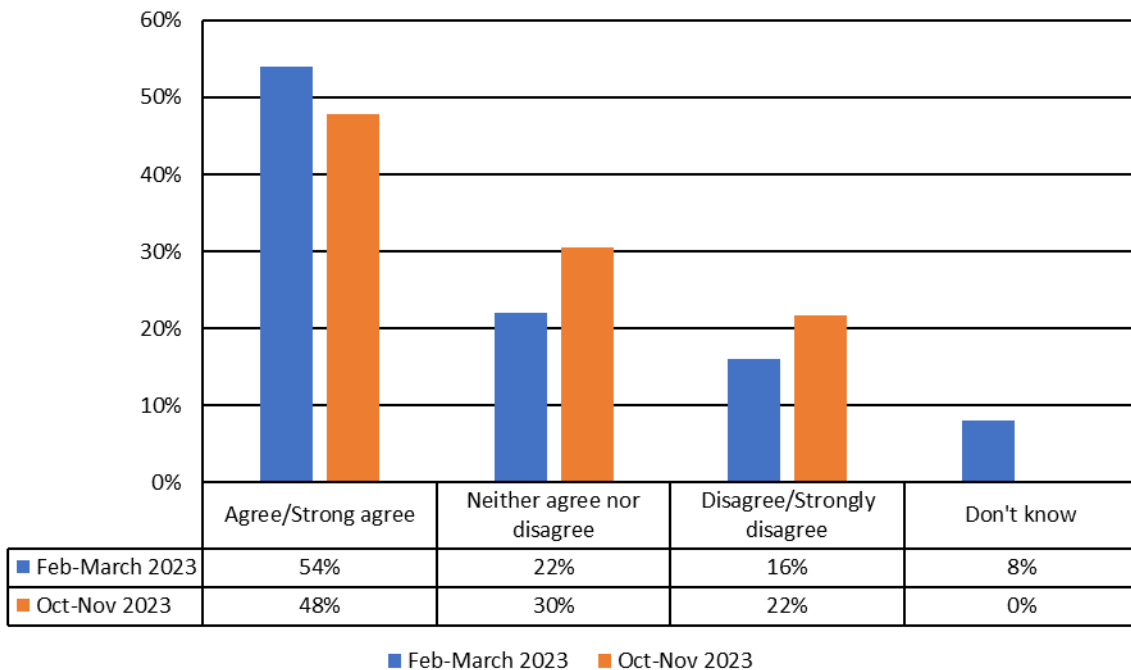|	Policing in general	Tackling crime	Keeping your area safe	Tackling anti-social behaviour	Bringing the community closer together
■ A very good/somewhat good job	33%	25%	33%	8%	0%
■ A neither good nor poor job	33%	33%	33%	50%	42%
■ A somewhat poor/very poor job	33%	42%	33%	42%	58%
■ Not answered	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

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Community

Figure 11 shows that a higher proportion of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that Irvine Fullarton has a sense of community (48%, n=11). Followed by 30% (n=5) who neither agreed nor disagreed.

The proportion of people who strongly agree/agreed that Irvine Fullarton has a sense of community decreased slightly since Feb-March 2023 and the proportion of those who strongly disagree/disagree has slightly increased.

When asked on their general thoughts and feelings of Irvine Fullarton, 16 comments were received. Many of the responses expressed positive comments about the Irvine Fullarton community (e.g. "Close knit […] Respectful of each other", "Lots of community projects", "Strong community spirit and is an area that has a lot of good connections and looks after residents").

Some comments touched on anti-social behaviour (e.g. "blighted by anti-social behaviour, petty crime", "Antisocial behaviour especially noticeable around Irvine mall and beach park area which I do not always feel safe to go" etc.). Many responses recognised resource constraints that local policing face with impact on service delivery noted (e.g. "They are reasonably quick to respond, but sometimes they don't give you updates on the situation", "I feel that we obviously don't have enough police", "Raising concerns is often met with little or no response, and individuals therefore feel the process is pointless", "More police would make a big difference, the resources availability don't reflect the needs").

Figure 11: Do you agree that Irvine Fullarton has a sense of community? – July/August 2023 - n=27; Sept-Nov 22 – n=57

	Agree/Strong agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/Strongly disagree	Don't know
Feb-March 2023	54%	22%	16%	8%
Oct-Nov 2023	48%	30%	22%	0%

■ Feb-March 2023 ■ Oct-Nov 2023

General Comments

In total, 11 comments were received when respondents were asked if they had any comments on the topics raised within the survey. Of these, two comments mentioned anti-social behaviour (e.g. "Need more police taking more action against hooligan kids and abusive trouble causing drug abusers"). Other comments noted concerns related to lack of resources and the impact of budget on physical visibility of police in community (e.g. "I just feel we need more police on the beat. Like it used to be", "I do believe the police are doing their best in the area and surrounding. They have a lot of challenges though", "With cuts in budget going to be high in 24/25 how are Police Scotland going to be able to enforce function in all areas of North Ayrshire").

Two comments also touched on the wider criminal justice system and other services needing to respond to communities as well as the police ("other agencies including the courts and politicians have a duty to communities as well", "Police do the job that they are tasked. The system, however, makes it a losing fire-fight that requires a re-write of the full emergency service and court system").

Conclusions and Key Findings

Just under half of respondents to the survey were aware of at least one initiative put in place by local policing. To raise awareness of initiatives in future, respondents' suggestions included improved communication through pre-existing organisations or groups (like schools), or in local press bulletins.

Without taking into account awareness of initiatives, there was a decrease in overall confidence, trust and local police performance between the Feb-Mar 2023 and Oct-Nov 2023 surveys. This mirrors national trends, with a notable decrease in levels of confidence and trust documented in the Authority's national polling between July 2022 and July 2023.

Regarding sense of community, decreases were observed with those saying 'strongly agree/agree' falling by 6 percentage points between Feb-Mar 2023 and Oct-Nov 2023. Comments largely centred around positive community spirit, anti-social behaviour, and impact of resources on service delivery and police visibility.

Comments about anti-social behaviour, police's physical visibility/engagement, and wider public sector partners were also made when respondents were asked on comments on topics raised within the survey.

Community Confidence Action Research – Irvine Fullarton Evaluation Survey Under 16

Introduction

Between the 31 October and 27 November 2023, the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) and Police Scotland ran a survey in a local schools in Irvine Fullarton to gain views on policing from those under the age of 16 as part of the evaluation of the Community Confidence Action Research Project.
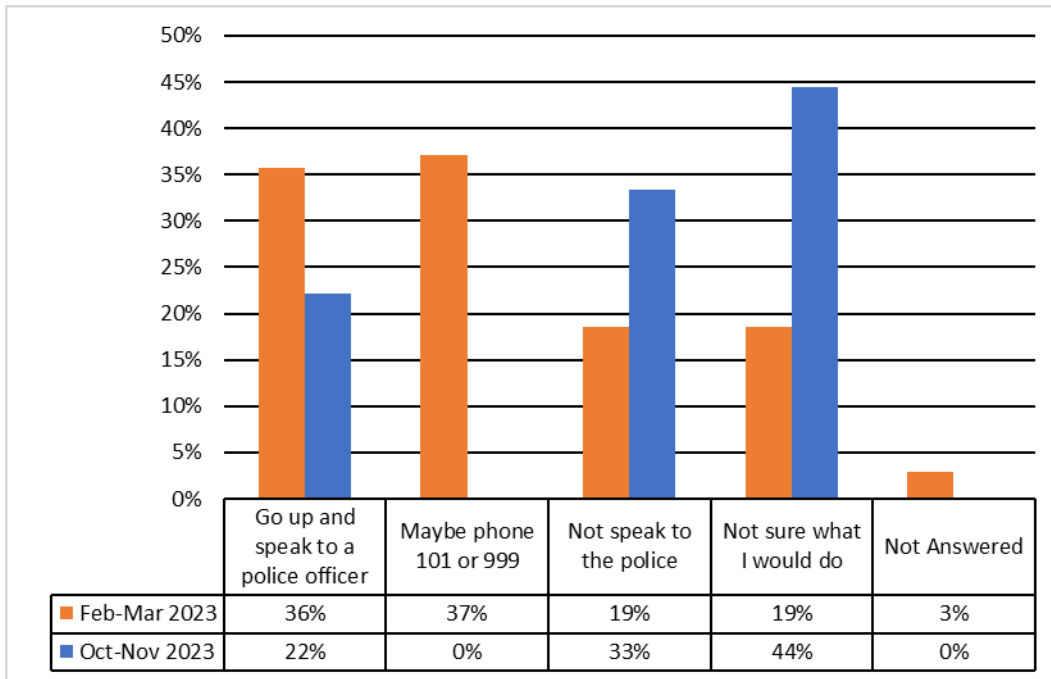
It was sent out to every pupil under the age of 16 across two local schools on two occasions. In total there were 9 respondents who consented to answer the questions. These questions related to what they would do if they had a general worry/problem (Q2), who they would contact if they were in danger (Q3), if they felt the police would help them if they were in danger (Q4), why they had chosen their answers to the previous questions (Q5) and if they had noticed any of the initiatives put in place by Police Scotland and if so what they had noticed (Q6).

The notable drop in response rates between the two surveys must be recognised (Feb-March 2023 n=79, and Feb-March 2023 n=9).

Q2: If I had a general worry or problem outside of school I would…

Figure 12 shows that results are largely different between to the two time frames. With the majority of pupils in the Feb-Mar 2023 survey reporting they would 'go up to speak to an officer' (36%, n=25) or 'maybe phone 101 or 999' (37%, n=26), compared to the Oct-Nov 2023 results which show that 33% would not speak to the police (n=3) or selecting 'not sure what I would do (44%, n=4).

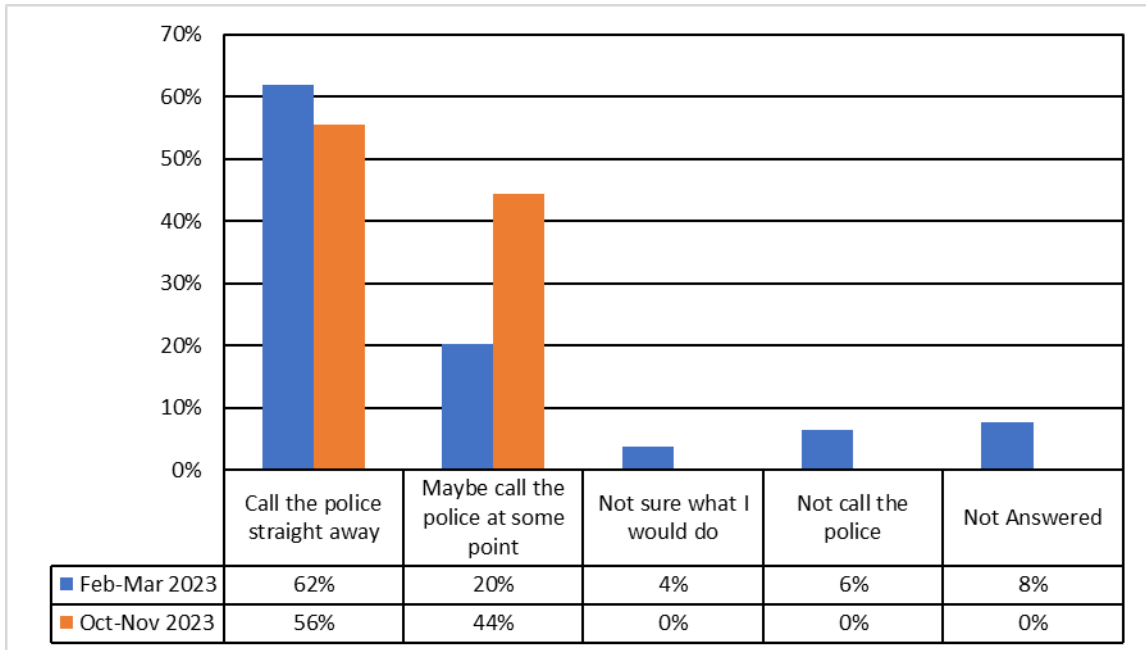**Figure 12: If I had a general worry or problem outside of school I would… (Feb-Mar 23 – n=79, Oct-Nov 2023 – n=9)**

	Go up and speak to a police officer	Maybe phone 101 or 999	Not speak to the police	Not sure what I would do	Not Answered
Feb-Mar 2023	36%	37%	19%	19%	3%
Oct-Nov 2023	22%	0%	33%	44%	0%

Q3: If I was in danger and needed help, I would…

Figure 13 shows that results between Feb-Mar 2023 and Oct-Nov 2023 as to actions pupils would take if they were in danger and needed help. In both surveys the majority of pupils would call the police straight away (62% or n=49 in Feb-Mar 23 and 56% or n=5 in Oct-Nov 2023). 'Maybe call the police at some point' was the next most popular answer in both surveys (20% or n=16 in Feb-

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Mar 23 and 44% or n=4 in Oct-Nov 2023). No students in Oct-Nov 2023 selected any option compared to the Feb-Mar 2023 survey where 4% were not sure what they would do (n=3), and 6% (n=5) would not call the police.

Figure 13: If I was in danger and needed help, I would... (Feb-Mar 2023 – n=79, Oct-Nov 2023 – n=9)

	Call the police straight away	Maybe call the police at some point	Not sure what I would do	Not call the police	Not Answered
Feb-Mar 2023	62%	20%	4%	6%	8%
Oct-Nov 2023	56%	44%	0%	0%	0%

Q4: If I was in danger and needed help, I think the police would...

Figure 14 again shows that results were broadly similar between Feb-Mar 2023 and Oct-Nov 2023 as whether pupils felt police would help them if they were in danger and needed help. In both surveys the majority of pupils felt the police would help them.

**Figure 14: If I was in danger and needed help, I think the police would…
(Feb-Mar 2023 – n=79, Oct-Nov 2023 – n=9)**

	Help me	Not help me	Not answered
Feb-Mar 2023	90%	6%	4%
Oct-Nov 2023	100%	0%	0%
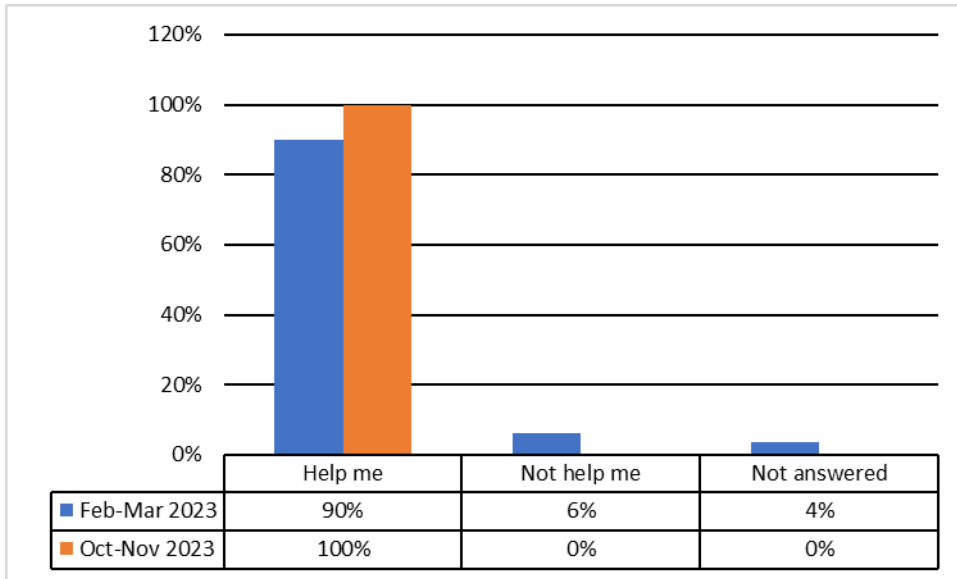
Q5: Thinking about your answers above, can you tell us why you chose these options?

For Question 5, when asked to reflect on their answers to the previous questions and comment on why they chose these options, 8 pupils left comments.

Comments largely related to how they thought that the police would help them (e.g. "it is their job", "we are taught that the police is a safe place to go to" etc.).

Other comments noted that their actions would be dependent on the severity of the situation (e.g. "I just don't think I'd go to the police unless my life was in danger", "Unless it's an emergency I would ask my parents about it first").

Q6: Have you noticed new things that the police have been doing in Irvine Fullarton in the last few months?

Figure 15 shows that the majority of pupils (89%, n=8) were unaware of any of the initiatives that Police Scotland had put in place in Irvine Fullarton. 1 respondent had noticed some new things.

Figure 15: Have you noticed new things that the police have been doing in Irvine Fullarton in the last few months? (n=9)

	Yes	No
■	11%	89%
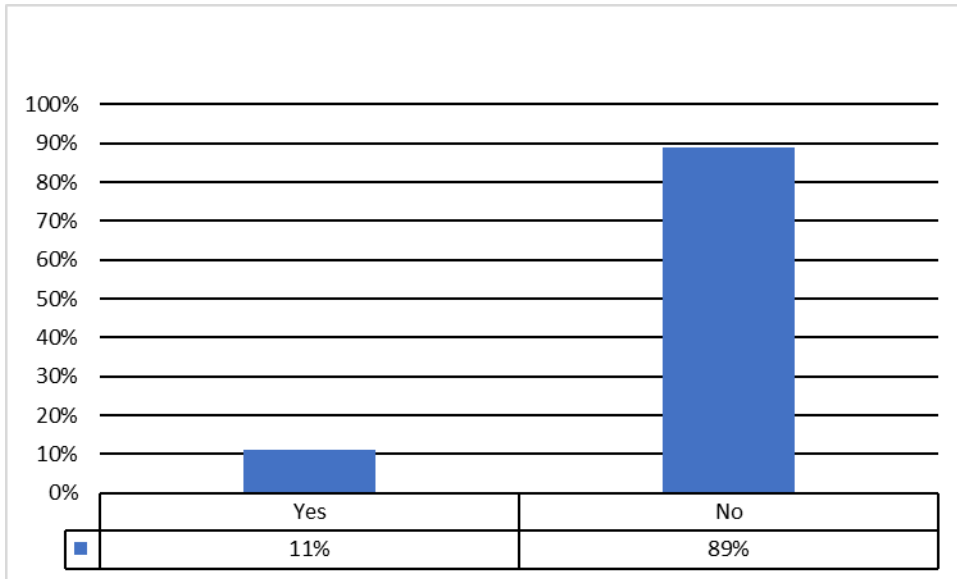
If pupils selected 'Yes' they were asked to comment on what they had noticed. However, no comments were received.

Conclusion

Overall, most of the pupils who responded appeared to view policing positively with little variation from Feb-March 2023. The most notable change was in relation to having 'a general worry or problem outside of school', with a higher proportion of pupils reporting in the Oct-Nov 2023 survey that 33% would not speak to the police (n=3) or being unsure of what to do (44%, n=4). However, it must be emphasised there was a limited response rate to the survey and overall it appears there was limited awareness of initiatives that had been implemented in Irvine Fullarton.

Conversations with Community Representatives

From October to December 2023, SPA staff had conversations with representatives from community groups in person or on MS Teams to gather feedback on the project. In total we spoke with 6 representatives from five stakeholder organisation situated and actively working to support the work in the Irvine Fullarton area.

Overall, the project was received positively and summarised feedback includes:

- Stakeholders commended communication approach used by project team in the area (e.g. "kept in touch", "resources have been handed in readily", "plastering posters far and wide", "physically out and about");
- Some people we talked to found the events were useful for their own professional learning to understand community (e.g. "shows people have an appetite to be involved in community conversations);

- In terms of timeframes, feedback was noted that "everything suggested and ideas presented by community were put in place really quickly" but some people highlighted three months is perhaps not enough time for the test of change to be noticed;
- Stakeholders noted that communication methods related to the project could perhaps have been different to improve engagement (examples suggested include project team doing door-to-door awareness raising, and local policing having a stall at the Rivergate Centre to engage the community);
- Many stakeholders noted that having events during the day may exclude those who work during the day, with an evening session perhaps more convenient and should be considered for future work; and the project team could attend existing groups, rather than creating new groups;
- It was noted by multiple stakeholders that individuals in the community started off interested, however this interest tailed off (e.g. "Initial conversations were really good, lots of buy in at the beginning");
- It was felt that the police should make more of an effort to publicise the good things they are doing in the community;
- Overall people reported that it was good to see the police listening and responding to community needs;
- The police quadbikes were positively discussed in three out of the five conversations.