Community Confidence Action Research - Wick

Purpose

The following report was compiled by SPA Strategy and Performance and Police Scotland Partnerships, Prevention and Community Wellbeing Division. It provides key findings from the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland's survey in Wick as part of the Community Confidence Action Research Project.

Executive Summary

This paper discusses the headline findings of a survey conducted in Wick as part of the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland Community Confidence Action Research Project.

The Community Confidence Survey ran from 11th April to 23rd May 2023 with 139 responses.

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 Wick population.

Key findings:

- Majority of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that Wick has a sense of community (70%, n=97).
- It was identified that there is a strong sense of community found in Wick; although the impacts of deprivation can be observed in the area, and respondents perceive there to be an increasing rise in antisocial behaviour and drug use in the area.
- Regarding trust and confidence in policing for Wick, the highest proportion of respondents scored 'Low' across a range of categories.
- When scoring how good a job local policing were doing in the area, the highest proportion of respondents selected 'A somewhat poor/very poor job' across scenarios. For the indicators of 'tackling anti-social behaviour' and 'bringing the community together' this response is reflective of SPA National Polling.
- The majority of respondents noted no changes in local police engagement and stated that their view of policing locally had not changed in the past six months.
- Comments noted issues relating to police presence and visibility as influencing confidence in policing within the community. It was also suggested that local policing should become more embedded and responsive to the community's unique needs.

Introduction

This paper discusses the headline findings of a survey conducted in Wick as part of the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland Community Confidence Action Research Project.

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 Wick population.

Section 1: Community Confidence Action Research – Wick Survey

As part of the Community Confidence Action Research Project, the Scottish Police Authority and Police Scotland designed a survey to gather views on community and policing in Wick. Hosted on the Scottish Police Authority's Citizen Space, the survey contained 15 questions and ran from 11th April - 23rd May 2023. In total 139 responses were received.

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents lived in the Wick area (77%, n=107).

The highest proportion of respondents were aged 35-44 (25% n=35) and the lowest aged 16-24 at 6% (n=8). The sample is also predominantly female (63%, n=88). The majority of respondents stated they had no contact with the police in the last 6 months (65% n=90).

Table 1: Sample demographics (n=139)

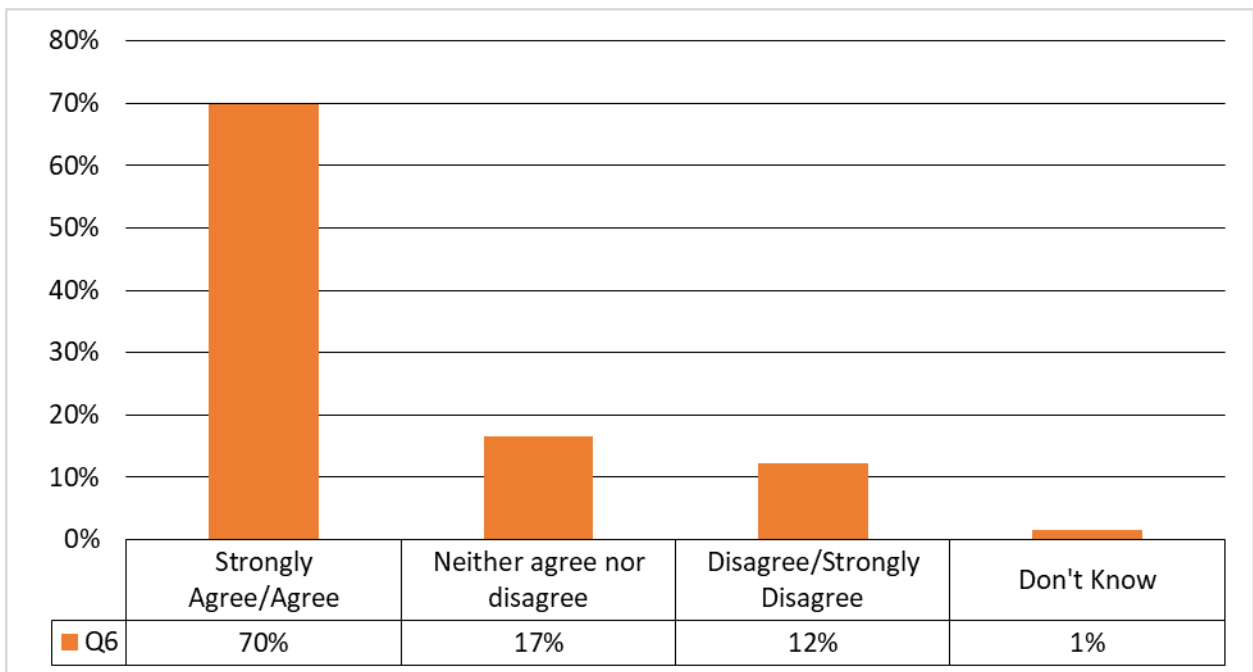| Reason for being in/visiting Wick		
I have family/friends in the area	10	7%
I live in the area	107	77%
I work in the area	15	11%
Other	7	5%
Age		
16-24	8	6%
25-34	21	15%
35-44	35	25%
45-54	31	22%
55-64	23	17%
65+	16	12%
Not Answered	1	1%
Prefer not to say	4	3%
Gender		
Female	88	63%
Male	43	31%
Not Answered	1	1%
Prefer not to say	7	5%
Contact with police - 6 months		

No	90	65%
Yes	48	35%
Not Answered	1	1%

Community

70% (n=97) of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that Wick had a sense of community, 17% (n=23) neither agreed nor disagreed and 12% (n=17) disagreed/strongly disagreed.

Q6: Do you agree that Wick has a sense of community (n=139)

	Strongly Agree/Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree/Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
■ Q6	70%	17%	12%	1%

Q7: Thinking about your answers to the previous questions, what are your general thoughts and feelings of Wick?

There were 120 comments in total – although three were not relevant to the question. 52 responses reflected on the recent changes associated with the impacts of deprivation observed within the community. A range of indicators associated with deprivation were identified across the responses; with people noting that many shops have shut down, that there is a distinct lack of services and opportunities in the community, and declining level of maintenance in the area (looks old and tired, rundown, declining town, left to deteriorate). 40 responses identified that there is a strong sense of community in Wick. Many people noted that residents of the community "pull together" for the greater good, with volunteering projects and community spirit noted to make improvements to Wick. Furthermore, multiple people noted in response to this question that there appears to be an increasing issue with antisocial behaviour and drug use in the area.
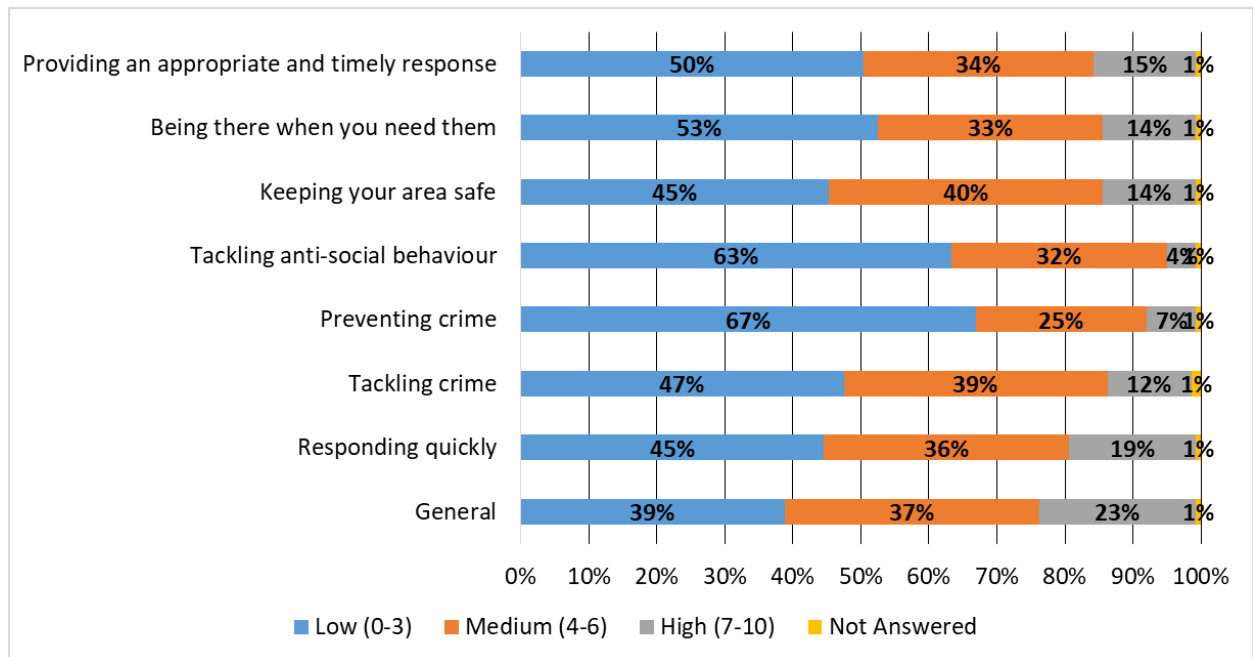
Confidence and Trust in Police

In terms of confidence in police in the local area, over the range of indicators a higher proportion of respondents scored 'Low' for:

- Providing an appropriate and timely response (50%, n=70)
- Being there when you need them (53%, n=73)
- Keeping your area safe (45%, n=63)
- Tackling antisocial behaviour (63%, n=88)
- Preventing crime (67%, n=93)
- Tackling crime (47%, n=66)
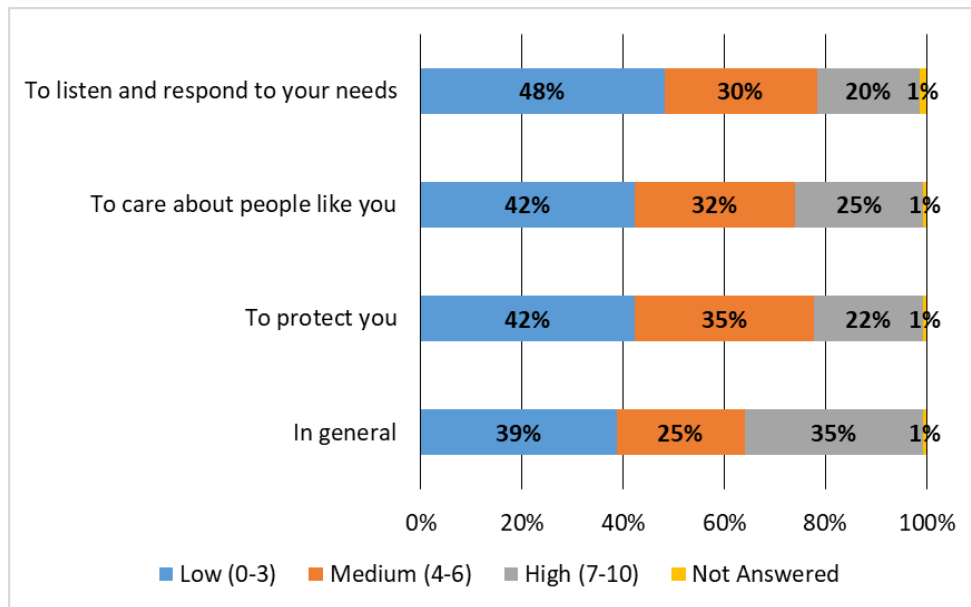- Responding quickly (45%, n=62)
- General (39%, n=54)

For all of these the next most common score was 'Medium'.

Q8: How much confidence do you have in the police your local area in… (n=139)

Regarding trust, the highest proportion of respondents across all categories scored 'Low'. For all except 'In general', the second most common score was 'Medium' (for 'in general' the second most common score was 'High').
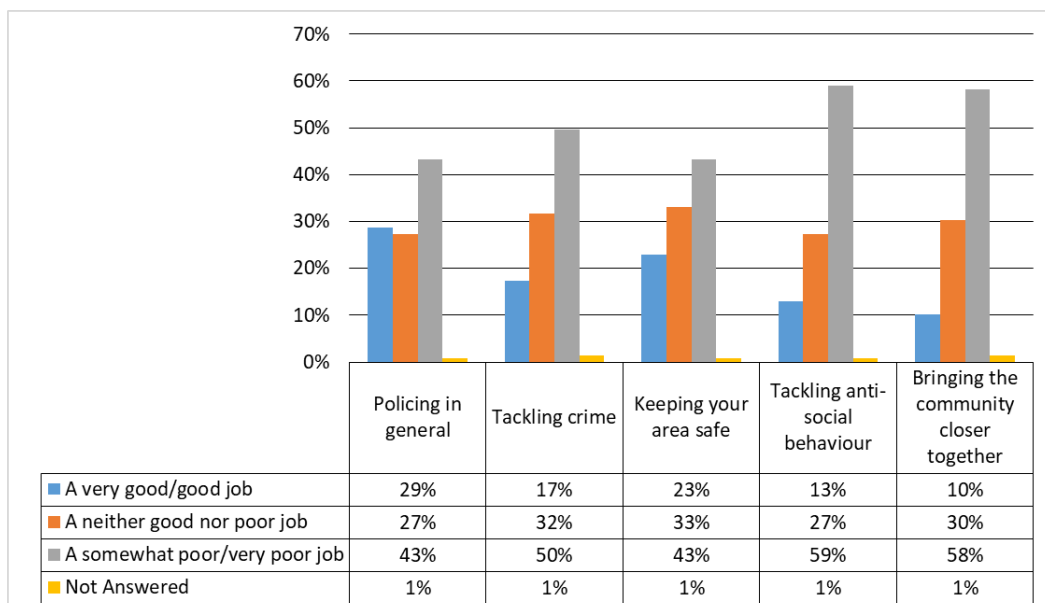
Q9: How much trust do you have in the police your local area (n=139)

Regarding the performance of police in their local area, the highest proportion of respondents selected 'A somewhat poor/very poor job' across all scenarios. SPA national polling in Jan/Feb 2023 also showed a higher proportion of respondents selecting a negative response for 'tackling anti-social behaviour' and 'bringing the community together', but for 'policing in general', 'keeping your area safe' and 'tackling crime' a higher proportion selected 'A very good/somewhat good job'.

For 'In general', the second most common response for the Wick respondents was 'A very good/somewhat good job'. For all other scenarios the second most comment response was 'A neither good nor poor job'.

Q10: How good or poor a job do you think the police in your local area are doing at the moment in the following regards? (n=139)
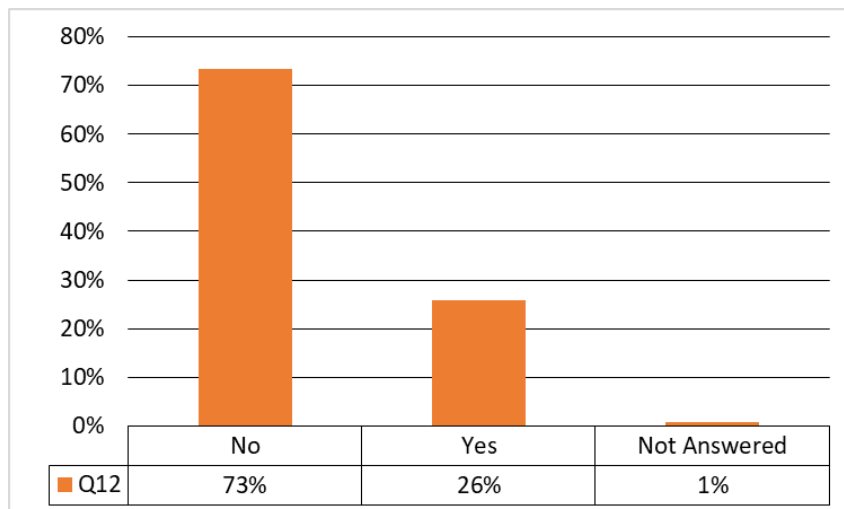

	Policing in general	Tackling crime	Keeping your area safe	Tackling anti-social behaviour	Bringing the community closer together
■ A very good/good job	29%	17%	23%	13%	10%
■ A neither good nor poor job	27%	32%	33%	27%	30%
■ A somewhat poor/very poor job	43%	50%	43%	59%	58%
■ Not Answered	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%

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Changes/Views on Local Police

The majority of respondents noticed no changes in how local police engaged in the local area in the last six months (73%, n=102). There were 42 comments made (35 from those who selected 'Yes' and 7 who selected 'No' – although one comment was not relevant to the question). 32 of these comments related to visibility and presence, with 28 noting a lack of police presence and/or visibility (e.g. only being in vehicles, low police numbers impacting engagement, stations being closed, not knowing officers, lack of engagement in community, no anti speeding campaigns etc.). The other four comments on visibility and presence mentioned there being more officers in the area and engagement from officers, and officers seeming more approachable and interested".
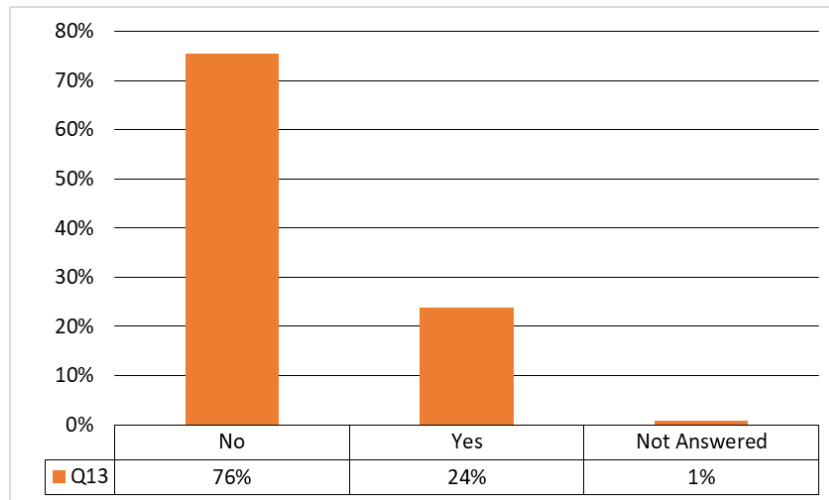
The other nine relevant comments related to a lack of response to drug crime, a lack of support for victims of crime, inconsistent response to issues from officers, issues with centralised policing (e.g. dispatchers unable to determine location of incidents). However, one mentioned a positive being more officers who were not from the area due to a perception they would not "take sides", another stated "more active", and one mentioned the PPCW Community Officer being "approachable" and "willing to become involved".

76% (n=105) stated their view of policing locally had not changed in the past six months. 45 respondents provided further detail, although one was not relevant to the question. The most consistent comment related to a lack of police presence/visibility (e.g. lack of staff/officers, always being seen in cars, no "village Bobby" etc.) and a lack of resourcing. Other comments related to waiting times for response, call wait times (e.g. 101), policing seeming to "pick on youngsters", accessibility (e.g. stations being closed, everything being online etc.), issues in police not tackling crime (e.g. anti-social behaviour), and a positive comment on the PPCW Community Officer improving their view of policing locally.

Q11: Have you noticed any changes in how local police engage in the local area in the last six months? (n=139)

	No	Yes	Not Answered
Q12	73%	26%	1%

Q12: Has your view of policing locally changed in the past six months? (n=139)

	No	Yes	Not Answered
■ Q13	76%	24%	1%

Q13: A key part of this project is focused on understanding why people may be less confident in policing in the area. Please let us know below the things you think may impact confidence

There were 116 comments in response to Q13.The majority of responses (n=59) related to a lack of police visibility and presence in the area. This also included access to the local police station and a wide appetite from respondents for police officers to engage more with the local area and become part of the community. Ten respondents noted the impact of centralised policing upon Wick and the need for rural communities to be policed differently to larger cities. A lack of police resources which directly impacted upon the ability of local police to effectively do their jobs, and frustrations related to call handling and response times were also common themes. Many responses highlighted drug use and dealing, anti-social behaviour, and vandalism were particular crime trends which needed to be addressed by local police (although two respondents also noted the role of the court system in not providing sufficient punishment). The unprofessional conduct of local police officers was also highlighted as being of concern to respondents. One respondent described a "boy's club mentality", whilst three respondents noted rumours of police corruption in the local area.

Q14: If you have any comments on the topics raised within this survey, please detail them in the text box below

There were 35 comments in response to Q14. There were a number of notable themes. Visibility in local communities was a prominent issue for thirteen respondents, noting a lack of police officers patrolling the local area and a desire for greater levels of community engagement with young people, local groups and at local events. This linked to respondents' overall trust in local policing. In addition, three respondents noted negative interactions with local police, including rudeness and being dismissive. However, one respondent commended the positive steps taken by local police to engage with Wick High School. Six respondents highlighted the negative impact of centralised policing on rural communities like Wick. Two respondents stated their reluctance to contact Police

Scotland to report crimes due to frustrations with call centres. The presence of drugs in the local area and issues relating to anti-social behaviour, including anti-social behaviour by teenagers, were also highlighted by respondents.

Conclusions and Key Findings

When looking at the survey responses, the majority of respondents 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that Wick has a sense of community (70%, n=97). This is also reflected in the qualitative responses which identified that there is a strong community spirit found in Wick. It is also notable that many respondents reflected on recent changes associated with the impacts of deprivation in the area – signalling that the selected intermediate data zone/area is an appropriate centre to focus the project on. Furthermore, respondents perceive there to be an increasing rise in antisocial behaviour and drug use in the area.

In terms of confidence in police in the local area, over the range of indicators the highest proportion of respondents scored 'Low' across all categories. Similarly, regarding trust in policing for Wick, 'Low' confidence was scored by the highest proportion of respondents. For all indicators except 'In general', the second most common score was 'Medium' following the 'Low' score (for 'in general' the second most common score was 'High').

When scoring how good a job local policing were doing in the area, the highest proportion of respondents selected 'A somewhat poor/very poor job' across all scenarios. For the indicators of 'tackling anti-social behaviour' and 'bringing the community together' this response is reflective in SPA National Polling, but for the categories 'policing in general', 'keeping your area safe' and 'tackling crime' a higher proportion of respondents select 'A very good/somewhat good job' nationally.

The majority of respondents noted no changes in local police engagement and stated that their view of policing locally had not changed in the past six months. When asked to provide a qualitative response to this matter, comments largely related to a lack of police presence and visibility. There seemed to be a desire for local policing to become more embedded and respond to the community's needs. Multiple responses noted resourcing issues currently associated with the police service, and advised more targeted ways of working to address the priority issues identified by respondents.