



2024

Public Perceptions of Policing in Scotland

Key Findings



SCOTTISH POLICE
AUTHORITY
ÙGH DARRAS 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 fourth wave of polling, conducted from 23rd to 26th January 2024. Wave 1 was conducted in July/August 2022, wave 2 in January/February 2023 and wave 3 in July 2023.



Methodology

The survey was designed by Diffley Partnership. 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 23rd - 26th January 2024, and received 2,587 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 three waves of data collection, before exploring new questions focusing on trust and confidence in various institutions and how this has changed over the past 12 months.

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

Trust in the Police

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".

Since data collection began in July 2022 we have observed a decline in trust between each data collection cycle. Differences quoted are between January 2024 and July 2023.

	Jul-22	Jan-23	Jul-23	Jan-24	Difference (W4 - W3)
Police in your local area	6.23	6.23	5.84	5.81	-0.03
Police in Scotland overall	6.14	6.04	5.66	5.65	-0.01
To protect you	5.92	5.9	5.38	5.35	-0.03
To care about people like you	5.92	5.89	5.36	5.28	-0.08
To listen and respond to your needs	5.59	5.69	5.16	5.07	-0.09

Local police continue to receive the highest level of trust from the public (5.81) and are closely followed by police in Scotland overall (5.65). While these scores are on the positive side of the midpoint, scores have decreased by 0.42 and 0.49, respectively, since data collection began.

In terms of actions, police are trusted to protect (5.35) and care about people (5.28) to around the same degree, with trust to listen and respond to people's needs slightly lower (5.07). The average trust ratings continue to show that, overall, police are more trusted than not trusted on all measures.

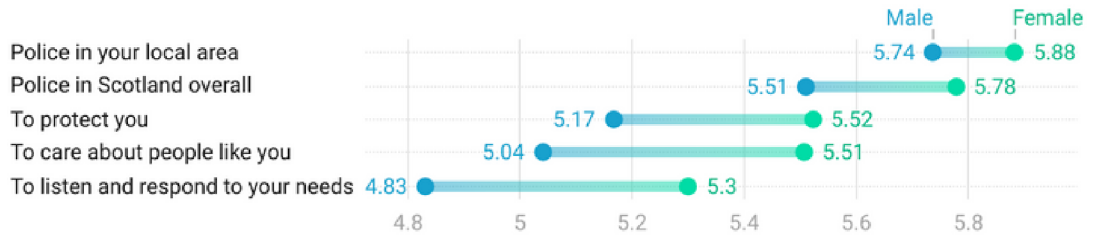
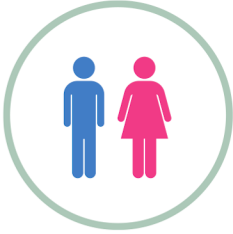
43%

of respondents have a high level of trust
in police in their local area
(rated as 7 to 10/10)

Variations in Trust: Demographics

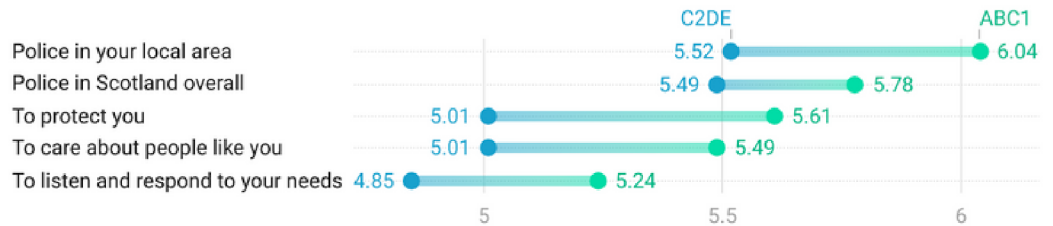
Trust in the police varies greatly depending on demographic factors.

01. Gender



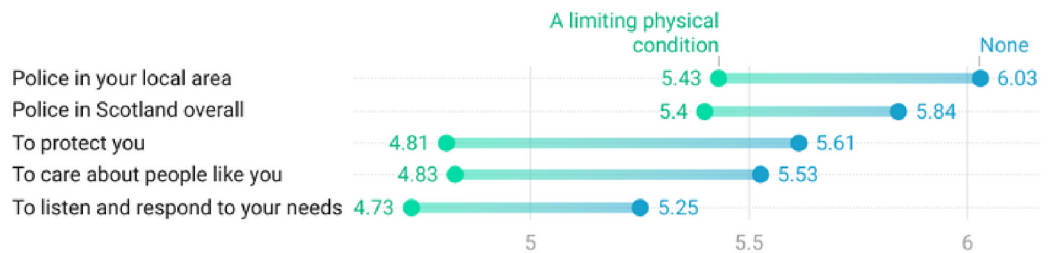
Males are significantly more likely to have less trust in police for all aspects.

02. Social grade



Working-class people (those in the C2DE category) have less trust in the police than people who are middle and upper class (ABC1).

03. Health

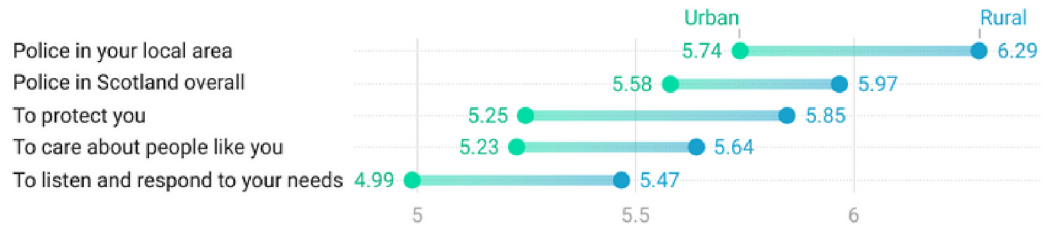


People with a limiting physical condition are more likely to have less trust in the police than those with no health conditions.

Variations in Trust: Geographics

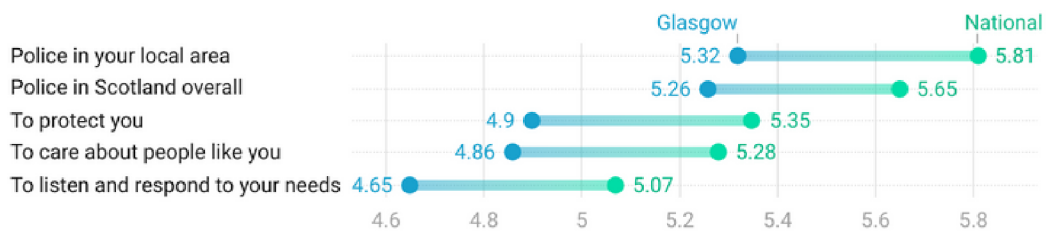
Trust in the police also varies depending on geographic factors.

01. Urban vs Rural



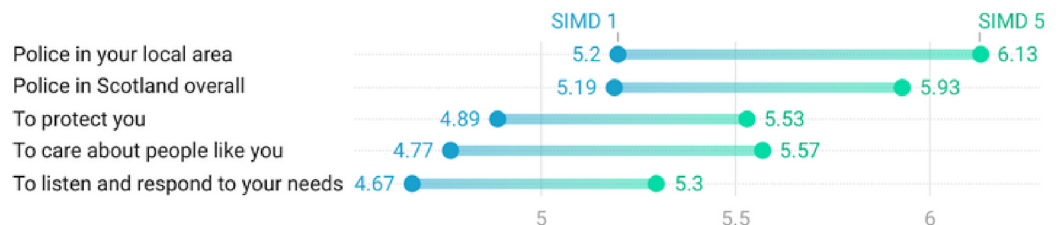
People in urban areas are more likely to have less trust in the police for all factors than those from rural areas. Those in rural areas are particularly trusting in their local police, with an average 6.29 out of 10.

02. Parliamentary Area



People in Glasgow have less trust in the police than the national average. Some of the lowest ratings for trust are found in the Glasgow area.

03. Areas of Deprivation



People in the most affluent areas (SIMD5) are likely to hold more trust in the police than those in SIMD1 areas. Those in SIMD t5 areas award above average scores to the police for all aspects, indicating there is more trust than distrust in these areas. Those in SIMD1 aware lower than average scores for aspects of protection (4.89), care (4.77) and listening and responding (4.67) indicating there is more distrust in these areas.

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 trust in police, all aspects of confidence are trending downwards with lower averages for all aspects observed. Differences quoted are between January 2024 and June 2023.

	Jul-22	Jan-23	Jul-23	Jan-24	Difference (W4 - W3)
Police in your local area	6.10	6.11	5.79	5.78	-0.01
Police in Scotland overall	5.99	5.98	5.77	5.69	-0.08
Keeping your area safe	5.72	5.70	5.24	5.16	-0.08
Tackling crime in your local area	5.46	5.41	5.10	5.04	-0.06
Being there when you need them	5.48	5.56	5.06	4.93	-0.13
Providing an appropriate and timely response	5.34	5.35	4.82	4.68	-0.14
Preventing crime in your local area	5.29	5.28	4.78	4.70	-0.08
Tackling anti-social behaviour in your local area	5.02	5.08	4.50	4.36	-0.14

Confidence in police in your local area (5.78) and Scotland overall (5.69) are both higher than 5 out of 10, indicating that the public has more confidence than no confidence in police overall. This is also true for the police keeping your area safe (5.16) and tackling crime in your local area (5.04).

The average level of confidence reported by members of the public remains below 5 out of 10 for the police being there when you need them (4.93), providing an appropriate and timely response (4.68), preventing crime in local areas (4.70) and tackling anti-social behaviour in local areas (4.36).

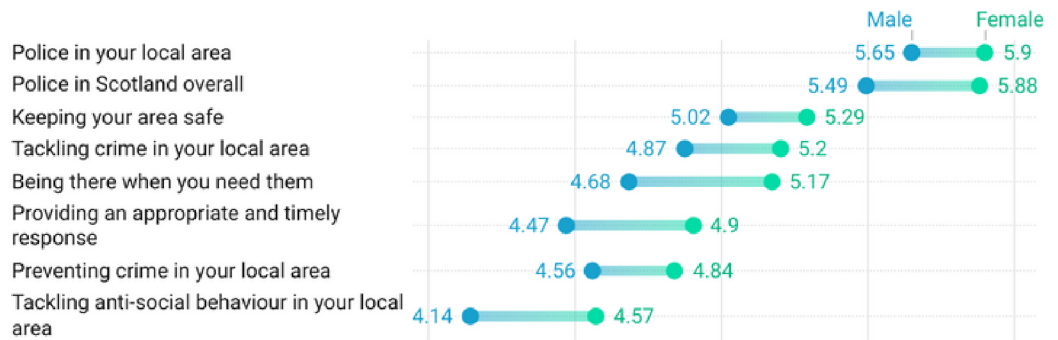
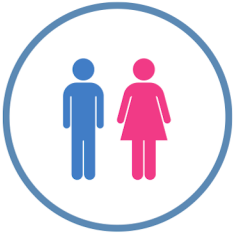
42%

**of respondents have high confidence in
police in their local area
(rated as 7 to 10/10)**

Variations in Confidence: Demographics

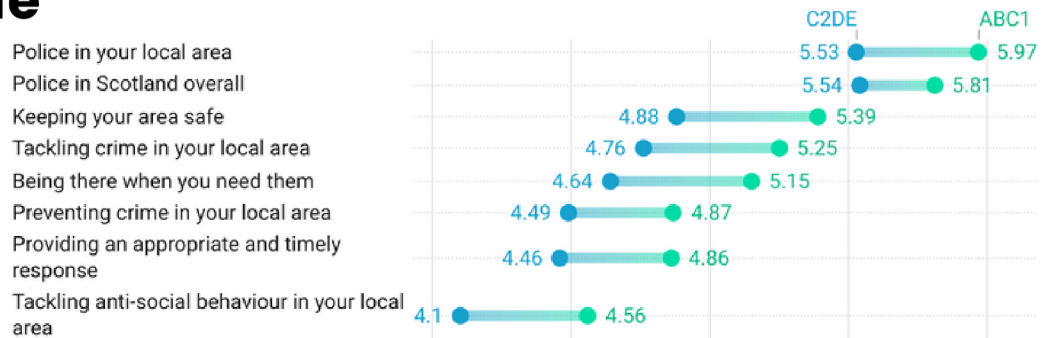
Levels of confidence in police vary significantly when looking at demographic factors

01. Gender



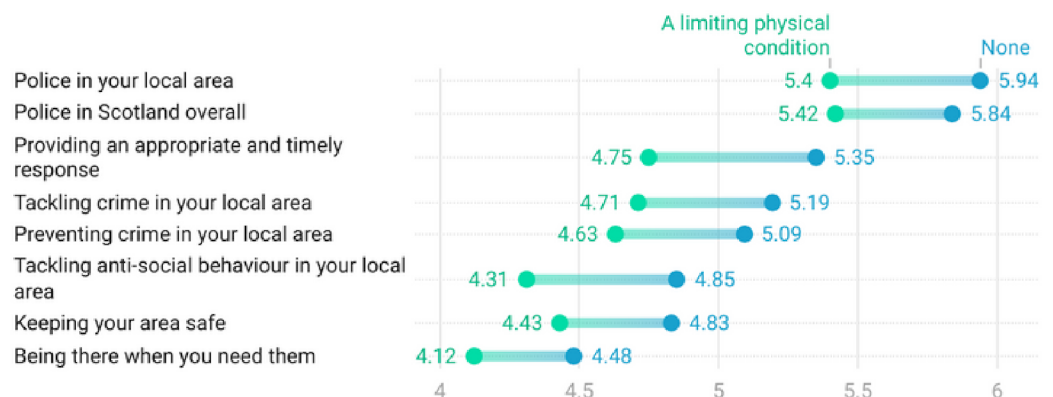
Males are significantly more likely to have less confidence in police for all aspects.

02. Social grade



Working class people (those in the C2DE category) have less confidence in the police, than people who are middle and upper class (ABC1)

03. Health



People with a limiting physical condition are more likely to have less confidence in the police than those with no health conditions.

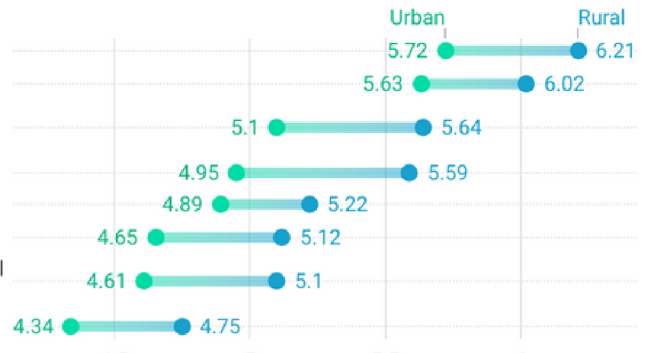
Variations in Confidence: Geographics

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

01. Urban vs Rural



- Police in your local area
- Police in Scotland overall
- Providing an appropriate and timely response
- Tackling crime in your local area
- Preventing crime in your local area
- Keeping your area safe
- Tackling anti-social behaviour in your local area
- Being there when you need them

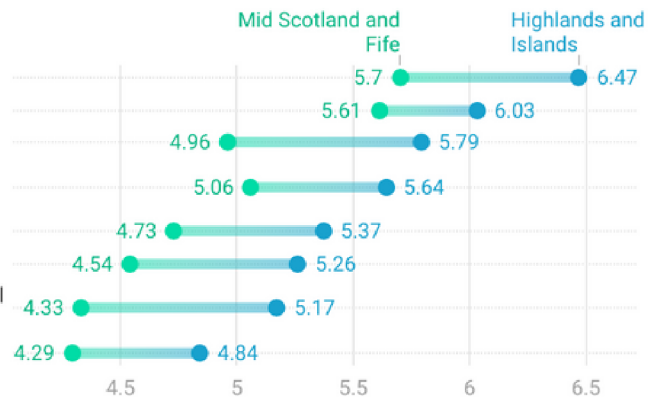


People in rural areas have more confidence in the police across the range of aspects. Those in urban areas are more likely to have less confidence than confidence in the police for aspects such as tackling anti-social behaviour in the local are.

02. Parliamentary Area



- Police in your local area
- Police in Scotland overall
- Tackling crime in your local area
- Providing an appropriate and timely response
- Preventing crime in your local area
- Keeping your area safe
- Tackling anti-social behaviour in your local area
- Being there when you need them

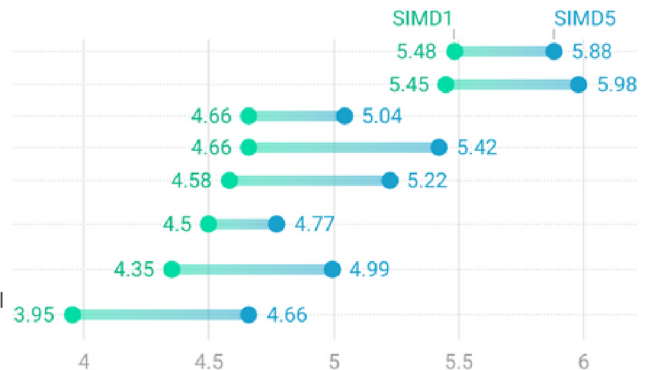


People in the Highlands and Islands region have the most confidence in the police, while those in the Mid Scotland and Fife region have the least confidence in police across a range of aspects.

03. Areas of deprivation



- Police in Scotland overall
- Police in your local area
- Being there when you need them
- Keeping your area safe
- Tackling crime in your local area
- Providing an appropriate and timely response
- Preventing crime in your local area
- Tackling anti-social behaviour in your 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).

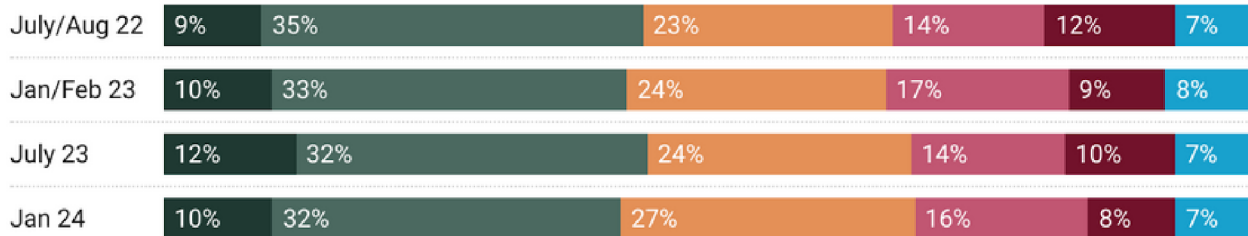
Performance of Local Police

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

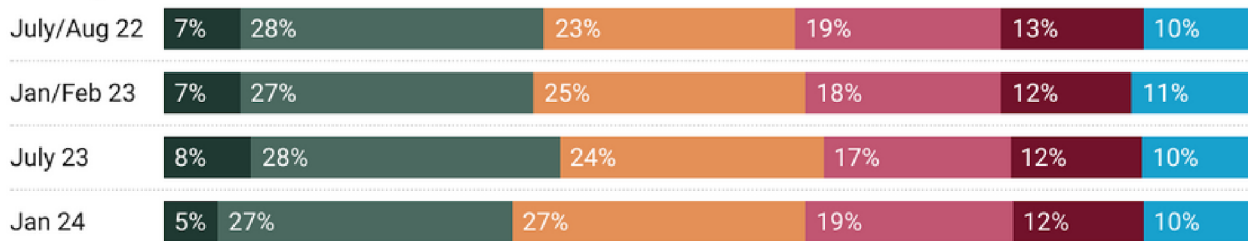
How good or poor a job do you think the police in your local area are doing at the moment in the following regards?

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

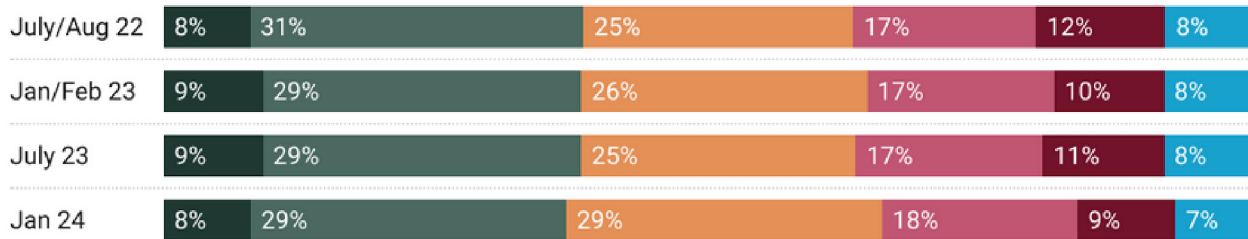
Policing in general



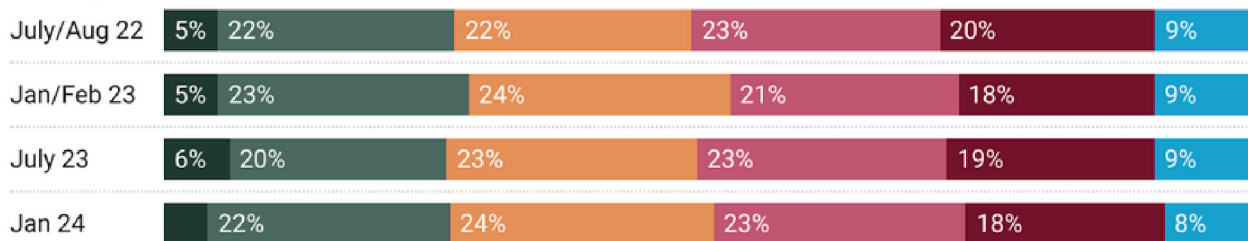
Tackling crime



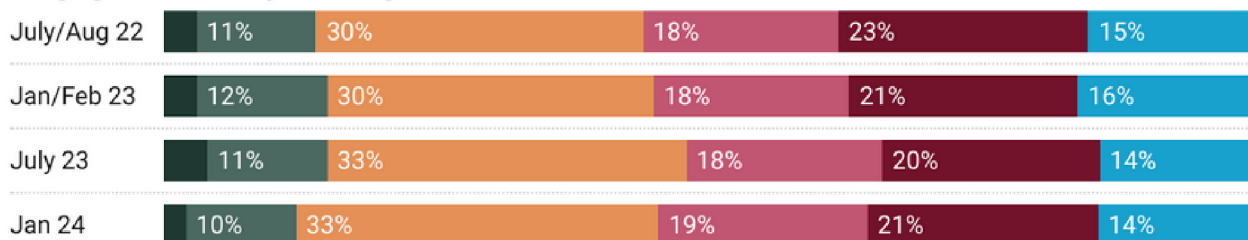
Keeping your area safe



Tackling anti-social behaviour



Bringing the community closer together



Trust and Confidence in Institutions

Several questions were asked in this wave of data collection about trust and confidence in a range of institutions, and how these have changed over the past 12 months.

Beginning with trust, respondents were asked how much trust they place in the following institutions, on a scale of 0 'do not trust at all' to 10 'trust completely'. The Fire and Rescue Service is the most trusted institution (8.11) which is closely followed by the Ambulance Service (7.5) The NHS is also highly trusted (6.89) while trust in my local council (3.81) and the Scottish Government (3.67) both fall below the average, meaning more people have low trust in these institutions.

The Fire and Rescue Service



The Ambulance Service



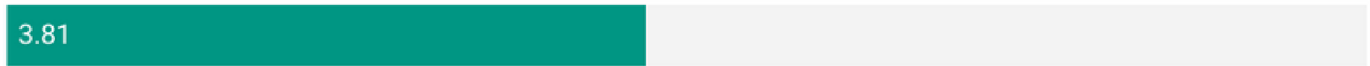
The NHS



Police in Scotland overall



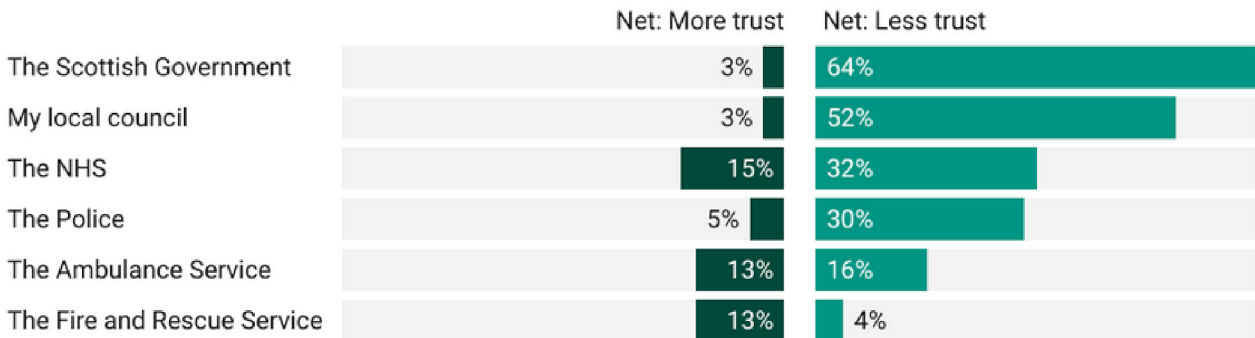
My local council



The Scottish Government



Looking specifically at how trust in these institutions changed over the past 12 months, the most trust has been lost in The Scottish Government, with almost two-thirds indicating their views have declined (64%). Around half (52%) have also lost trust in their local council. One in three (30%) have less trust in the police over the past 12 months.



Respondents were asked to rate their confidence in various institutions on a scale ranging from 0 ("no confidence at all") to 10 ("complete confidence").

The Fire and Rescue Service received the highest confidence level at 8.14, followed by The Ambulance Service at 7.39. The NHS also ranked above average with a confidence rating of 6.74. In contrast, more individuals lack confidence in their local council (3.98) and the Scottish Government (3.88) since both ratings fall below the average level of confidence.

The Fire and Rescue Service



The Ambulance Service



The NHS



Police in Scotland overall



My local council



The Scottish Government



Examining the shift in confidence towards these institutions over the last year, the Scottish Government experienced the most significant decline, with 67% indicating a loss of confidence. Additionally, more than half (55%) have less confidence in their local council, while 41% have less confidence in the NHS. About a third (35%) have decreased confidence in the police in the past year and one-fifth have less trust in the ambulance service. People are increasingly confident in the Fire and Rescue Service compared to the previous 12 months.

