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# Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) – Public Briefing

Briefing No. 22



November 2024



## Summary

This public briefing outlines what is classed as antisocial behaviour and considers its causes and public opinion on the impact on citizens and communities. It also provides a comparison between antisocial behaviour statistics in Scotland and England & Wales, and offers advice on how to report an incident and obtain further support.

# What is Antisocial Behaviour?

According to the [Antisocial Behaviour etc. \(Scotland\) Act 2004](#), the definition of antisocial behaviour (ASB) is as follows:

A person engages in antisocial behaviour if they:

- (a) act in a manner that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress; or
- (b) pursues a course of conduct that causes or is likely to cause alarm or distress,

to at least one person who is not of the same household (section 143(1)).

The following systemic root causes of antisocial behaviour are highlighted in a [review of Scotland's approach to antisocial behaviour](#):

- Poor mental health;
- Misuse and influence of drugs and alcohol;
- Poverty;
- Stigma and stereotypes;
- Housing; and
- Covid-19 pandemic;

# Antisocial Behaviour Order (ASBO)

Anyone over the age of 12 can be given an Antisocial Behaviour Order (ASBO) if they behave antisocially.

Being subject to an ASBO means that restrictions are in force which may include being prohibited from certain specific anti-social acts or being excluded from entering certain specific locations or areas as laid down in the order.

An ASBO will last for the length of time stated on the order and can be between 12 to 36 months.

Receipt of an ASBO is not a conviction and does not form part of a criminal record. However, breaking or 'breaching' an ASBO is a crime, and may result in a court appearance and prosecution:

- An adult can be fined an unlimited amount or sentenced up to 5 years in prison, or both;
- A young person can be fined up to £250 (if they're 10-14 years old) or up to £1,000 (if they're aged 15-17 years old). The fine may have to be paid by the young person's parents if they're under 16 years old. A young person may also get a community sentence or, if they're over 12 years old, a detention and training order (DTO) for up to 24 months.

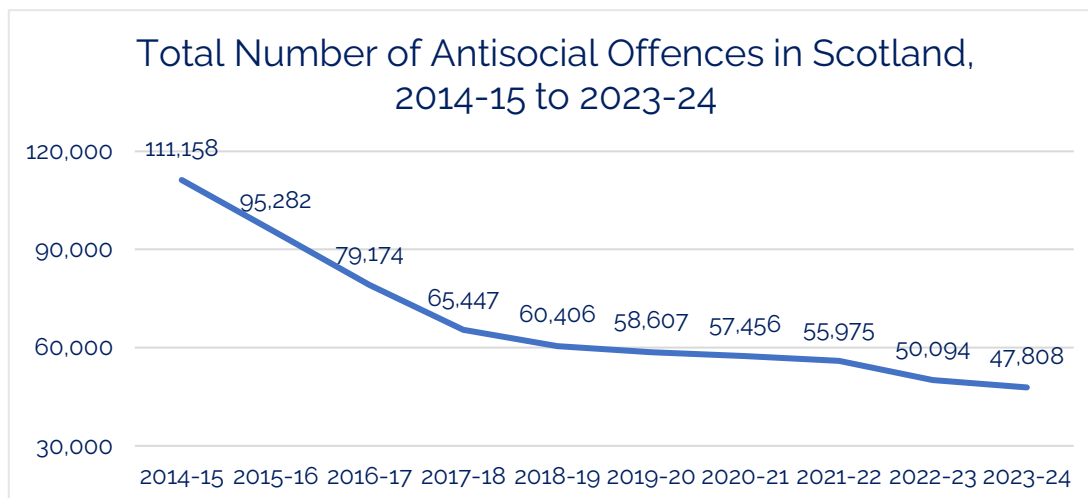
## Authority Oversight of Police Scotland's Response to Antisocial Behaviour

Police Scotland's performance data, including antisocial behaviour, is discussed every three months at the Scottish Police Authority's Policing Performance Committee. Updated figures can be found [here](#).

# Comparing Antisocial Behaviour figures in England & Wales

Antisocial offences accounted for 27% of all offences recorded in Scotland in 2023-24 ([April 2023 – March 2024](#)).

Between 2014-15 and 2023-24, the number of antisocial offences recorded by the police decreased by 57%. This includes a 5% decrease since 2022-23 from 50,094 to 47,808 in 2023-24.



In 2023-24, threatening and abusive behaviour accounted for most antisocial offences in Scotland (90%).

In contrast, antisocial offences accounted for 16% of all offences recorded (including by British Transport Police) [in England & Wales](#), in 2023-24 (March 2023 – March 2024).

The number of recorded antisocial offences decreased by 47% between 2014-15 and 2023-24, including a 0.45% decrease from 1,047,347 in 2022-23 to 1,042,654 in 2023-24.

The most common types of antisocial behaviour – as categorised in England & Wales – included:

- Groups hanging around on the streets – 13.2%;
- Drink related behaviour – 10.2%; and
- People using or dealing drugs – 10.1%;

# Reviewing Scotland's approach to Antisocial Behaviour

The Scottish Government held 25 engagement discussions with the [Scottish Community Safety Network](#) in [November 2023](#). These discussions included representatives working with those affected by antisocial behaviour, and community and equalities groups.

When asked what changes should be made to the current approach or what further steps should be taken to help prevent antisocial behaviour, the following were highlighted as areas for consideration:

- Early intervention
- Focusing on young people
- Tackling poor mental health
- Drug and alcohol misuse in adults and young people
- Poverty
- Housing
- Culture
- Enforcement and legislation
- Legislation and guidance
- Powers
- Reporting Approach
- Person/family centred approach Services
- Empowering communities
- Stigma and stereotypes
- Hate crime and discrimination
- Misogyny
- Community-led solutions

The Scottish Government's [Independent Working Group on Antisocial Behaviour](#) was formed in November 2023. It considers how effective the current approach is to understanding and preventing antisocial behaviour.

Insights from the Authority's engagement work with local communities and from public polling have helped inform the working groups understanding of anti-social behaviour and the attitudes towards it.

# Addressing Anti-Social behaviour

Addressing anti-social behaviour (ASB) in Scotland involves complex multi-agency challenges. A key issue is the need for effective coordination among the Police, councils, health services, and social work, as poor communication often leads to gaps in service delivery.

Resource allocation poses another challenge, with budget constraints limiting agencies' ability to tackle ASB effectively. Additionally, limited data sharing hampers comprehensive assessments and the evaluation of interventions.

Engaging local communities is essential, yet agencies frequently struggle to align their strategies with specific local needs, resulting in inconsistent responses across different areas. Public perception reflects frustration with perceived ineffectiveness, as some community members call for a stronger police presence while others emphasize the importance of support services.

Many recognize that underlying issues such as mental health and addiction contribute to ASB, leading to support for holistic approaches.

Priorities for improvement include enhancing collaboration among agencies, fostering community involvement, focusing on prevention and education, increasing resources, and establishing clear metrics to evaluate the impact of interventions.



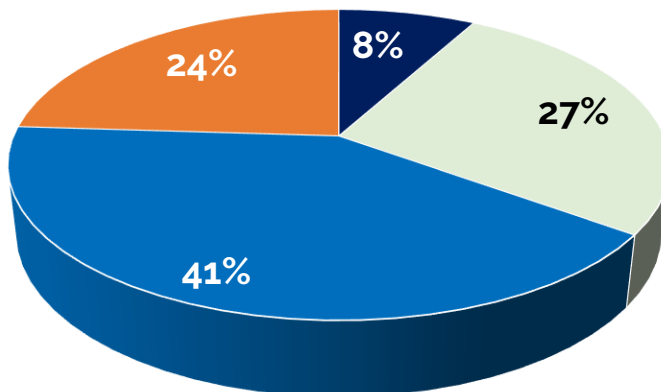
# Scottish Public Opinion

Diffley Partnership and the Authority produce annual reports on public perceptions of anti-social behaviour, Police Scotland's response and its impact on citizens and their communities. In the February 2024 [report](#) found:

- On tackling antisocial behaviour in their local area, 27% of respondents thought local police were doing a very good/somewhat good job;
- 24% of respondents thought local police were doing neither a good or poor job;
- 41% of respondents thought they local police doing a very poor/somewhat poor job;
- 8% of respondents didn't know if they thought local police were doing neither a good or poor job;

These percentages are broadly similar across previous survey periods in July-August 2022, January-February 2023 and July 2023.

How good or poor a job do you think the police in your local area are doing at the moment in tackling antisocial behaviour? (Scotland)

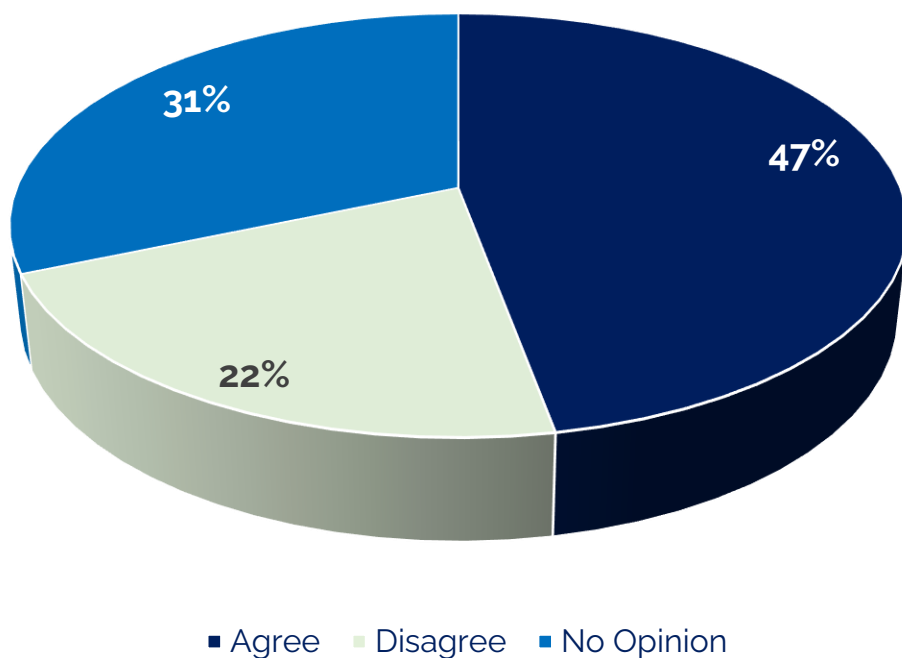


- Don't know
- Very good/somewhat good job
- Very poor/somewhat poor job
- Neither a good or poor job

In comparison with public opinions of antisocial behaviour in England & Wales, the [Crime Survey for England and Wales \(CSEW\)](#) – published for the period ending March 2024 – found the following:

- 47.1% agree that police and local councils are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in the local area;
- 21.5% disagree that police and local councils are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in the local area;
- 31.4% have no opinion on whether police and local councils are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in the local area.

Police and local council are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in the local area (England & Wales)





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- 31.4% have no opinion on whether police and local council are dealing with the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter in the local area.

Between 2021 and 2024, the SPA's Strategy and Performance team and Police Scotland's Prevention, Partnership and Community Wellbeing Division delivered the [Community Confidence Action Research Project](#).

The Project aimed to find links in the relationship between community "deprivation" and levels of trust and confidence in policing.

Antisocial behaviour issues were highlighted in all four geographical areas. A lack of police response was felt to impact confidence in policing.

[Findings for the evaluation in the Letham area in Perth](#) also indicated the importance of community officers (instated as part of the project) and the negative impact of officers being pulled away for response policing.

# How to report Antisocial Behaviour

There are different ways to report antisocial behaviour. You can:

- Find your community policy team on the [Police Scotland website](#)
- Phone 999 (emergency) or 101 (non-emergency)
- Report it in person at any police station
- Text 999 (this is for registered users only)
- Contact [Scotland-BSL](#)
- Report it using the [Keep Safe Scotland App](#)
- Report it anonymously by calling [Crimestoppers](#) on 0800 555 111
- Contact your community warden via your [local council](#)
- Contact your Tenant's Association
- Contact your local authority – you don't have to be a local authority tenant

## Getting support for victims of Antisocial Behaviour



- **Victim Support** [Victim Support Scotland](#) can provide personalised support and information to anyone who might be affected by the crime – you don't need to report the crime to receive their help;
- Your local authority has a dedicated [antisocial behaviour team](#), sometimes called 'community wardens';
-  [Citizen's Advice Scotland](#) can help with your rights around antisocial behaviour, neighbourhood safety, and could provide you with further support;
-  [Scottish Mediation](#) - Helpline: 0131 556 8118

# Keeping up to date

To keep up to date with our work, please keep an eye on the Scottish Police Authority's [website](#) where you can find papers and watch livestream committee discussions, and follow us on Twitter/X:

@ScotPolAuth

Date published: November 2024

# Purpose of these Public Briefings

The Strategic Police Plan commits to the provision of Policing for a safe, protected and resilient Scotland. This requires designing and maintaining services which meet rising and evolving demands in a constantly changing environment.

To meet these demands, now and in the future, Scotland's police service must adapt and proportionately adopt the necessary technologies which will enable them to protect the safety and wellbeing of our communities (as outlined in the Policing Principles - Section 32 of Police and Fire Reform Act 2012). These public briefings also contribute to the Authority's statutory function to keep under review the policing of Scotland.

This series of public focused and user-friendly public briefings has been developed to provide an overview of the benefits of emerging technology and upcoming developments within policing, the policies that will govern them, and the ethical, privacy and human rights implications.