2023

Public Perceptions of Policing in Scotland

Key Findings

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ÙGHDARRAS POILIS NA H-ALBA

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Introduction

Diffley Partnership was commissioned to conduct regular polling of the Scottish adult (16+) public on policing in Scotland and related issues of interest to the Scottish Police Authority (SPA). This report sets out the key findings of the third wave of polling, conducted from 18th to 23rd July 2023. wave 1 was conducted in July/August 2022 and wave 2 in January/February 2023.

Methodology

The survey was drafted jointly by Diffley Partnership and the SPA in consultation with the SPA. The survey and its insights include both key indicators which are captured at regular intervals as well as topical elements to inform the SPA's decisions and strategy.

Invitations to complete the survey were sent out through the online ScotPulse panel between the 18th – 23rd July 2023, and received 2,718 responses. Responses were tabulated and analysed quantitatively, including significance testing for between groups differences in opinion. Survey data is weighted to the age and gender profile of the Scottish population.

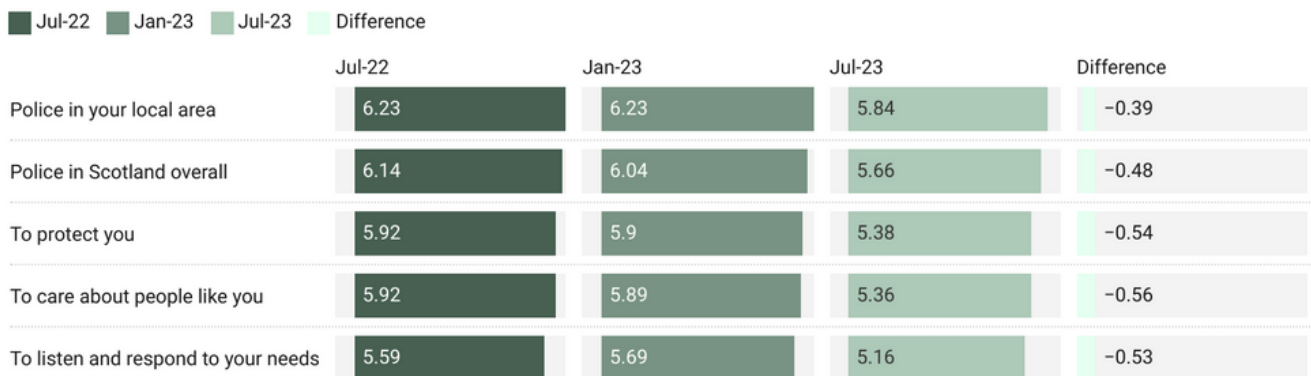## Presentation and interpretation of findings

This report summarises the key findings of this polling, drawing out noteworthy findings and between groups differences. We begin by exploring people's confidence and trust in the police compared to the last two waves of data collection, before exploring new questions focusing on the levels of antisocial behaviour observed in local areas and perceptions of institutional discrimination.

We explore each aspect in turn, with the aid of data visualisations, and comment on significant differences between demographic groups.

Trust in the Police

Similarly, respondents were asked how much trust they have in the police in a number of areas, on a scale of 0 "do not trust at all" to 10 "trust completely".

As with questions of confidence, we observe a decline in the levels of trust reported by the public across the six month period between data collection cycles.

	Jul-22	Jan-23	Jul-23	Difference
Police in your local area	6.23	6.23	5.84	−0.39
Police in Scotland overall	6.14	6.04	5.66	−0.48
To protect you	5.92	5.9	5.38	−0.54
To care about people like you	5.92	5.89	5.36	−0.56
To listen and respond to your needs	5.59	5.69	5.16	−0.53

Local police continue to receive the highest level of trust from the public (5.84) and are closely followed by police in Scotland overall (5.66).

In terms of actions, police are trusted to protect (5.38) and care about people (5.36) to around the same degree, with trust to listen and respond to people's needs slightly lower (5.16). However, converse to confidence, the average trust ratings continue to show that, overall, police are more trusted than not trusted on all measures.
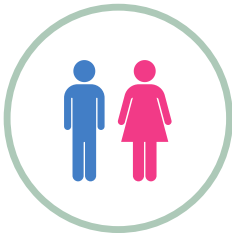
45%
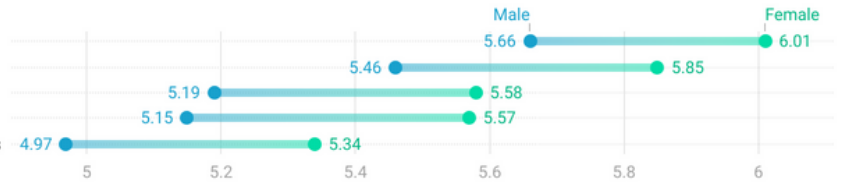## of respondents have a high level of trust in police in their local area

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Variations in Trust

Levels of trust in the police vary significantly when looking at demographic and geographic factors.

01. Gender

Females are significantly more likely to have more trust in the police for all aspects.

02. Parliamentary Area

People in the Glasgow Parliamentary Region have much less trust in the police, on average, than any other Parliamtary Region.

03. Areas of Deprivation

Created with Datawrapper

As with confidence, since wave 1 we have observed differences in trust based on the level of deprivation in the local area. Those living in the most deprived areas (SIMD1) typically have less trust in the police on every measure than those in the most affluent areas (SIMD5).

Confidence in Police

Respondents were asked how much confidence they have in the police in a number of areas, on a scale of 0 "no confidence at all" to 10 "complete confidence".

As with previous waves of data collection, police in local areas receive the highest levels of confidence from the public. However, all aspects are trending downwards with lower averages for all aspects observed. Differences quoted are between January 2023 and June 2023.
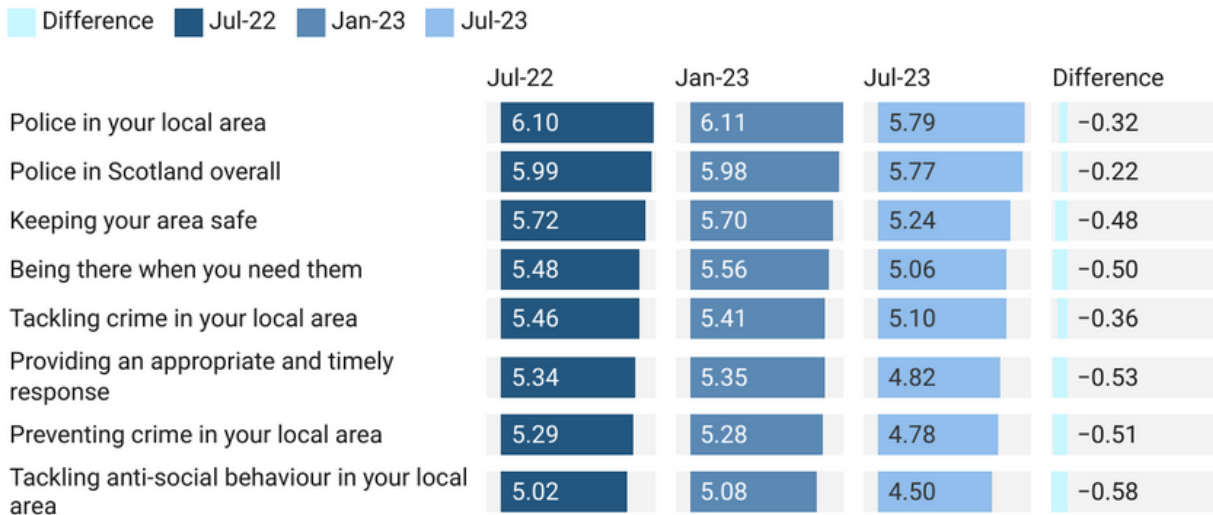
	Difference	Jul-22	Jan-23	Jul-23

	Jul-22	Jan-23	Jul-23	Difference
Police in your local area	6.10	6.11	5.79	−0.32
Police in Scotland overall	5.99	5.98	5.77	−0.22
Keeping your area safe	5.72	5.70	5.24	−0.48
Being there when you need them	5.48	5.56	5.06	−0.50
Tackling crime in your local area	5.46	5.41	5.10	−0.36
Providing an appropriate and timely response	5.34	5.35	4.82	−0.53
Preventing crime in your local area	5.29	5.28	4.78	−0.51
Tackling anti-social behaviour in your local area	5.02	5.08	4.50	−0.58

This is the first wave of the research where the average level of confidence reported by members of the public has fallen below 5 out of 10 for any indicator. This is true for providing an appropriate and timely response (4.82), preventing crime in local areas (4.78) and tackling anti-social behaviour in local areas (4.5).
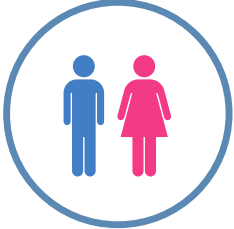
34%

## of respondents have high confidence in police to keep their local areas safe

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Variations in Confidence

Levels of confidence in police vary significantly when looking at demographic and geographic factors

01. Gender

	Male	Female
Police in Scotland overall	5.55	5.98
Police in your local area	5.62	5.96
Keeping your area safe	5.1	5.39
Being there when you need them	4.85	5.26
Tackling crime in your local area	4.96	5.24
Providing an appropriate and timely response	4.58	5.06
Preventing crime in your local area	4.62	4.94
Tackling anti-social behaviour in your local area	4.34	4.66
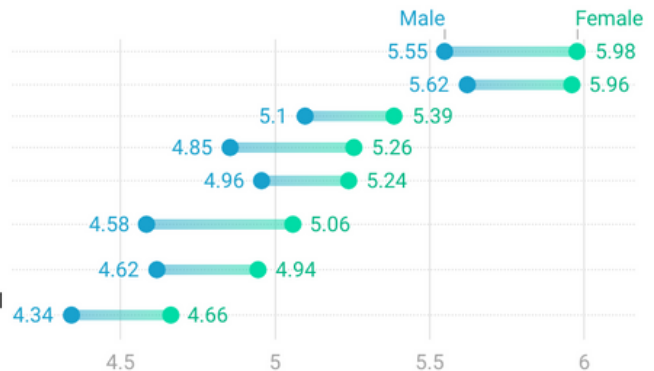
Males are significantly more likely to have less confidence in police for all aspects.

02. Occupation

	C2DE	ABC1
Police in Scotland overall	5.6	5.91
Police in your local area	5.55	5.99
Keeping your area safe	5.02	5.43
Being there when you need them	4.92	5.18
Tackling crime in your local area	4.87	5.29
Providing an appropriate and timely response	4.67	4.95
Preventing crime in your local area	4.54	4.98
Tackling anti-social behaviour in your local area	4.33	4.64
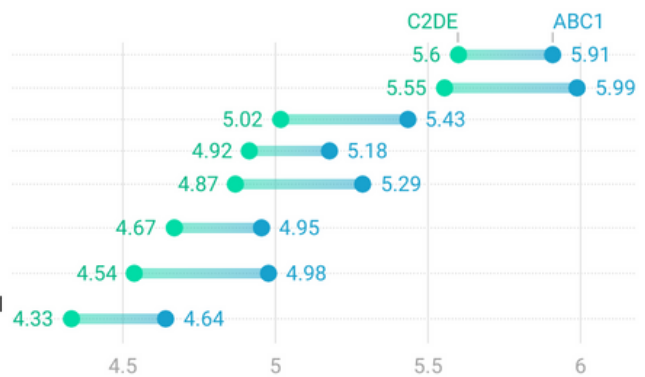
Working class people (those in the C2DE category) have less confidence in the police, than people who are middle and upper class (ABC1)

03. Areas of deprivation

	SIMD1	SIMD5
Police in your local area	5.39	6.09
Police in Scotland overall	5.53	5.87
Keeping your area safe	4.68	5.65
Tackling crime in your local area	4.52	5.41
Being there when you need them	4.7	5.4
Providing an appropriate and timely response	4.4	5.09
Preventing crime in your local area	4.21	5.07
Tackling anti-social behaviour in your local area	3.97	4.82
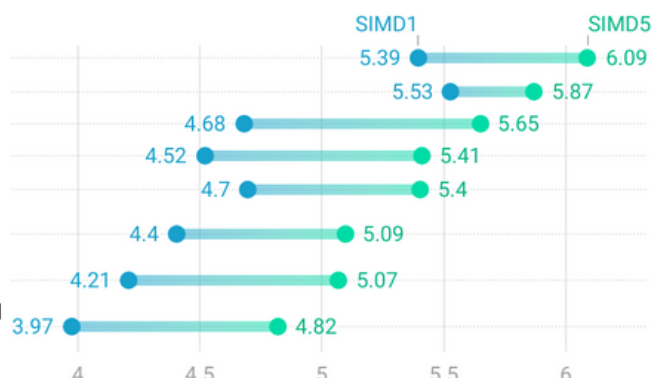
Since the first wave of polling we have observed differences in confidence based on level of deprivation in the local area. Those living in the most deprived areas (SIMD1) are typically less confident in the police on every measure than those in the most affluent areas (SIMD5).

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Performance of Local Police

Respondents evaluated how well or poorly police in their local area perform across a range of tasks.

How good or poor a job do you think the police in your local area are doing at the moment in the following regards?

Legend: ■ A very good job ■ A somewhat good job ■ A neither good nor poor job ■ A somewhat poor job ■ A very poor job ■ Don't Know

Policing in general

Period	A very good job	A somewhat good job	A neither good nor poor job	A somewhat poor job	A very poor job	Don't Know
July/Aug 22	9%	35%	23%	14%	12%	7%
Jan/Feb 23	10%	33%	24%	17%	9%	8%
July 23	12%	32%	24%	14%	10%	7%

Tackling crime

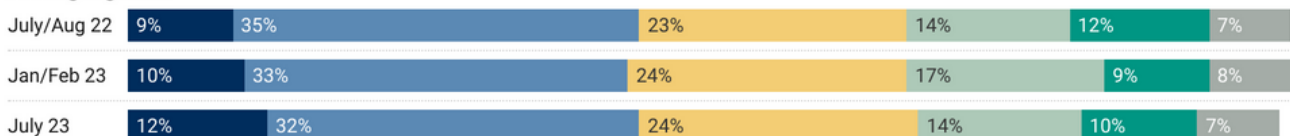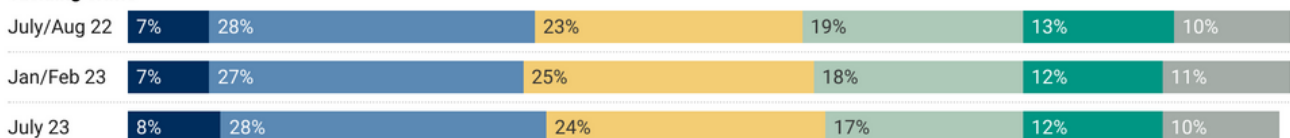| Period	A very good job	A somewhat good job	A neither good nor poor job	A somewhat poor job	A very poor job	Don't Know
July/Aug 22	7%	28%	23%	19%	13%	10%
Jan/Feb 23	7%	27%	25%	18%	12%	11%
July 23	8%	28%	24%	17%	12%	10%

Keeping your area safe

Period	A very good job	A somewhat good job	A neither good nor poor job	A somewhat poor job	A very poor job	Don't Know
July/Aug 22	8%	31%	25%	17%	12%	8%
Jan/Feb 23	9%	29%	26%	17%	10%	8%
July 23	9%	29%	25%	17%	11%	8%

Tackling anti-social behaviour

Period	A very good job	A somewhat good job	A neither good nor poor job	A somewhat poor job	A very poor job	Don't Know
July/Aug 22	5%	22%	22%	23%	20%	9%
Jan/Feb 23	5%	23%	24%	21%	18%	9%
July 23	6%	20%	23%	23%	19%	9%

Bringing the community closer together

Period	A very good job	A somewhat good job	A neither good nor poor job	A somewhat poor job	A very poor job	Don't Know
July/Aug 22	3%	11%	30%	18%	23%	15%
Jan/Feb 23	3%	12%	30%	18%	21%	16%
July 23	4%	11%	33%	18%	20%	14%

Data points not shown for bringing the community closer together answer option: 3% a very good job in July/Aug 22, 3% a very good job in Jan/Feb 23, 4% a very good job in July 23.

Created with Datawrapper

Respondents say that the police are doing a better job of tackling crime and keeping areas safe than they are at tackling anti-social behaviour.

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Perceptions of Anti-Social Behaviour

Several questions were asked in this wave of data collection about the prevalence of anti-social behaviour in local areas. These questions have not been asked in previous survey waves.

The chart below outlines the activities observed within our neighbourhoods in the last 12 months.

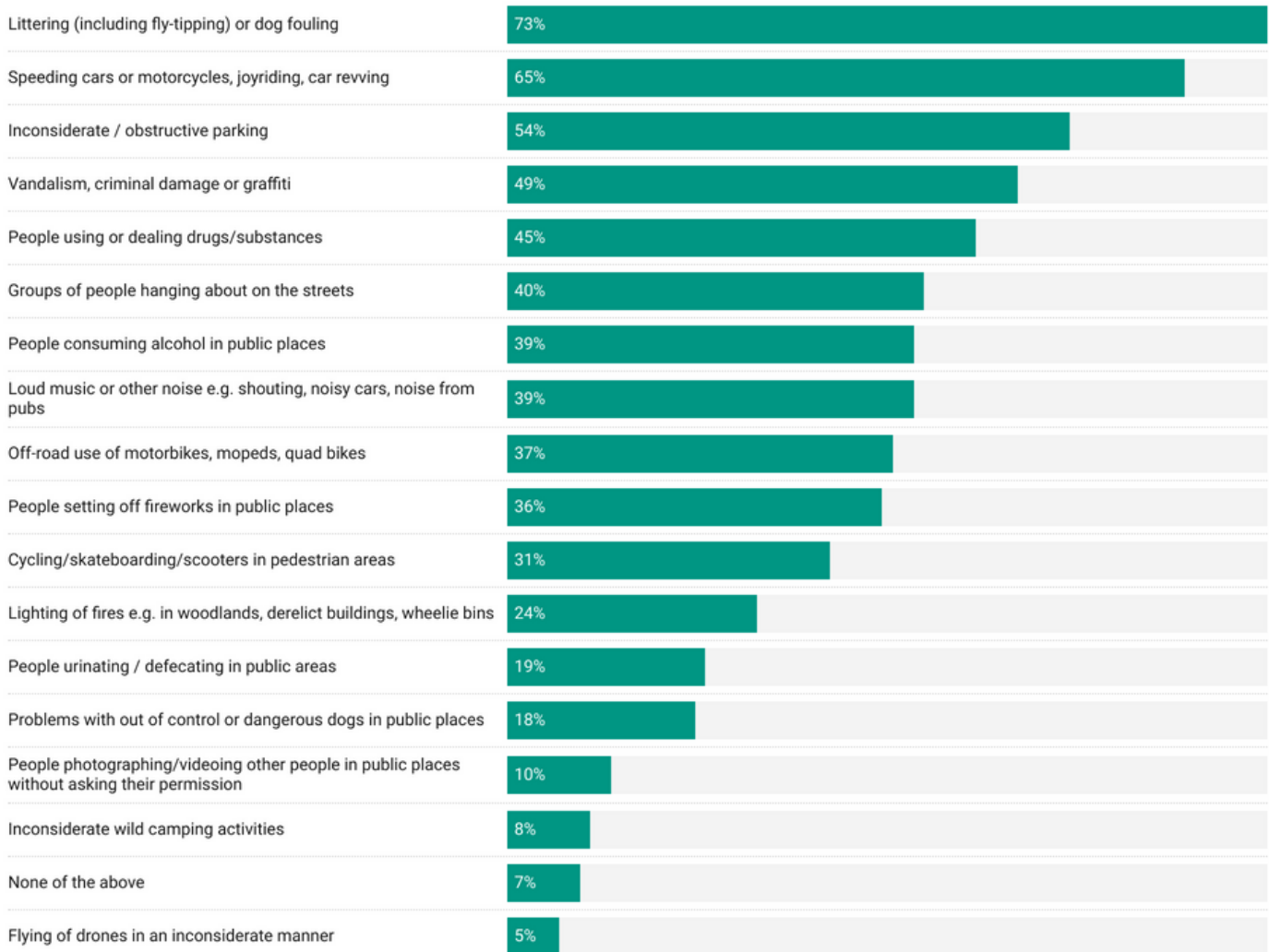| Activity	%
Littering (including fly-tipping) or dog fouling	73%
Speeding cars or motorcycles, joyriding, car revving	65%
Inconsiderate / obstructive parking	54%
Vandalism, criminal damage or graffiti	49%
People using or dealing drugs/substances	45%
Groups of people hanging about on the streets	40%
People consuming alcohol in public places	39%
Loud music or other noise e.g. shouting, noisy cars, noise from pubs	39%
Off-road use of motorbikes, mopeds, quad bikes	37%
People setting off fireworks in public places	36%
Cycling/skateboarding/scooters in pedestrian areas	31%
Lighting of fires e.g. in woodlands, derelict buildings, wheelie bins	24%
People urinating / defecating in public areas	19%
Problems with out of control or dangerous dogs in public places	18%
People photographing/videoing other people in public places without asking their permission	10%
Inconsiderate wild camping activities	8%
None of the above	7%
Flying of drones in an inconsiderate manner	5%

7%

of respondents observed no anti-social behaviour in their local area in the past 12 months

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Respondents were also asked to select the three types of activity they are most concerned about.

Despite littering being the most prevalent activity, only a third of people are most concerned about this issue.

	Which of the following types of activity have occurred in your neighbourhood in the last 12 months?	And which three of the following types of activity are you most concerned about?
People using or dealing drugs/substances	45%	41%
Speeding cars or motorcycles, joyriding, car revving	65%	39%
Littering (including fly-tipping) or dog fouling	73%	32%
Vandalism, criminal damage or graffiti	49%	31%
Inconsiderate / obstructive parking	54%	16%

Those in the 60% most deprived areas, SIMD1, SIMD2 and SIMD3 are most worried about people using or dealing drugs/substances in their local area.

Almost half (49%) of residents in the most deprived areas in Scotland (SIMD1) believe using or dealing drugs/substances in their local area. Whereas only a third (34%) of those in the most affluent areas (SIMD5) are worried about people using or dealing drugs/substances.
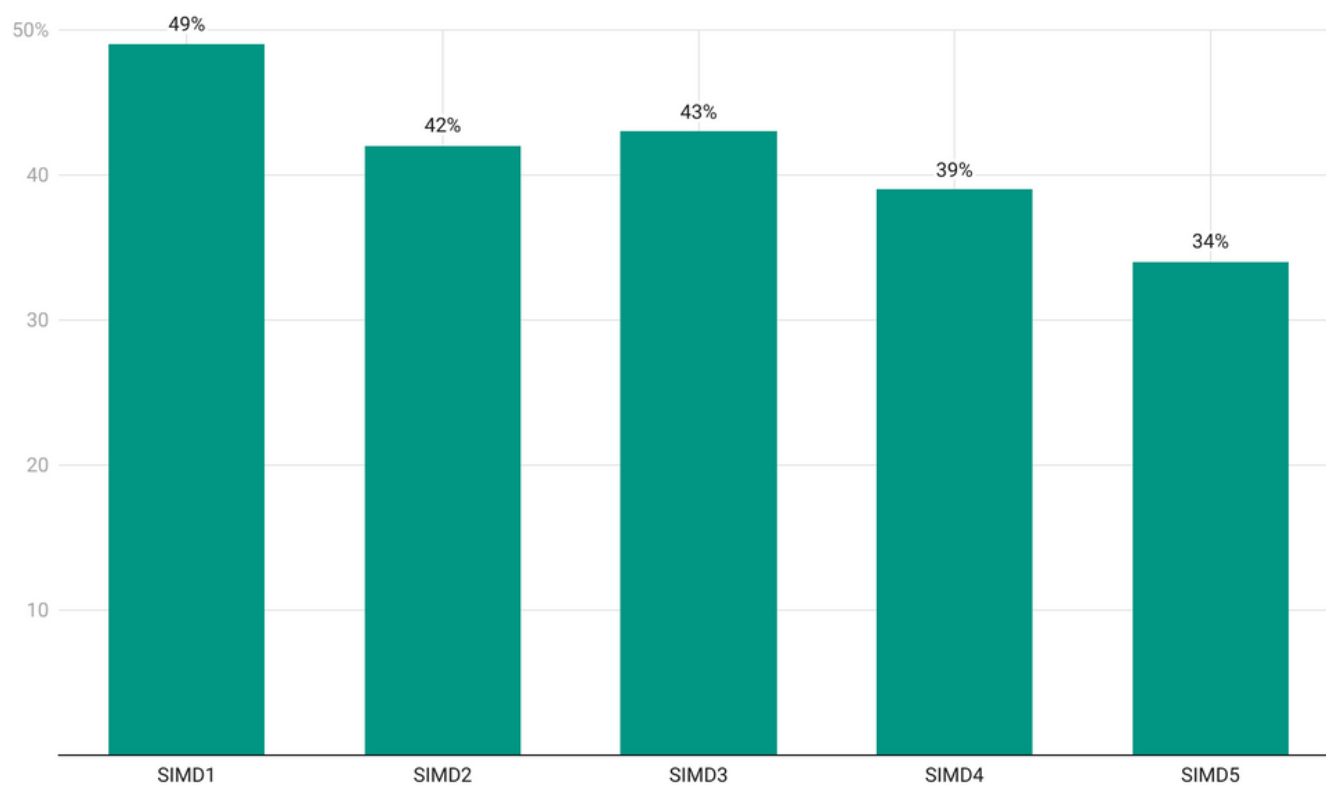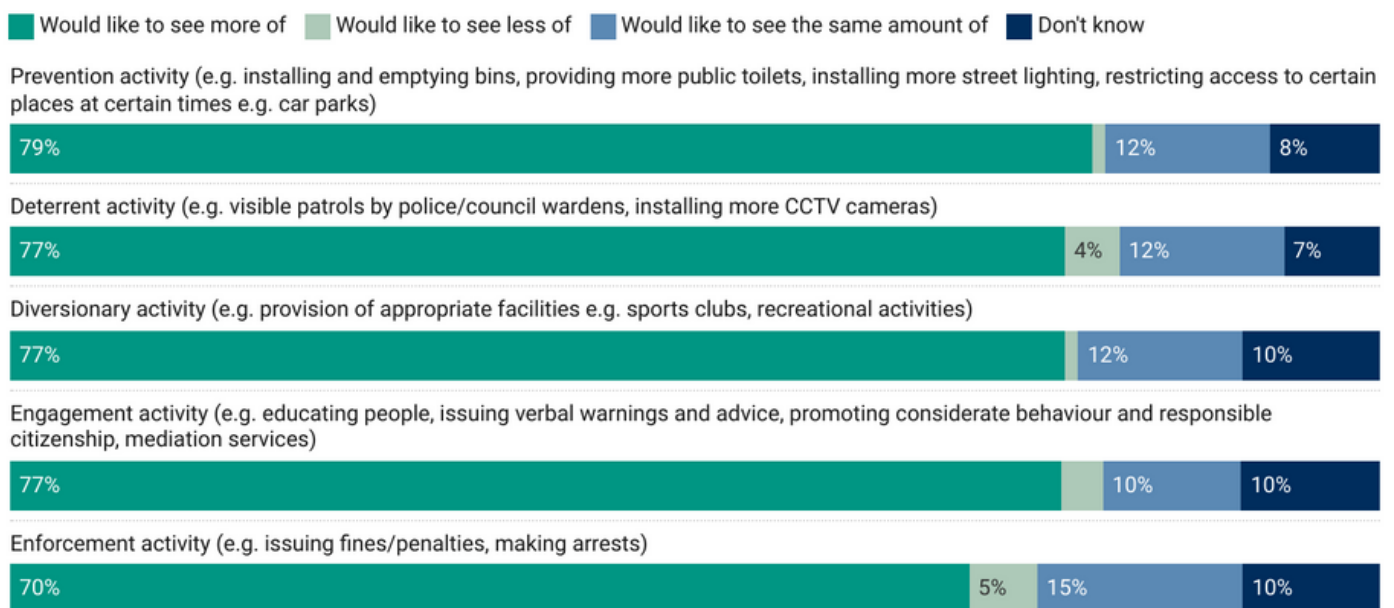

The types of activity people living in most affluent areas (SIMD5) are concerned about are speeding cars or motorcycles, joyriding and car revving (41%).

The police are most commonly associated with the responsibility for addressing antisocial behaviour in Scotland.

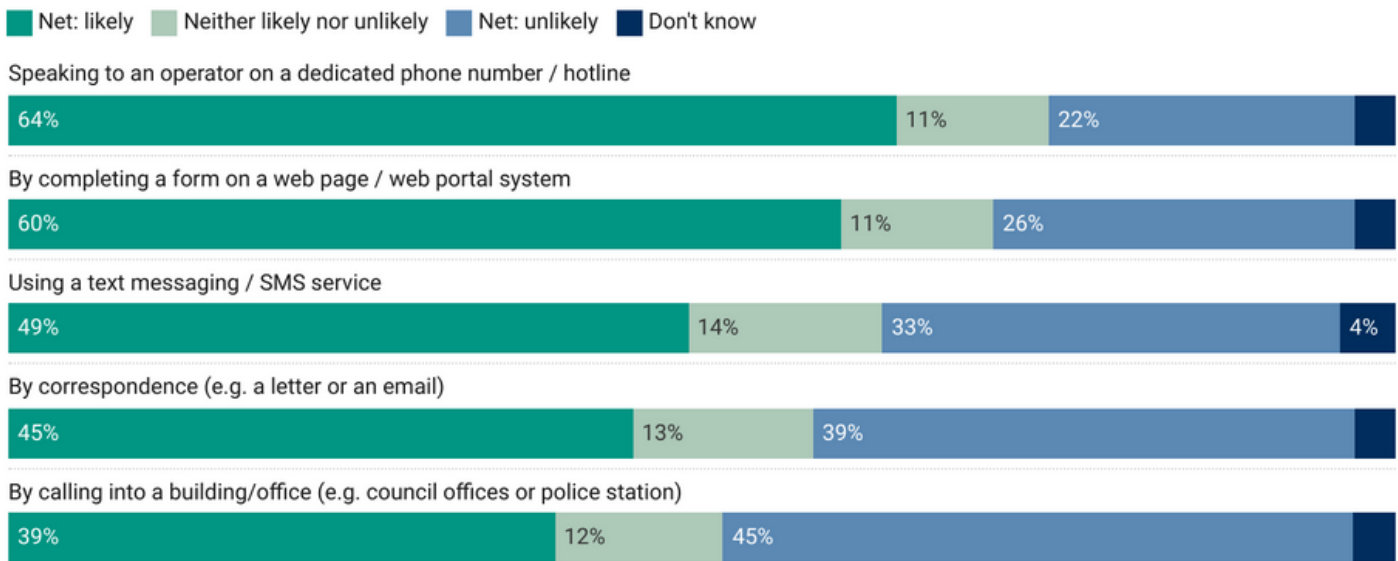|	
Police	6.49
Local Council	5.4
Individuals	5.36
Community groups	5.04
Housing/Residents' Associations	4.81
Businesses	4.05

The majority of people in Scotland are open to more activity to curb antisocial behaviour. Prevention action is the most sought after (79%), however engagement, deterrent diversionary action all have strong support (77%).

■ Would like to see more of ■ Would like to see less of ■ Would like to see the same amount of ■ Don't know

Prevention activity (e.g. installing and emptying bins, providing more public toilets, installing more street lighting, restricting access to certain places at certain times e.g. car parks)

| 79% | | 12% | 8% |

Deterrent activity (e.g. visible patrols by police/council wardens, installing more CCTV cameras)

| 77% | 4% | 12% | 7% |

Diversionary activity (e.g. provision of appropriate facilities e.g. sports clubs, recreational activities)

| 77% | | 12% | 10% |

Engagement activity (e.g. educating people, issuing verbal warnings and advice, promoting considerate behaviour and responsible citizenship, mediation services)

| 77% | | 10% | 10% |

Enforcement activity (e.g. issuing fines/penalties, making arrests)

| 70% | 5% | 15% | 10% |

Communication preferences

To conclude, respondents were asked to indicate their preference for communication methods to report antisocial behaviour.

If you wanted to make the authorities (e.g. council or police) aware of antisocial behaviour happening in your local area, how likely, if at all, would you be to use each of the following methods?

Legend: ■ Net: likely ■ Neither likely nor unlikely ■ Net: unlikely ■ Don't know

Speaking to an operator on a dedicated phone number / hotline

Net: likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Net: unlikely
64%	11%	22%

By completing a form on a web page / web portal system

Net: likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Net: unlikely
60%	11%	26%

Using a text messaging / SMS service

Net: likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Net: unlikely	Don't know
49%	14%	33%	4%

By correspondence (e.g. a letter or an email)

Net: likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Net: unlikely
45%	13%	39%

By calling into a building/office (e.g. council offices or police station)

| Net: likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Net: unlikely
39%	12%	45%

No significant differences were observed between groups for those likely (very or somewhat) or unlikely (very or somewhat) to use a particular channel.

This means that preferences do not necessarily depend on a respondents location or other socio-demographic variables.

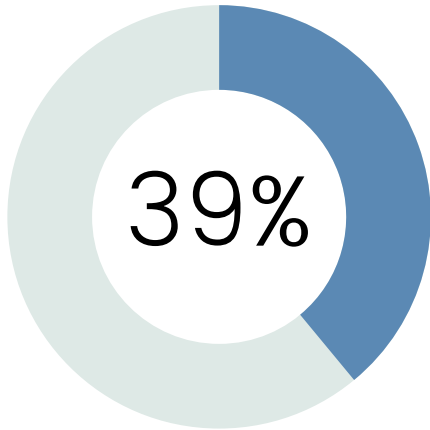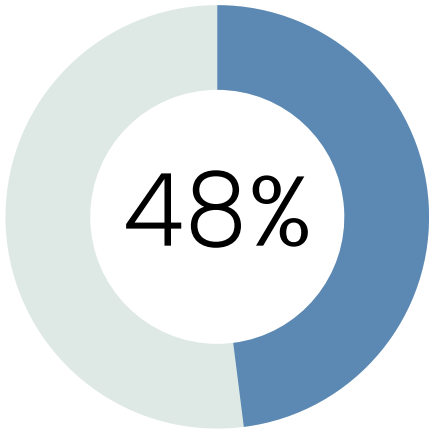# Perceptions of Institutional Discrimination

For this latest wave of data collection, we asked two new questions on the statement made by the Chief Constable of Police Scotland in May about institutional discrimination.

Around 6 in 10 respondents were aware of the public statement made by the Chief Constable of Police Scotland in May.
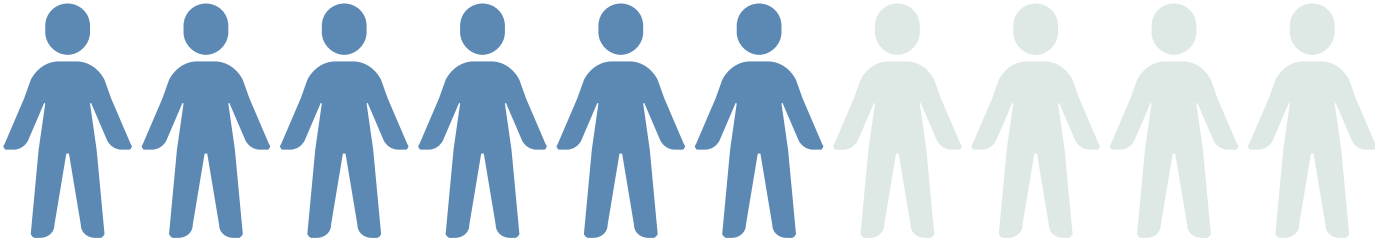
Almost half of respondents feel that institutional discrimination is an issue for Police Scotland

Around 4 in 10 respondents don't know about, or have no opinion on, the level of institutional discrimination present in Police Scotland.

48%

39%

Only 1 in 10 respondents disagree that institutional discrimination is an issue for Police Scotland

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