

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Policing Performance Committee Meeting</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>9<sup>th</sup> December 2021</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>MS Teams</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>SPA Public Confidence Surveying – Deep Dive</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Martin Smith, Strategy and Research Lead, SPA</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached – No</b>	

**PURPOSE**

This paper provides an overview of the main findings from the Authority's public opinion surveys (in conjunction with other surveys where applicable) by age, personal circumstances and financial status of respondents before outlining next steps.

**1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 During 2020/21 the Authority commissioned four public opinion surveys from the Diffley Partnership, exploring public attitudes towards the police, lockdown restrictions, and their ease of compliance and experiences of policing. Diffley Partnership drew a sample from the established *ScotPulse* online panel survey. Various findings have been published on the Authority's [website](#) during the course of the last 18 months and discussion has taken place at a number of Authority Meetings and meetings of the Policing Performance Committee (PPC).
- 1.2 This paper builds on previous geographical analysis presented to PPC in June 2021 and presents analysis of findings by age, personal circumstances and financial status.

## **2. SURVEY APPROACH AND METHOD**

- 2.1 The four surveys took place between April 2020 and February 2021. The approach to surveying was dynamic over the course of the pandemic, with some questions asked as standing items in all four surveys, others asked more intermittently, and some asked on a one-off basis linked to specific topical areas of interest.
- 2.2 The Authority developed and formulated its questions during the pandemic via engagement with the Independent Advisory Group chaired by John Scott (QC), along with the professional advice of Diffley Partnership.
- 2.3 A number of questions were also asked specifically as they enabled comparison with the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) and the Scottish Victimization Telephone Survey (SVTS). Data from these surveys are used in this paper to inform the analysis where appropriate. While SCJS and SVTS categories were recoded to enable greater comparability with the Authority data, it should be stressed that due to different survey modes, survey results are not directly comparable.
- 2.4 The demographics this paper explores are age, personal status and financial status. Age has previously been identified as having the greatest influence on variations in responses as compared with other demographic variables analysed such as gender or household size. Respondents' ages were captured in all four surveys, but questions regarding personal status and financial status were only asked in survey 3 (as an area of topical interest). Personal status relates to a question in the survey 3 asking respondents about their lifestyle and personal circumstances e.g. mental and/or physical health issues, caring responsibilities, and being from a Black and minority ethnic background. Financial status information is derived from a question which asked respondents how straightforward it would be to provide monetary support at short notice to a family member or friend who was experiencing COVID-19 related financial difficulty.
- 2.5 It has been possible to enlarge the sample for the age analysis in this paper, by aggregating the data from all four surveys. The Authority boosted the sample in survey 3 in an attempt to gain the views of seldom heard groups, however there were still small numbers of Black

and Minority Ethnic (BME) participants (n=22). Subsequently, this demographic has been excluded from the analysis and it is acknowledged that further work needs to be undertaken to gain the views of BME members of the public. 'Rather not say' and 'Not answered' responses have also been excluded from the analysis.

### **3. MAIN FINDINGS**

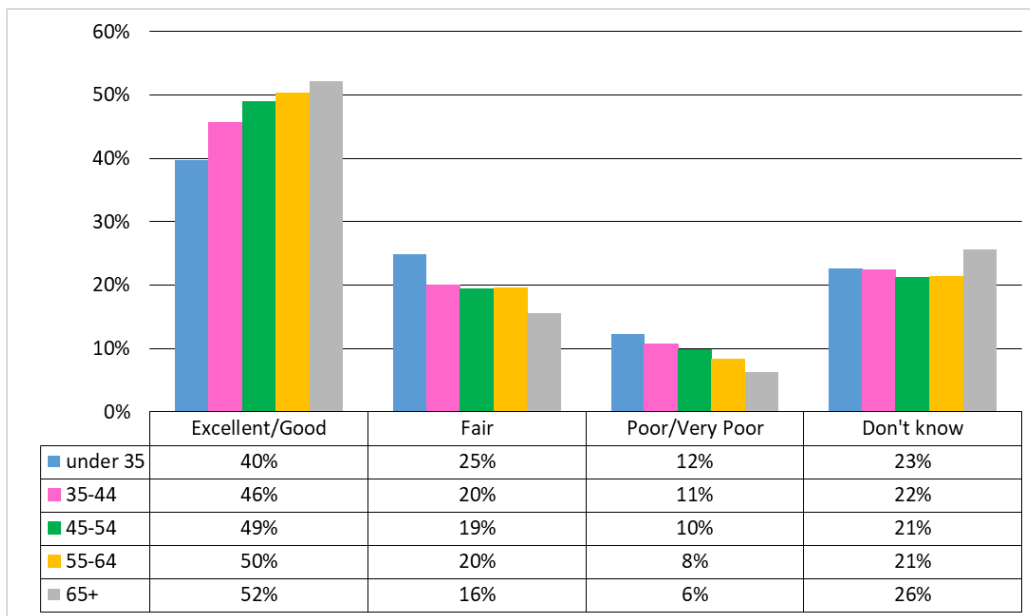
3.1 The analysis of responses by age, personal circumstances and financial status has resulted in the identification of the following main analytical findings:

- All age groups view local policing performance positively, however younger people, people reporting a mental health condition, and people with challenging financial circumstances are more likely to be critical of police performance.
- Younger people are more likely to feel that police presence is 'About right', whereas older people, and people with more pressing financial circumstances feel police presence is 'Not enough'.
- Although all groups are largely supportive of the 4E policing approach, older people and people with more resources are more supportive of the approach than younger people and people experiencing financial difficulty. People reporting a mental health condition are more likely to make the call for tougher enforcement action by the police.
- Confidence in the police to respond quickly and effectively to incidents is high across all age groups over the pandemic, with little variation by age or other factor.
- Support for police enforcement in the form of fines, arrest and 'stop and account' is high, although younger people are less supportive of use of arrest.
- Compliance with lockdown regulations has been more difficult for younger people and people with challenging personal and financial circumstances.

#### 4. AGE ANALYSIS

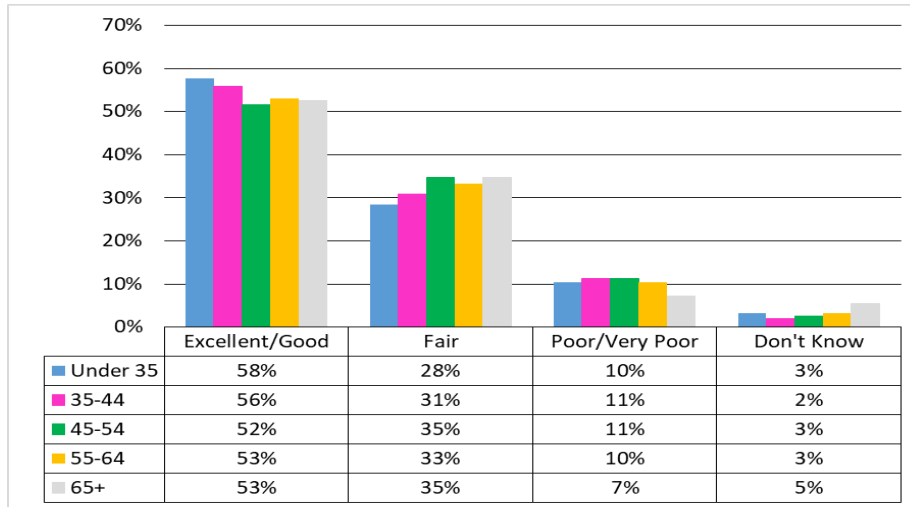
4.1 The largest proportion of survey respondents have consistently felt that police in their local area have been doing an 'Excellent/Good' job across all age categories – see **Figure 1**. However it is notable that feelings of the police doing an 'Excellent/Good' job increase with age, and that feelings of police performance being 'Fair' and 'Poor/Very Poor' largely decreases with age. This observation contrasts with SCJS 2019/20 findings where those who feel that the police are doing an 'Excellent/Good' job decreases as the age categories increased – see **Figure 2**. The SVTS also shows that under 35's are the most likely to say that the police are doing an 'Excellent/Good' job, whereas 35-44 and 45-54 are the least likely age groups to feel this way – see **Figure 3**.

**Figure 1:** How good a job do you think the police in your local area are doing? -Age Breakdown % (Count: 9,599) – Authority Surveys

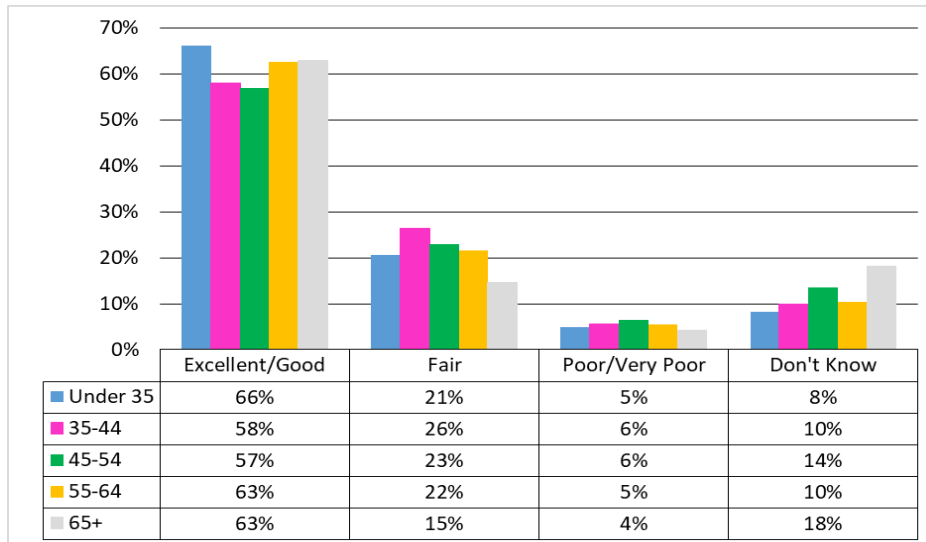


4.2 While these surveys are not directly comparable due to different survey modes, these results suggest further work should be undertaken to explore and unpack views on police performance by age.

**Figure 2:** Taking everything into account, how good a job do you think the police in this area are doing? - **Age Breakdown %** (Count 5,568) - [SCJS 2019/20](#)



**Figure 3:** Taking everything into account, how good a job do you think the police in this area are doing? - **Age Breakdown %** (Count 2,649) - [SVTS 2020](#)

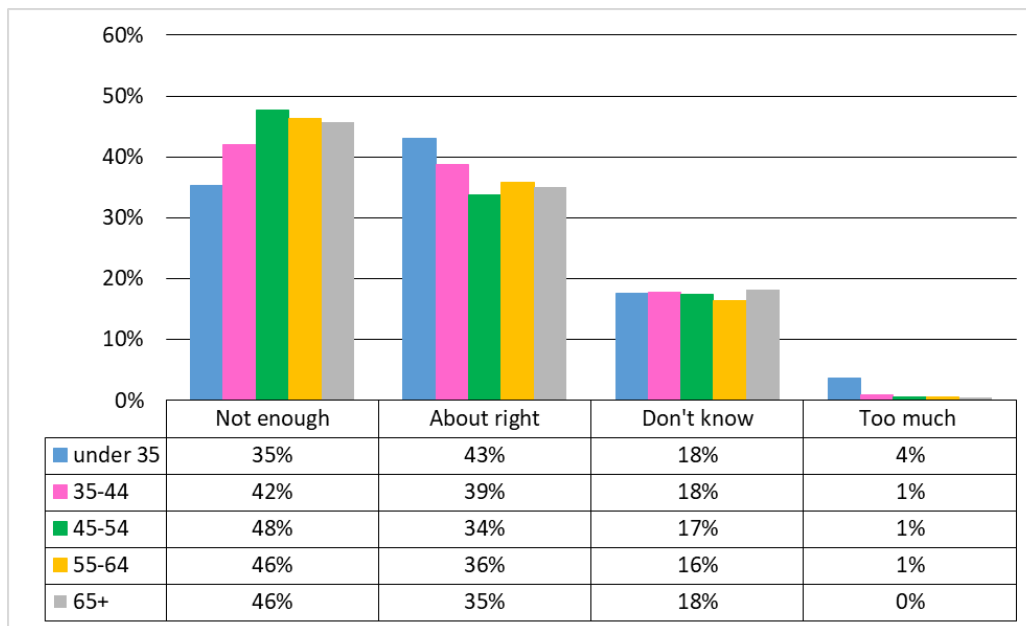


4.3 The majority of those 35 and over felt police presence was 'Not enough' (ranging from 42% to 48%) – see **Figure 4**. Concurrently, the majority of under 35's felt that police presence was 'About right'

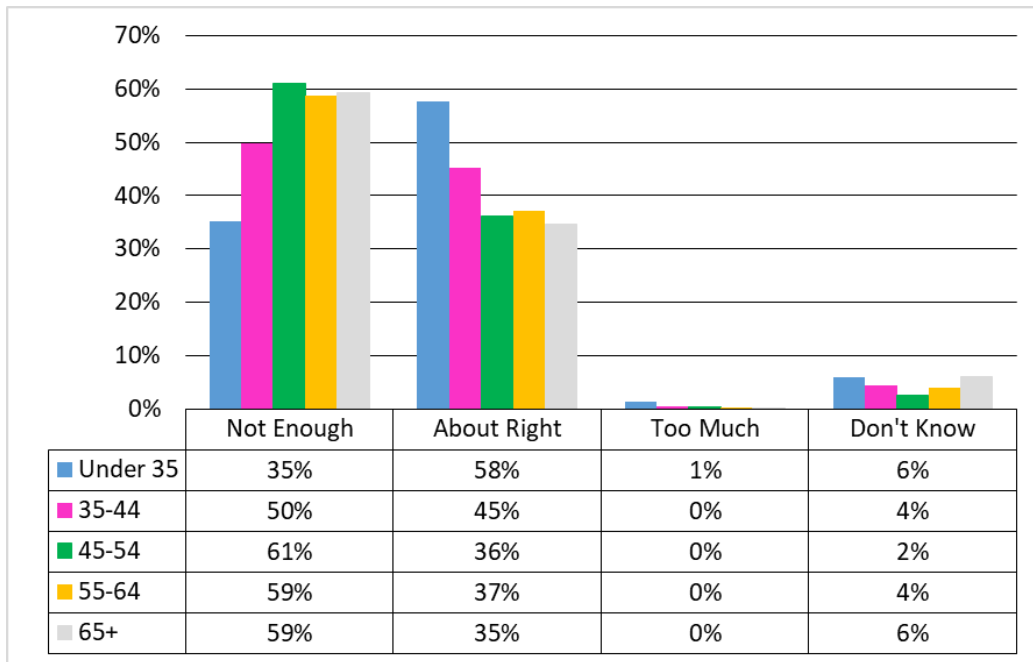
(43%), with 35% of under 35's feeling police presence was 'Not enough'.

- 4.4 These findings are similar to those in the SCJS 2019/20 where over 35's were more likely to report that police presence was 'Not enough' and under 35's were more likely to view it was 'About right' (see **Figure 5**). These results suggest that older age groups would desire more local policing presence.
- 4.5 The Authority's surveys have higher rates of respondents' selecting 'Don't know' and this could be reflective of the lockdown measures in place at the point of data collection, which limited the public's ability to see visible policing during times spent largely at home.

**Figure 4:** Overall, do you think that the police presence in your local area is...? **Age Breakdown % (Count: 9,643) – Authority Surveys**

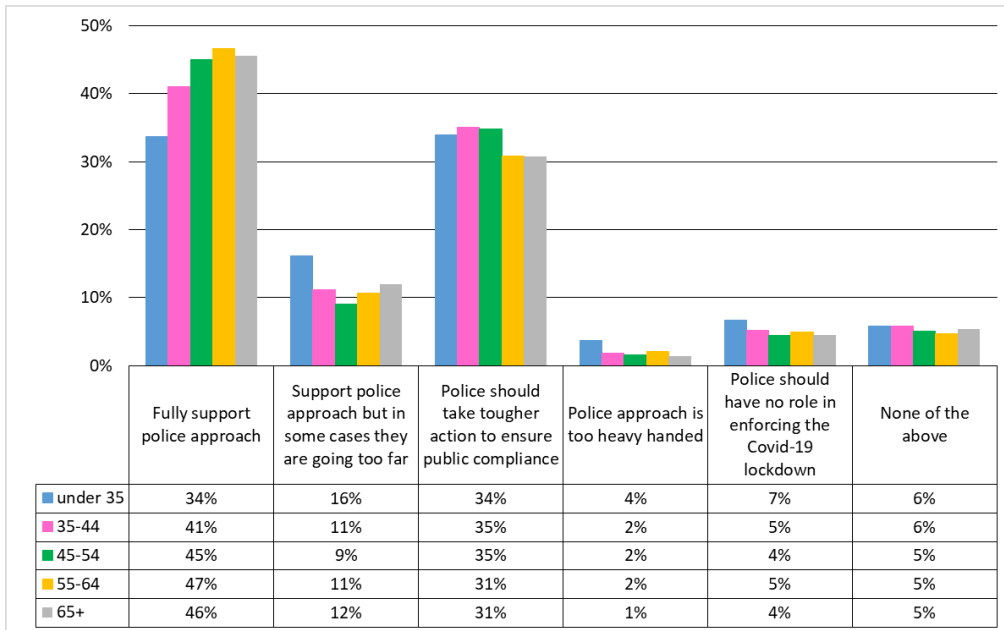


**Figure 5:** Police presence in local area is... **Age Breakdown % (Count: 5,445) – SCJS 2019/20**



- 4.6 As shown in **Figure 6**, full support of the police approach to lockdown broadly increases with age. With the exception of the under 35’s, other age groups are more likely to be fully supportive of the 4Es police approach to lockdowns – ranging from 41% to 47%.
- 4.7 In relation to under 35’s there is an even split between full support and the view that police should be taking tougher action to ensure compliance – 34%. Under 35’s are also the most likely age group to support the police but feel “that they are going too far” in some cases – 16%. This suggests that while there is broad support for the 4Es policing approach to lockdowns, support is generally higher among older people.

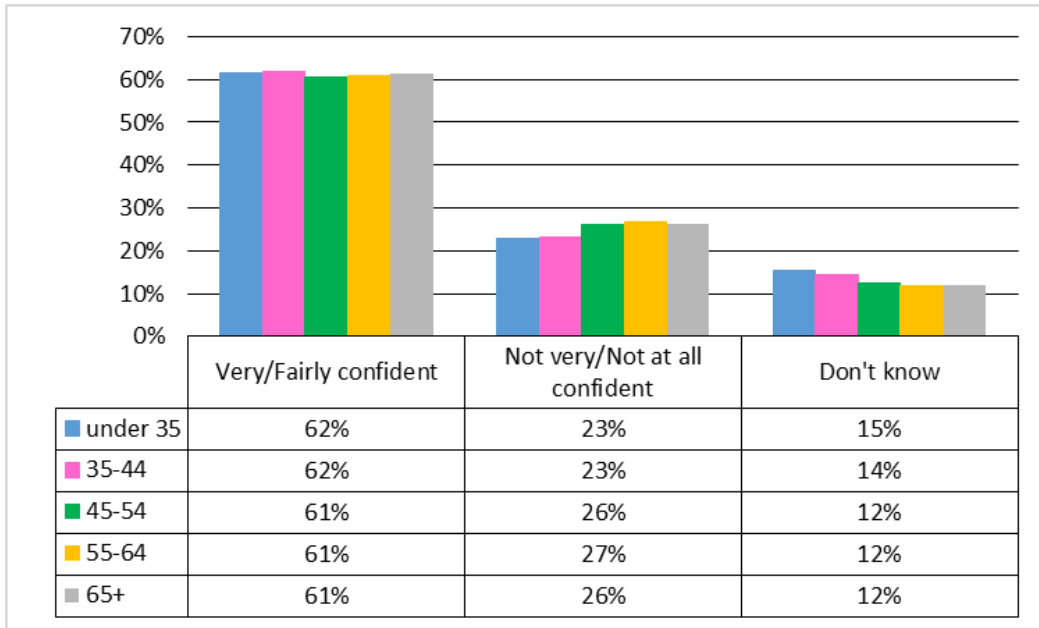
**Figure 6:** Which one of the following statements comes closest to your view of how the police in Scotland are handling the COVID19 lockdown? **Age Breakdown % (Count: 9,640) – Authority Surveys**



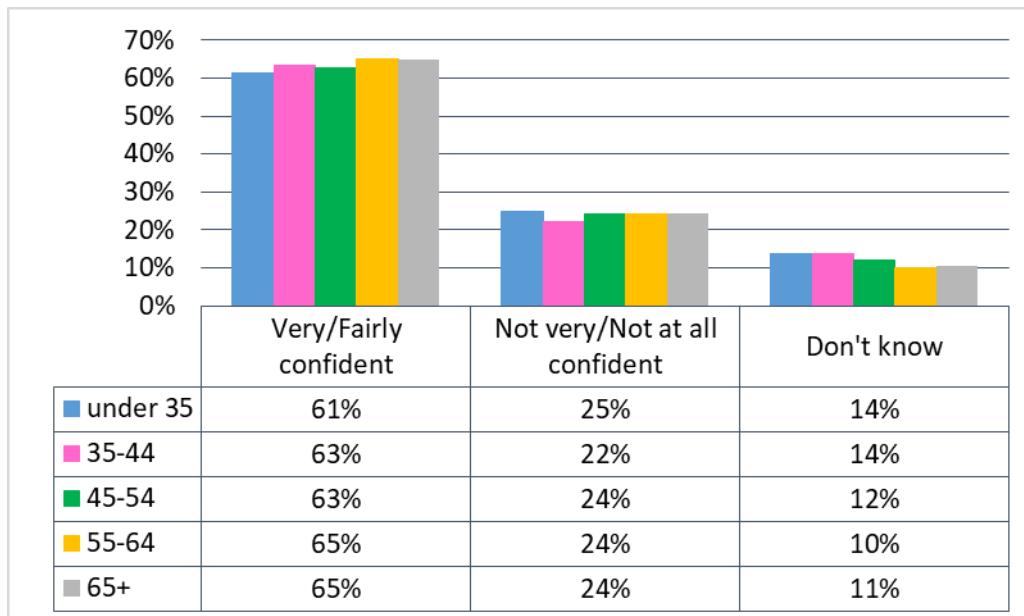
- 4.8 As shown in **Figure 7** and **Figure 8**, the majority of respondents of all ages are 'Very/Fairly confident' in the ability of police to respond quickly (ranging from 61% to 62%) and deal with incidents as they occurred (ranging from 61% to 65%).
- 4.9 The majority of respondents were also 'Very/Fairly confident' for both of these measures in the SCJS 2019/20 – see **Figure 9** and **Figure 10**. However, it is notable that with the exception of the 65+ category the proportion of those feeling confident decreased as the age categories increased. Subsequently, as lockdown measures ease, this is something that should continue to be monitored.



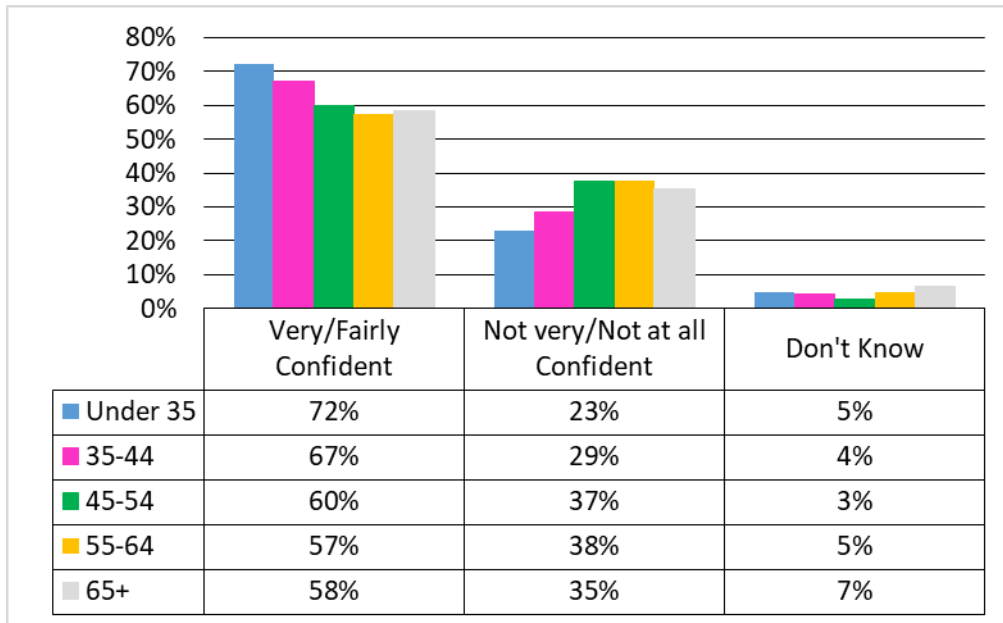
**Figure 7:** How confident are you in the ability of police in your local area to respond quickly? **Age Breakdown % (Count: 5,851) – Authority Surveys**



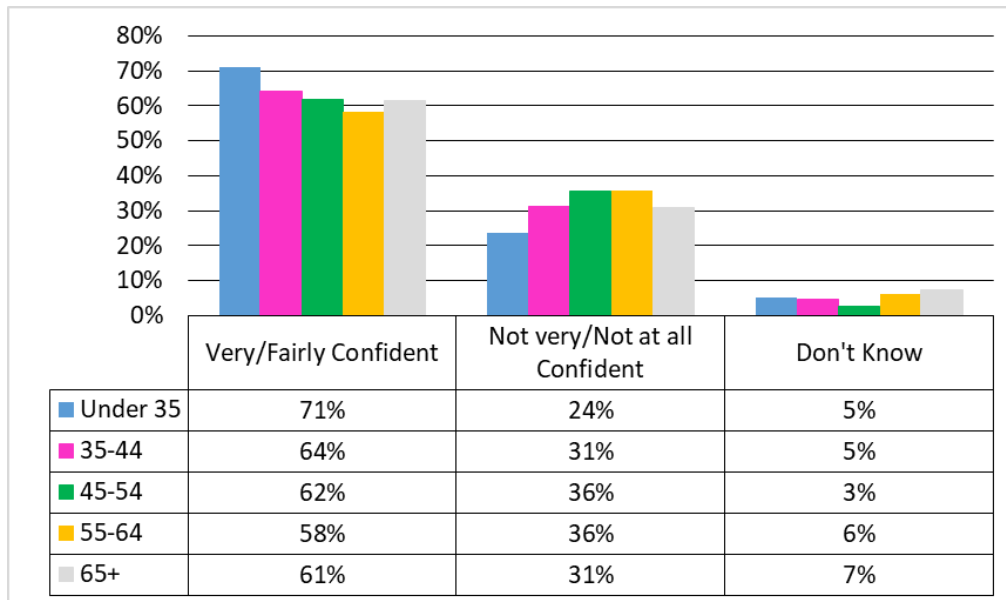
**Figure 8:** How confident are you in the ability of police in your local area to deal with incidents as they occur? **Age Breakdown % (Count: 5,850) – Authority Surveys**



**Figure 9:** Confidence in ability of police in local area to: Respond quickly to appropriate calls and information from the public. **Age Breakdown % (Count 5,568) - SCJS 2019/20**



**Figure 10:** Confidence in ability of police in local area to: Deal with incidents as they occur. **Age Breakdown % (Count 5,567) - SCJS 2019/20**

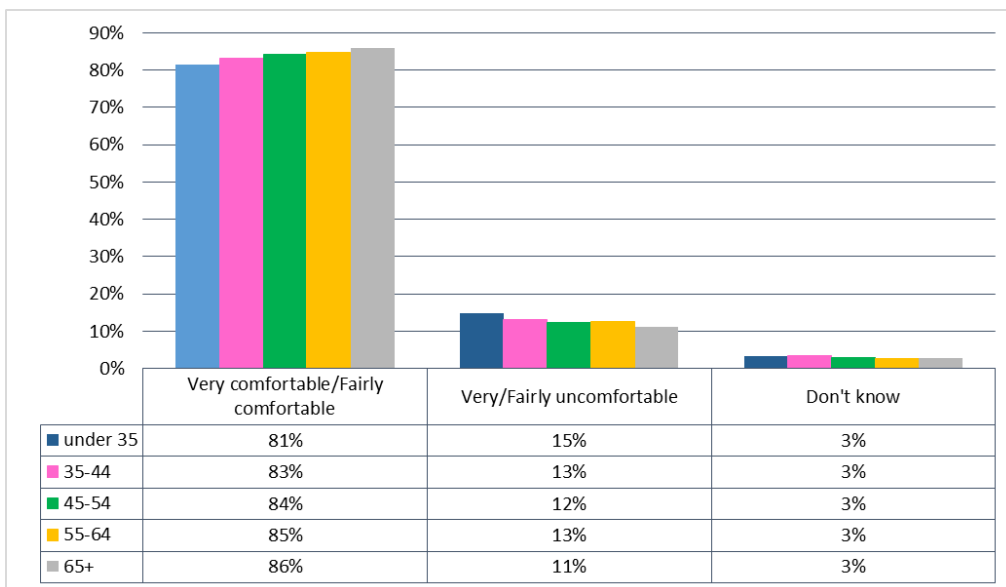


4.10 The majority of respondents across the age groups are 'Very/Fairly comfortable' with the use of penalty fines, 'stop and account' and

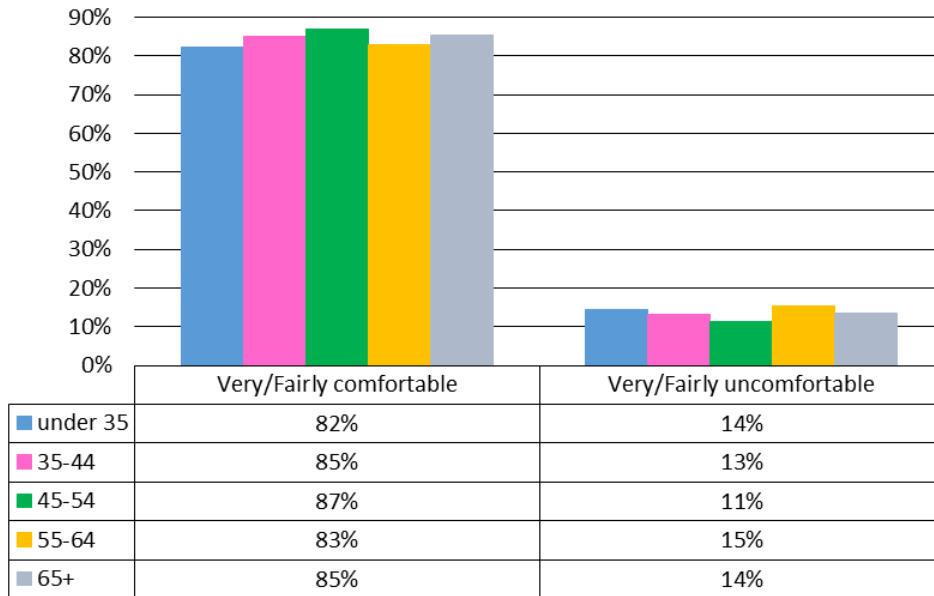
arresting those who failed to comply with the instruction to return home – see **Figure 11**, **Figure 12** and **Figure 13**.

- 4.11 For all measures, over 80% of those between 35-44 and 65+ are 'Very/Fairly comfortable'. Over 80% of under 35's are 'Very/Fairly comfortable' with penalty fines and stop and account, however, only 69% are comfortable with use of arrest.
- 4.12 28% of persons under 35 are 'Very/Fairly uncomfortable' with the use of arrest, in comparison to 15% and 14% who were uncomfortable with the other measures. This suggests that people aged under 35 are less comfortable with use of arrest than older persons.

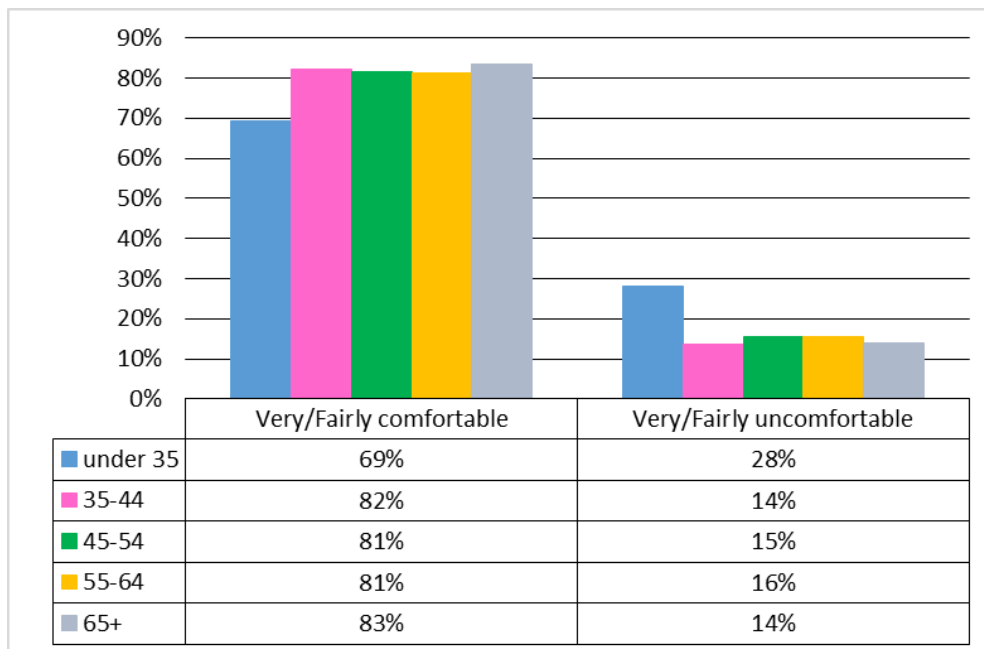
**Figure 11:** To what extent are you comfortable or uncomfortable with the police issuing penalty fines to people breaching the lockdown rules in response to Covid-19? **Age Breakdown % (Count: 5,839) – Authority Surveys**



**Figure 12:** To what extent are you comfortable or uncomfortable with the police asking people to provide a valid reason for being out of their home when challenged (stop and account)? **Age Breakdown % (Count: 3,221) – Authority Surveys**



**Figure 13:** To what extent are you comfortable or uncomfortable with the police arresting people who fail to comply with police instructions to return home? **Age Breakdown % (Count: 3,224) – Authority Surveys**

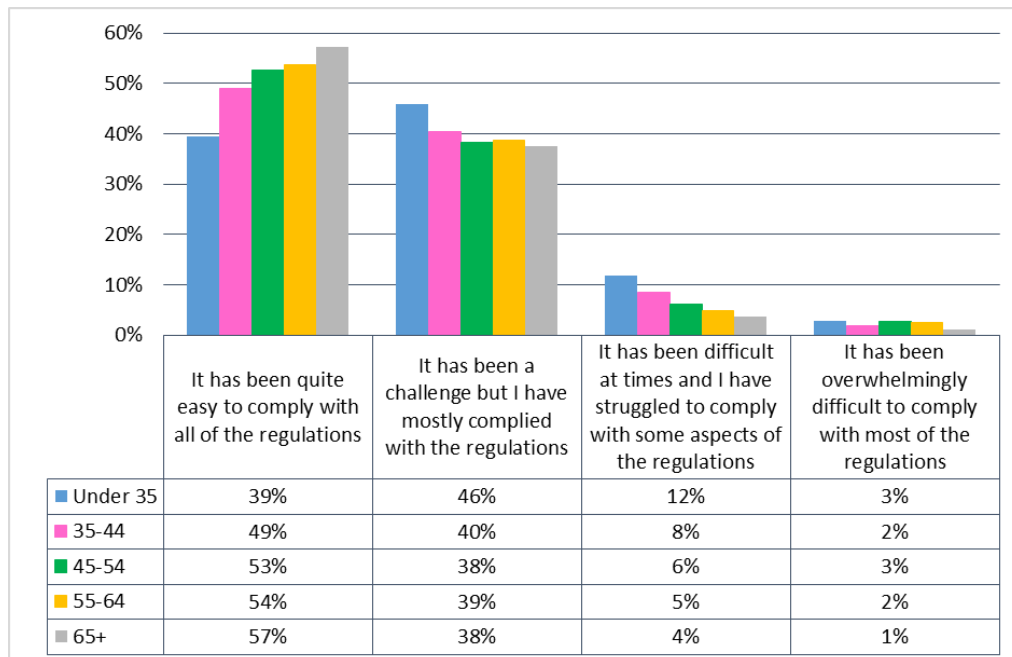


4.13 In survey 3 (October 2020), participants were asked how easy or difficult it had been to comply with all aspects of the lockdown regulations over the previous six months.

4.14 The majority of over-35s felt it had been quite easy to comply with all of the regulations, whereas the majority of under 35's felt it had been a challenge but they had mostly complied –see **Figure 14**.

4.15 Notably ease of compliance largely increases with age. Older people are more likely to say it had been quite easy, and younger age groups were more likely to say it had been a challenge or difficult at times. These results suggest that younger people have found it harder to comply with the regulations.

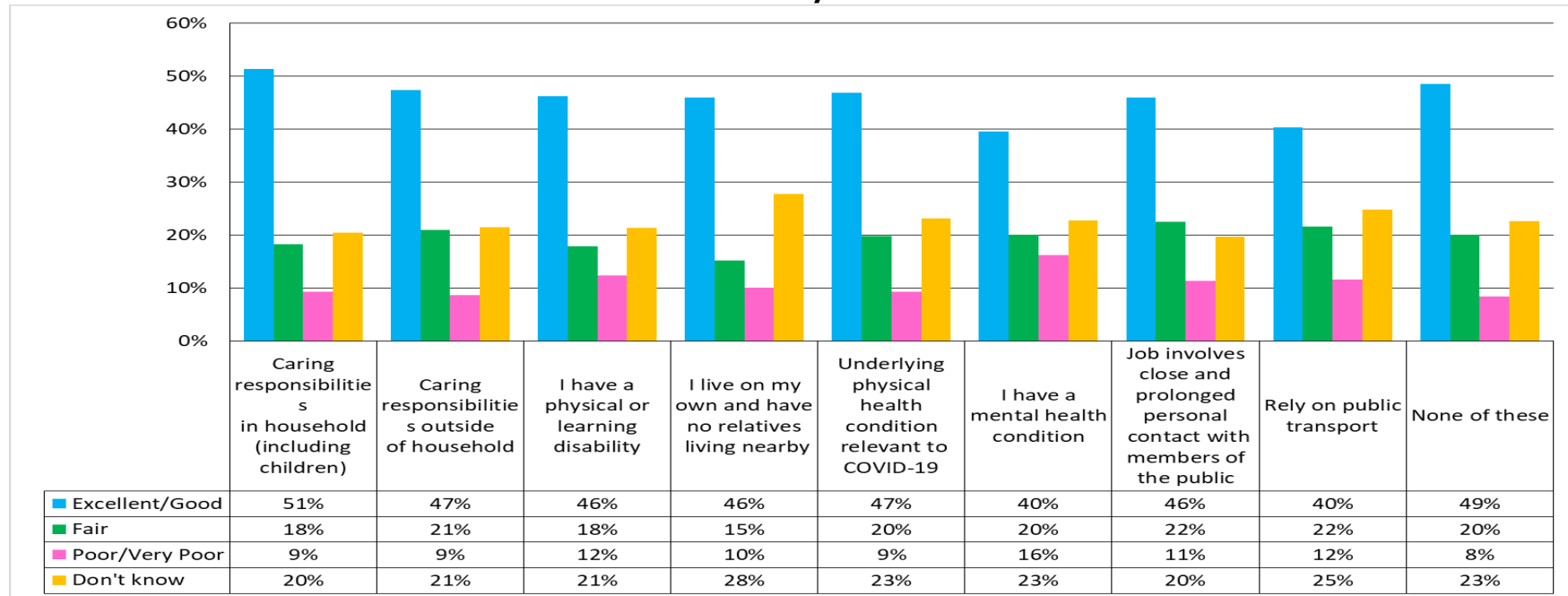
**Figure 14:** On the whole over the last six months, how easy or difficult has it been for you personally to comply with all aspects of lockdown regulations? Select the statement that best describes your experience. **Age Breakdown % (Count: 3,791) – Authority Surveys**



## 5. PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES ANALYSIS

- 5.1 As shown in **Figure 15**, the majority of respondents with various listed personal circumstances feel that the police in their local area were doing an 'Excellent/Good' job. Notably though, those who selected 'None of these' (i.e. without any of the listed personal circumstances) were between two to nine percentage points **higher** than the other categories.
- 5.2 Those who had a mental health condition or relied on public transport were the least likely to feel that police had been doing an 'Excellent/Good' job (40%). People with caring responsibilities in their household (including children) and people who selected 'None of these' were the most likely to rate police performance favourably – 51% and 49%.
- 5.3 Those with a mental health condition were also most likely to feel that police were doing a 'Poor/Very Poor' job (16%). Those who selected 'None of these' were the least likely to feel police were doing a 'Poor/Very Poor' job (8%) – between one and eight percentage points **below** the other categories. There was also a high proportion of 'Don't Know' responses - ranging from 20% to 28%.
- 5.4 While the majority viewed police performance positively, this highlights that those with a mental health condition were the least likely and those who selected 'None of these' were the most likely.

**Figure 15:** How good a job do you think the police in your local area are doing? – **Personal Circumstances** Breakdown % – **Authority Surveys<sup>1</sup>**

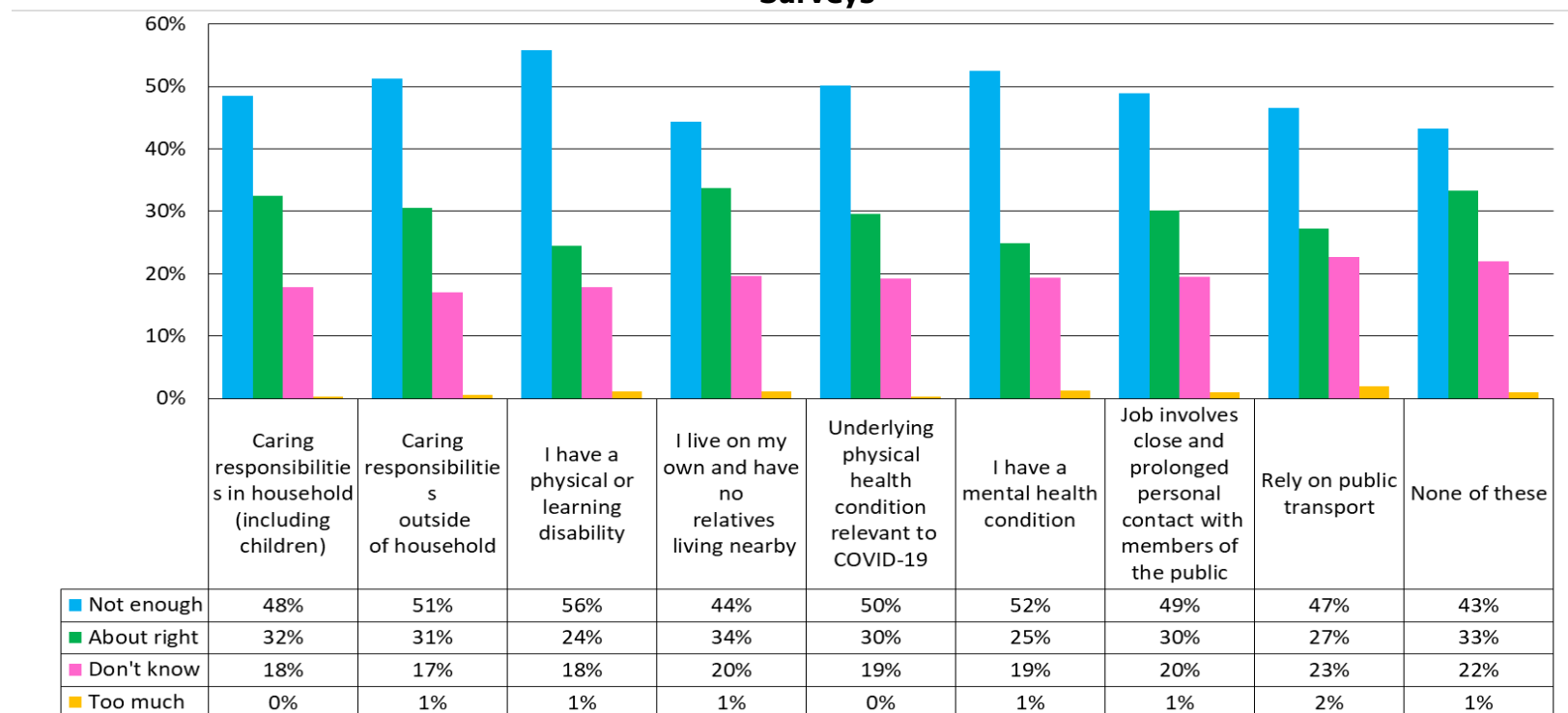


1	Caring responsibilities in household (including children)	Caring responsibilities outside of household	I have a physical or learning disability	I live on my own and have no relatives living nearby	Underlying physical health condition relevant to COVID-19	I have a mental health condition	Job involves close and prolonged personal contact with members of the public	Rely on public transport	None of these
<b>Count</b>	694	522	258	368	714	470	645	449	1245

- 5.5 Across all categories, the majority of respondents feel that police presence is 'Not enough' – see **Figure 16**. At 56% those with a physical or learning disability are the most likely to feel this way, followed by those with a mental health condition (52%). Those who selected 'None of these' were the least likely (43%) – ranging from one to 13 percentage points below the other categories.
- 5.6 People with a physical or learning disability and/or a mental health condition are the least likely to say that police presence is 'About right' – 24% and 25% respectively. Those who live on their own and have no relatives nearby are the most likely to hold this view (34%) followed by those who selected 'None of these' at 33%.
- 5.7 This suggests that people with a physical or learning disability and/or a mental health condition are more likely to state that there is not enough police presence.



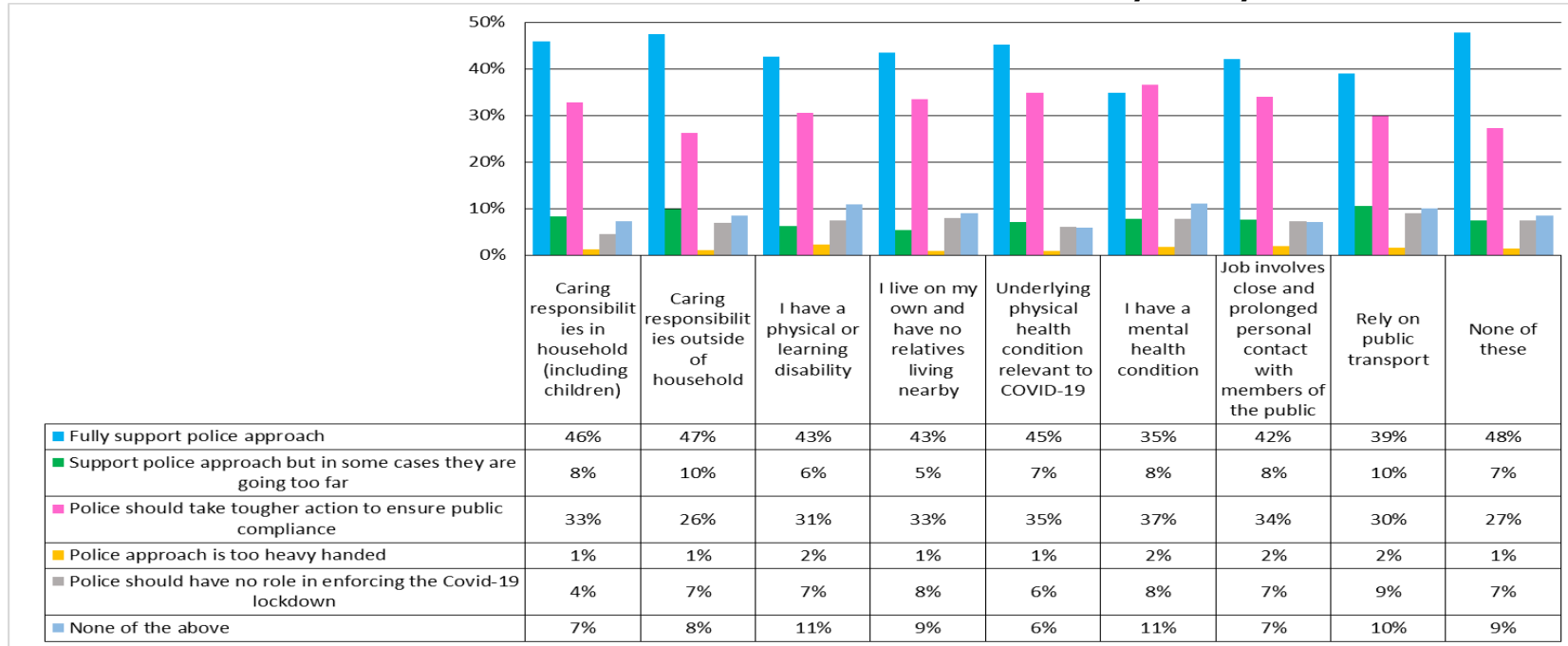
**Figure 16:** Overall, do you think that the police presence in your local area is...? **Personal Circumstances** Breakdown % – **Authority Surveys<sup>2</sup>**



2	Caring responsibilities in household (including children)	Caring responsibilities outside of household	I have a physical or learning disability	I live on my own and have no relatives living nearby	Underlying physical health condition relevant to COVID-19	I have a mental health condition	Job involves close and prolonged personal contact with members of the public	Rely on public transport	None of these
Count	694	523	258	368	715	471	645	449	1245

- 5.8 With the exception of those with a mental health condition, the majority of respondents fully support the policing approach to lockdowns. Those who selected 'None of these' are the most likely to feel this way at 48% - see **Figure 17**.
- 5.9 In comparison, only 35% of people with a mental health condition feel this way, and 37% feel that the police should take tougher action to ensure public compliance. As already discussed, this chimes with the previous questions whereby those with a mental health condition were the least likely to be positive about policing performance and felt that police presence was not enough.

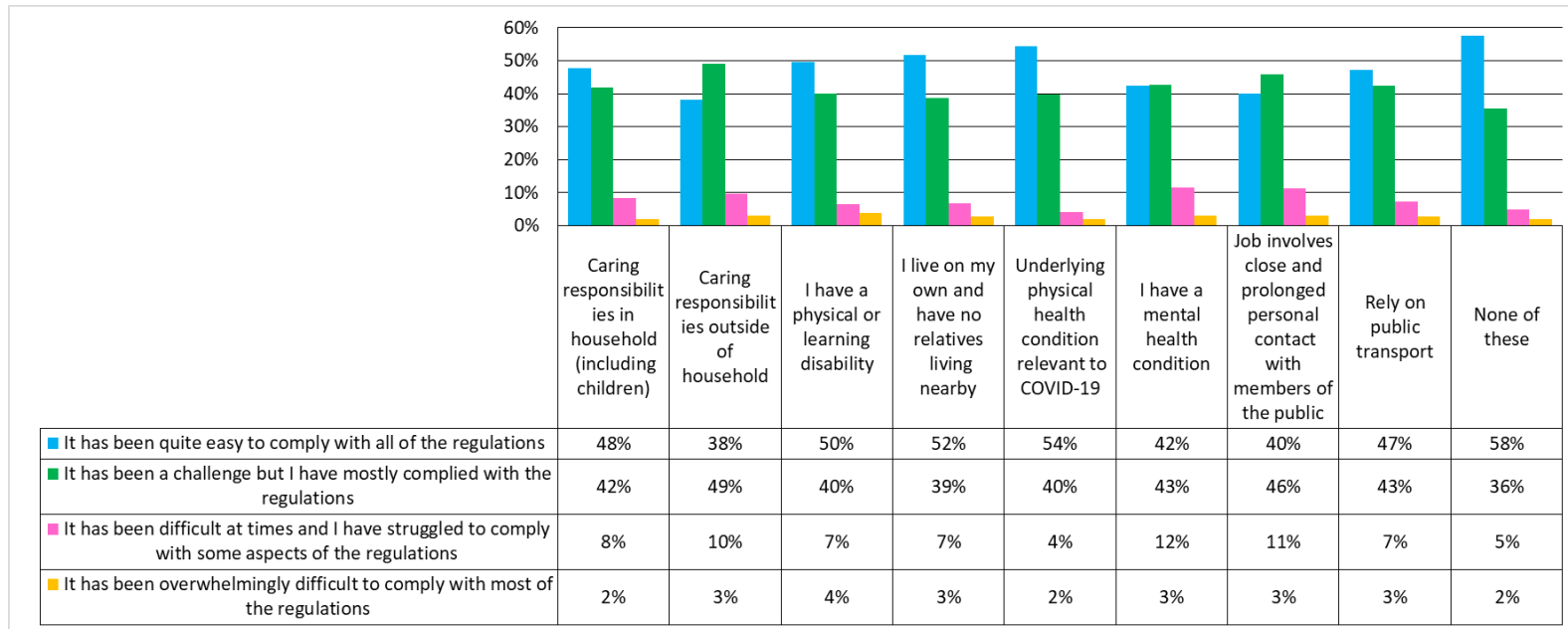
**Figure 17:** Which one of the following statements comes closest to your view of how the police in Scotland are handling the COVID19 lockdown? **Personal Circumstances Breakdown % – Authority Surveys<sup>3</sup>**



3	Caring responsibilities in household (including children)	Caring responsibilities outside of household	I have a physical or learning disability	I live on my own and have no relatives living nearby	Underlying physical health condition relevant to COVID-19	I have a mental health condition	Job involves close and prolonged personal contact with members of the public	Rely on public transport	None of these
Count	693	523	258	368	715	470	645	448	1245

- 5.10 In survey 3 (October 2020), the public was asked how easy or difficult it had been to comply with all aspects of the lockdown regulations over the prior six months.
- 5.11 As shown in **Figure 18**, ease of compliance is mixed across all personal circumstances. The majority of those with caring responsibilities in their household (48%), with a physical or learning disability (50%), living on their own with no nearby relatives (52%), with underlying physical health conditions relevant to Covid-19 (54%), who rely on public transport (47%), and selected 'None of these' (58%) found it quite easy to comply. People without challenging personal circumstances i.e. answering 'None of these' ranged from four to 20 percentage points above the other categories.
- 5.12 In comparison, the majority of those with caring responsibilities outside of their household (49%), with a mental health condition (43%), and whose job involved close and prolonged contact with the public (46%) feel that it had been a challenge but had mostly complied. Those who selected 'None of these' were the least likely to select this (36%) – ranging from three to 13 percentage points below the other categories.
- 5.13 These findings suggest that ease of compliance varies with personal circumstances, but people have complied or mostly complied with the regulations. People who say that they had none of these circumstances found it the easiest to comply.

**Figure 18:** On the whole over the last six months, how easy or difficult has it been for you personally to comply with all aspects of lockdown regulations? Select the statement that best describes your experience. **Personal Circumstances Breakdown % – Authority Surveys<sup>4</sup>**

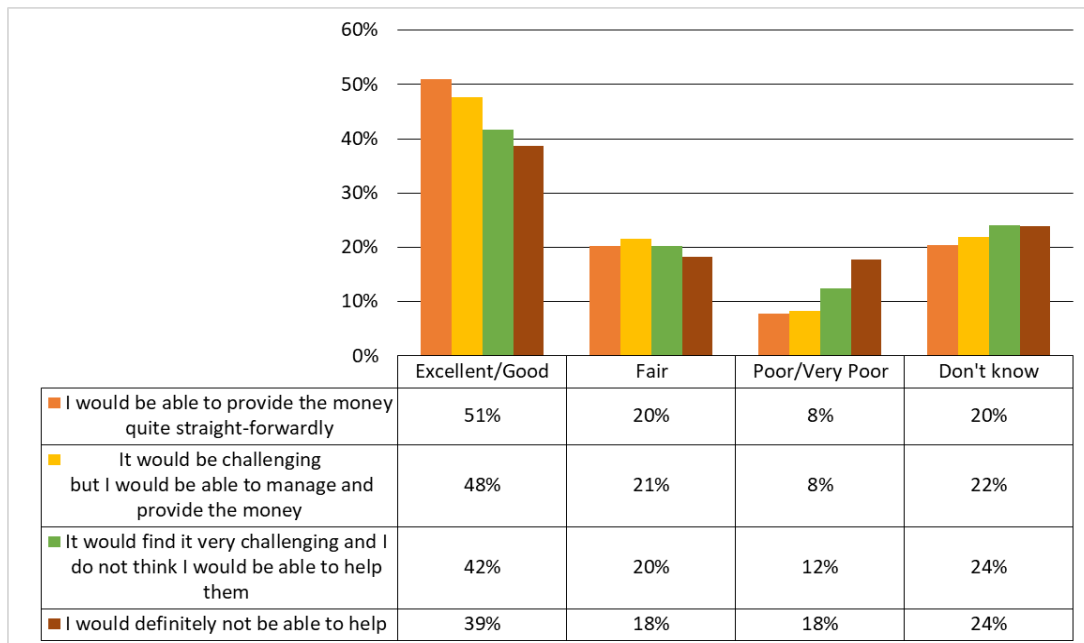


4	Caring responsibilities in household (including children)	Caring responsibilities outside of household	I have a physical or learning disability	I live on my own and have no relatives living nearby	Underlying physical health condition relevant to COVID-19	I have a mental health condition	Job involves close and prolonged personal contact with members of the public	Rely on public transport	None of these
Count	690	521	258	367	713	471	644	449	1246

## 6. FINANCIAL STATUS ANALYSIS

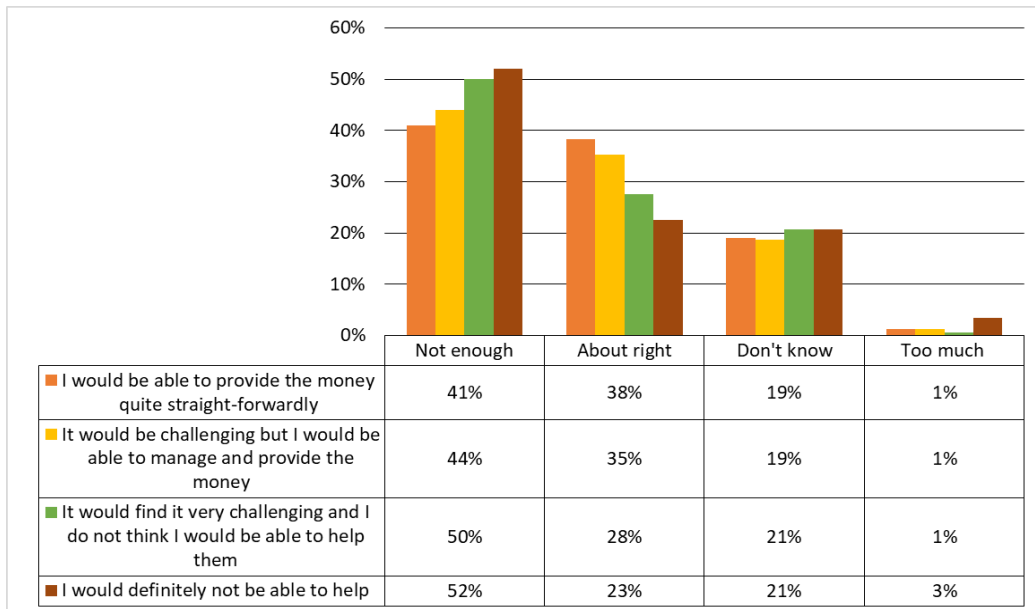
- 6.1 While the majority of respondents regardless of their financial status feel that the police in their local area were doing an 'Excellent/Good' job, as shown in **Figure 19** this position decreases as the ease of being able to provide someone with money if they contracted Covid-19 decreased. For those who would be able to provide the money quite straightforwardly, 51% felt this way, decreasing to 39% of those who would definitely not be able to help – this is a difference of 12 percentage points.
- 6.2 Only 8% of those who could provide the money but said that it would be a challenge or could provide the money straightforwardly felt the police were doing a 'Poor/Very Poor' job. In comparison, 12% of those who did not think they could help and 18% of those who definitely would not be able to help rated the police poorly.
- 6.3 This suggests that people with more challenging financial circumstances are more likely to be critical of how the police have been performing during the pandemic.

**Figure 19:** How good a job do you think the police in your local area are doing? – **Financial Status Breakdown** % (Count: 3,770) – **Authority Surveys**



- 6.4 While the majority of respondents feel police presence was not enough, this is substantially higher for those with less financial resources – see **Figure 20**.
- 6.5 52% of people who would definitely not be able to help out financially feel that police presence is 'Not enough' along with 50% of those who did not think they would be able to help. In comparison, 44% of those who say that it would be a challenge but would be able to provide the money feel this way, along with 41% of those to whom it would be quite straightforward. This is an 11 percentage point difference between those who would definitely not be able to help and those to whom it would be straightforward.
- 6.6 The second most common response was that police presence is 'About right', and this view increases as the financial resources available to respondents increases. This suggests that people with fewer financial resources to assist someone with Covid-19 are more likely to feel that police presence is 'Not enough' compared with people who have more financial resources.

**Figure 20:** Overall, do you think that the police presence in your local area is...?  
**Financial Status** Breakdown % (Count: 3,772) – **Authority Surveys**

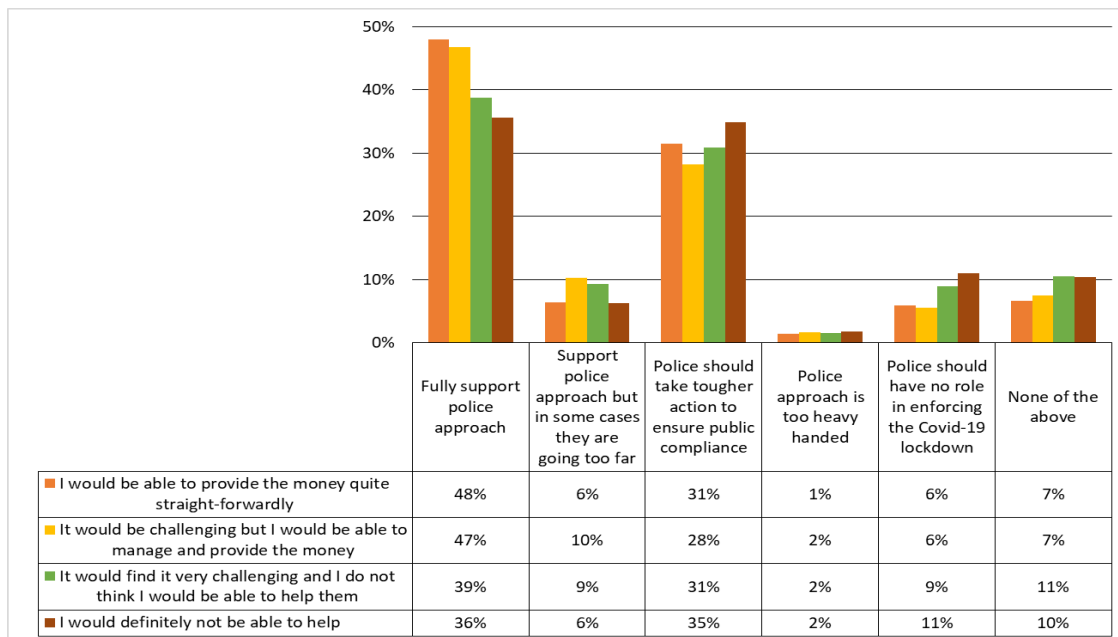


- 6.7 While the majority of people fully support the policing approach to lockdowns, this decreased substantially as the volume of financial resources held by respondents decreased. In terms of levels of support, this stands at 48% for people who could provide money

straightforwardly, 47% for people who felt it would be challenging but could provide it, 39% for people who did not think they could help, and 36% for people who would definitely not be able to help. This is a 12 percentage point difference between people who would definitely not be able to help and those to whom it would be straightforward.

6.8 The second most common response was that the police needed to take tougher action to ensure public compliance. People who would definitely not be able to help were the most likely to say that the police needed to take tougher action (35%, one percentage point below those who fully supported), followed by 31% of those to whom it would be quite straightforward or did not think they would be able to help, and 28% of those who would find it challenging but would be able to provide the money. This suggests that people with fewer financial resources are less supportive of the policing approach to lockdown.

**Figure 21:** Which one of the following statements comes closest to your view of how the police in Scotland are handling the COVID19 lockdown? **Financial Status** Breakdown % (count 3,771) – **Authority Surveys**



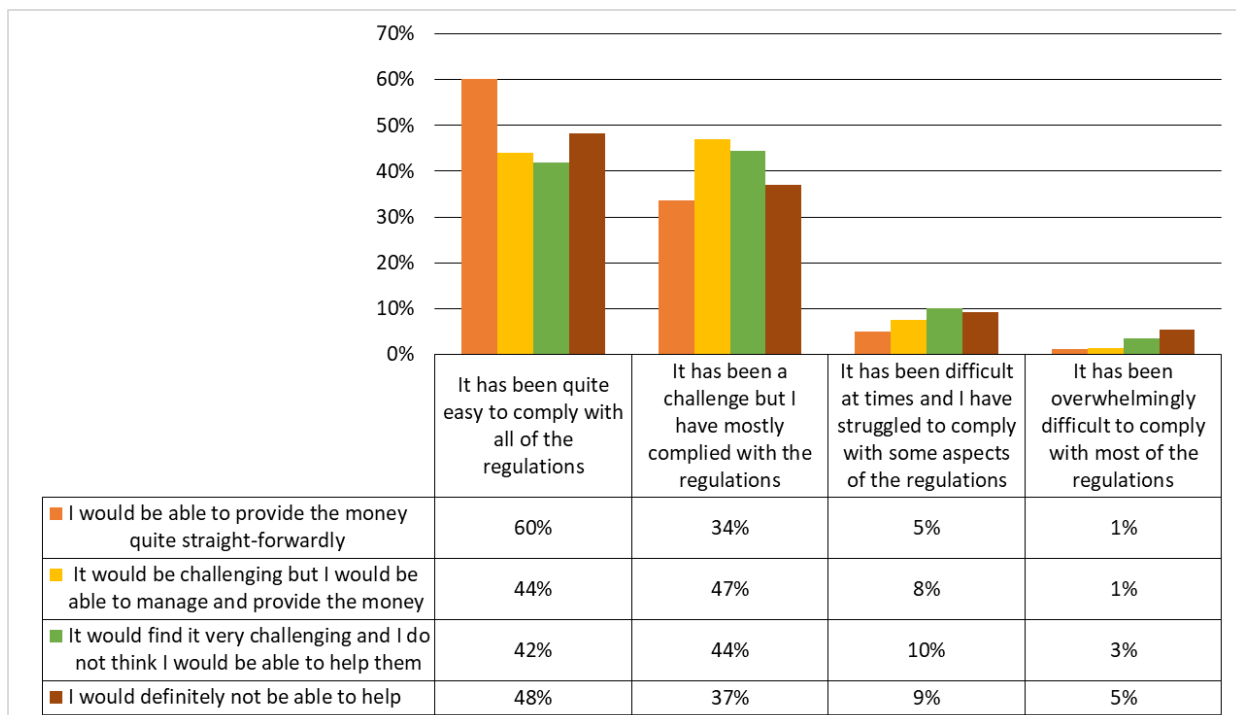
6.9 Views on ease of compliance are mixed across the categories – see **Figure 22.**



6.10 The majority of people who would be able to provide the money quite straightforwardly (60%) and people who would definitely not be able to help (48%) feel that it had been quite easy to comply with all of the regulations. In comparison, the majority of those who felt it would be challenging but they would be able to provide the money (47%) and those who did not think they would be able to provide the money (44%) feel that it had been a challenge but that they had mostly complied.

6.11 These findings suggest that people have mostly complied with all of the regulations but that it was easier for those who could provide money to support someone with Covid-19 quite straightforwardly.

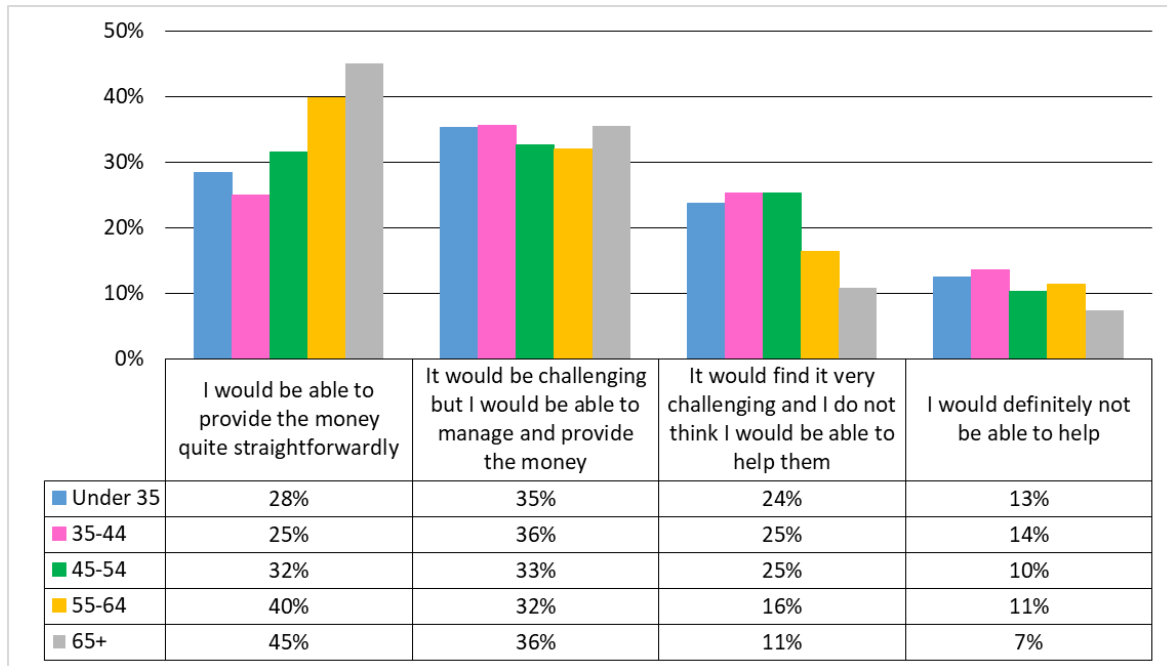
**Figure 22:** On the whole over the last six months, how easy or difficult has it been for you personally to comply with all aspects of lockdown regulations? Select the statement that best describes your experience. **Financial Status** Breakdown % (Count: 3,766) – **Authority Surveys**



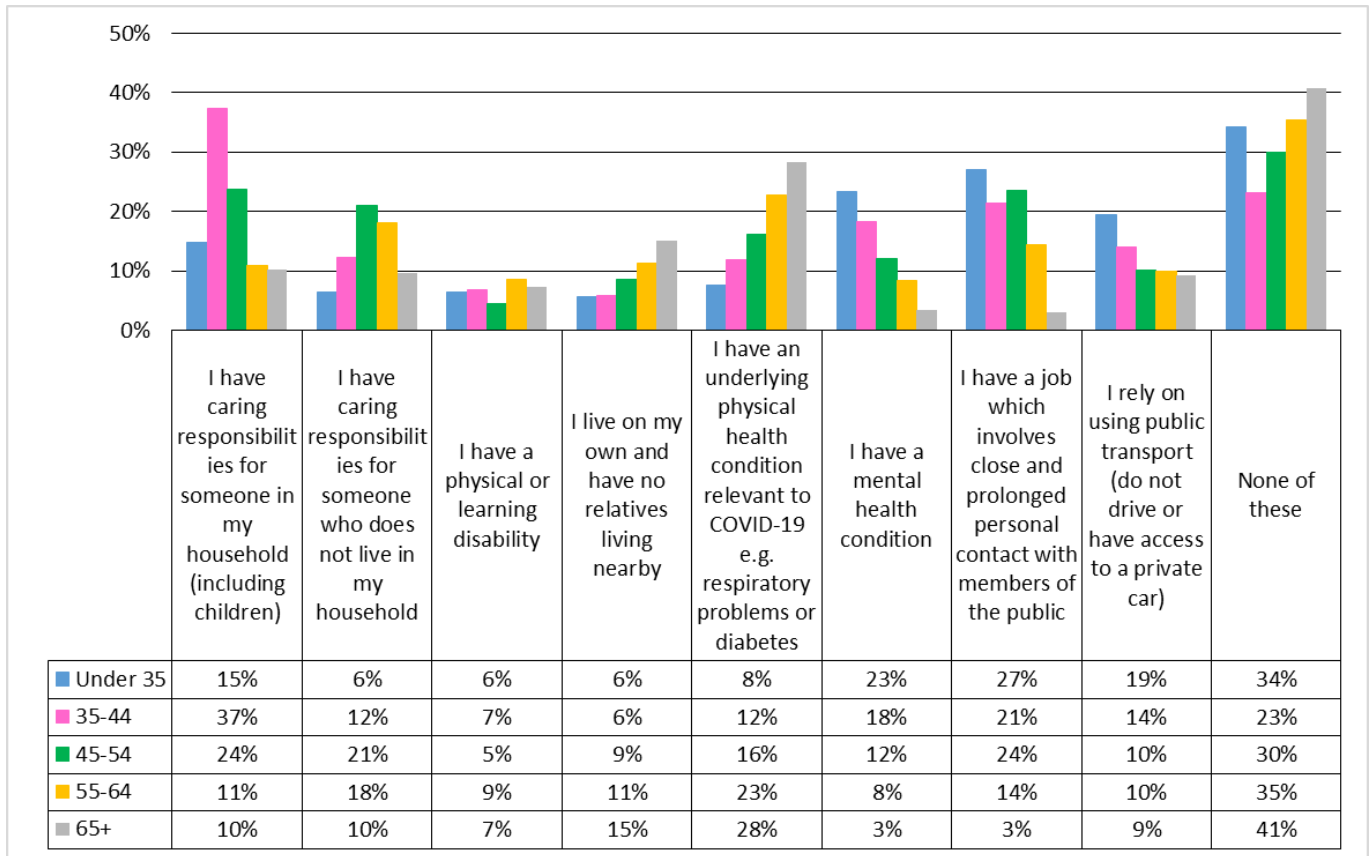
6.12 It is possible that younger people are less positive of policing as they are less likely to be able to straightforwardly provide money to support someone with Covid-19 and more likely than the other age

categories to experience mental health issues – see **Figure 23** and **Figure 24**.

**Figure 23:** If someone in your family, household or extended household became ill with COVID-19 symptoms and asked you to borrow money urgently to help them to cover their rent/mortgage and other household bills for the next month, how straightforward or difficult would it be for you to offer that help, provided you wanted to do so? **Age Breakdown % (Count: 3,791) – Authority Surveys**



**Figure 24:** Some people are impacted more than others by the lifestyle restrictions during COVID-19, or may be at higher risk of experiencing serious COVID-19 symptoms. Which of the following, if any, apply to you? **Age Breakdown % – Authority Surveys<sup>5</sup>**



5

	Under 35	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+
Count	1061	607	682	682	758

## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.1 There are several key conclusions to be drawn from the main findings (presented in Section 3 of this report).
- 7.2 Views of local policing performance have been positive across all groups. However, younger people were more likely to be critical of police performance in comparison to older people, those with a mental health condition were most likely to say performance was 'Poor/Very Poor' and those with fewer financial resources were less positive than those with more.
- 7.3 The majority of people across the groups have viewed local police presence as being 'Not enough'. The only exception to this is the under 35 age group who felt it was 'About right'.
- 7.4 Support for how the lockdowns have been policed has been strong across all categories. Although notably those with a mental health condition felt there should be tougher action and under 35's were split between tougher action and full support. Full support was also generally higher amongst older people, people who had none of the personal circumstances outlined, and amongst people with greater financial resources.
- 7.5 Ease of compliance with lockdown regulations increased with age, with under 35's most likely to say it had been a challenge but they had mostly complied in comparison to other age groups who reported that it had been 'quite easy'. People who had none of the personal circumstances outlined and who could provide money quite straightforwardly were also more likely to have found compliance easier.
- 7.6 In relation to police enforcement around fines, arrest, and 'stop and account', support was high across all age groups, although younger age groups were substantially less supportive of use of arrest.

## **8 NEXT STEPS**

- 8.1 Regarding next steps, there is a need for further and ongoing work to measure public confidence in policing and capture the views of various segments of the Scottish population beyond the scope of

surveys of this nature. To this end, the Authority is currently undertaking a procurement exercise to establish six-monthly public confidence polling.

- 8.2 Academic research projects are also underway, funded jointly by the Authority, SIPR and Police Scotland, looking into the experiences of seldom heard groups and policing (see more [here](#)); additionally the Authority and Police Scotland are progressing a participative community-based action research project looking at the relationship between deprivation, vulnerability and confidence in policing.

**9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are **no** financial implications associated with this report.

**10. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are **no** personnel implications associated with this report.

**11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 There are **no** legal implications in this paper.

**12. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 There are **reputational** implications in this paper associated with the need for the policing system to listen to the opinions of communities and promote and enhance public confidence.

**13. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 There are **no** social implications associated with this paper.

**14. COMMUNITY IMPACT**

14.1 There are **no** community implications associated with this paper.

**15. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

15.1 There are **no** equality implications associated with this paper.

**16. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

16.1 There are **no** environmental implications associated with this paper.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are invited to:

Note the analytical Main Findings (Section 3) and discuss the overall Conclusions (Section 7) and proposed Next Steps (Section 8).