

## Fact Sheet 8

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### Public Confidence in Policing

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#### Introduction

The relationship between the police service and the people who live, work in and visit Scotland is vital to building trust and confidence that the service will keep people safe. Policing in Scotland has a long and proud history based on the fundamental principle of policing by the consent of the people.

#### Legitimacy and policing by consent

A range of evidence, both internally gathered and from independent external sources, underlines the significant value our fellow citizens and communities place upon their police service. This strong bond with the public is key to policing legitimacy.

Surveys such as those used to inform this briefing underline that accessible, visible policing is vital to maintaining and building a relationship with the public. Tailored and responsive local policing, which meets the needs of communities, will always be at the heart of policing in Scotland.

It is critical that Police officers and staff listen to, and understand, the needs of diverse communities, bringing empathy to interactions and improving their ability to respond appropriately. Services must continue to be relevant, accessible and effective to ensure public safety and wellbeing across Scotland.

The [joint strategy for policing](#) commits to transforming the way that people can contact Police Scotland and how their queries are resolved, recognising and responding appropriately to the needs of individuals and communities. It also commits to ensuring that the public feel their input is genuinely valued, listened to and is having an impact on the policing approach.

#### SPA oversight - Policing in the public interest

The principle of "policing in the public interest" sits at the core of the Authority's oversight approach to policing in Scotland. The Authority's [Corporate Plan 2020-23](#) committed to a vision of 'policing in the public interest' which underpins delivery of an agreed set of strategic outcomes. The public polling undertaken by the Authority forms a core part of this vision;

understanding public perceptions and drivers of opinion aids and informs oversight of policing in Scotland.

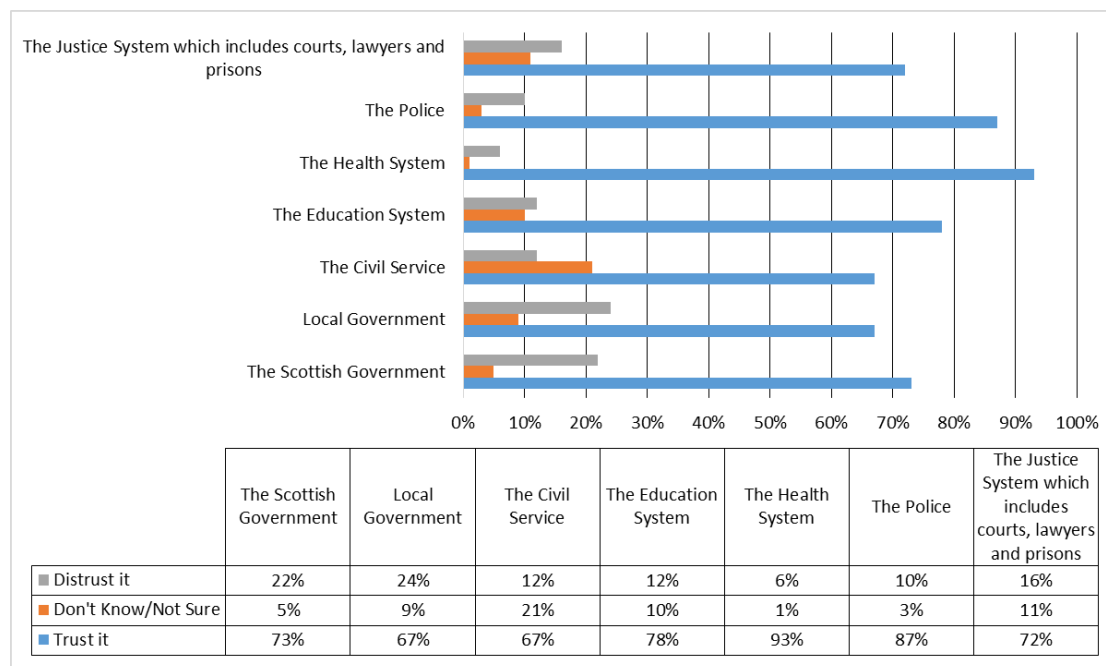
The effectiveness of this approach was demonstrated in the [SPA pandemic polling](#) which provided understanding of the public’s experiences of policing in a time where policing powers and demands had significantly increase.

## External assessment of public trust - Scottish Household and Understanding Scotland

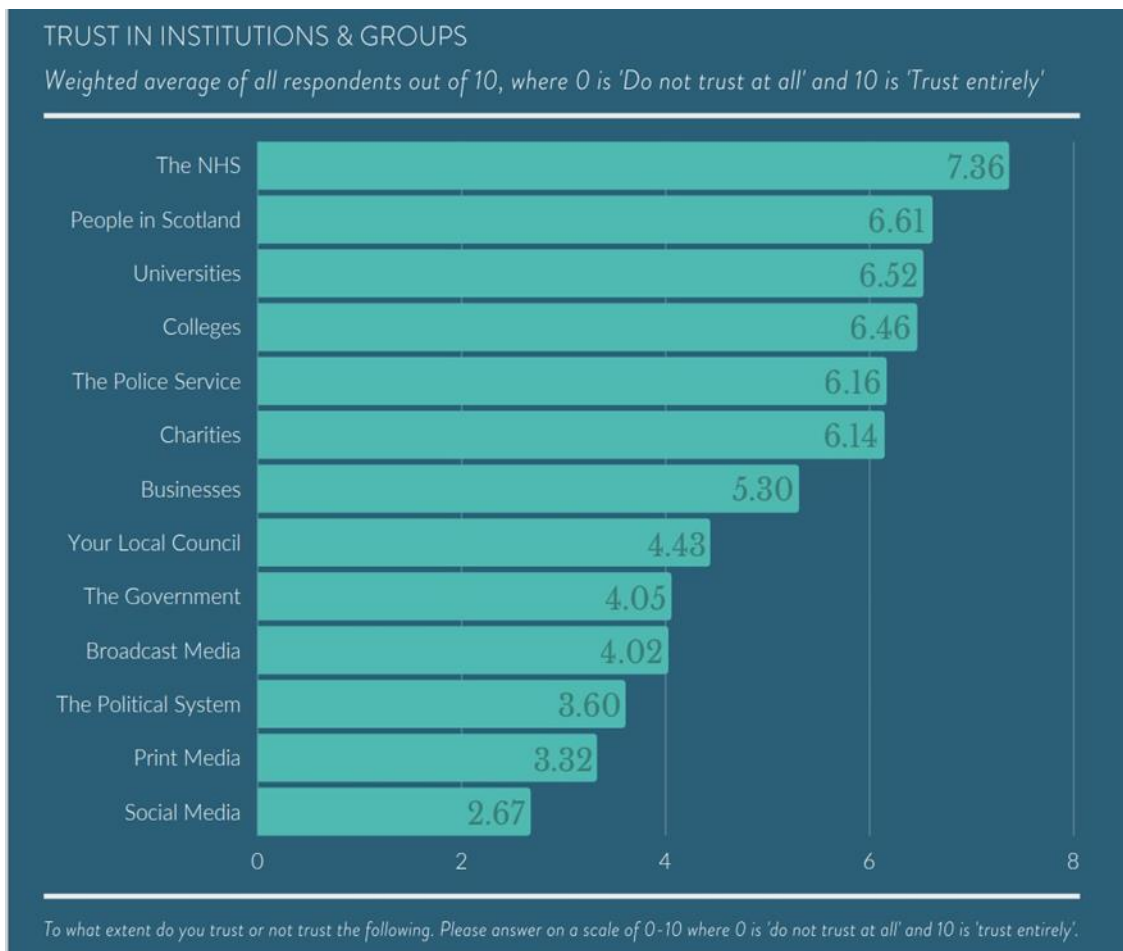
The [Scottish Household Survey 2020](#) found that trust in policing was at 87% - secondly only to the health services (see **Figure 1**). This high level of trust in policing was replicated in the 2021 [Understanding Scotland](#) report. Using a weighted average of all respondents where 10 was trust entirely and zero equated to no trust, Police Scotland scored 6.16 – see **Figure 2**.

In addition, 69% of respondents to the monthly [UK YouGov tracker](#) (July 2019-March 2022) rated the service as ‘doing a good job’. This compared to the UK regional range of 58%-70%. This is in line with the average confidence value of 61% (excluding ‘don’t know’ answers) for the Your Police survey over the period 2020-22.

**Figure 1: Scottish Household Survey 2020 – Trust in Institutions (%)**



**Figure 2: Understanding Scotland 2021 – Trust in Institutions and Groups**



## Police Scotland – Understanding User Experience

Police Scotland undertakes a monthly local policing User Experience Survey, delivered through independent research partner Progressive Partnership Ltd. The survey is delivered by text message to a random sample of around 14,000 people who have recently contacted police (including 101/999, online and public counter contact at police stations, but excluding some types of crime/incident of a highly sensitive nature).

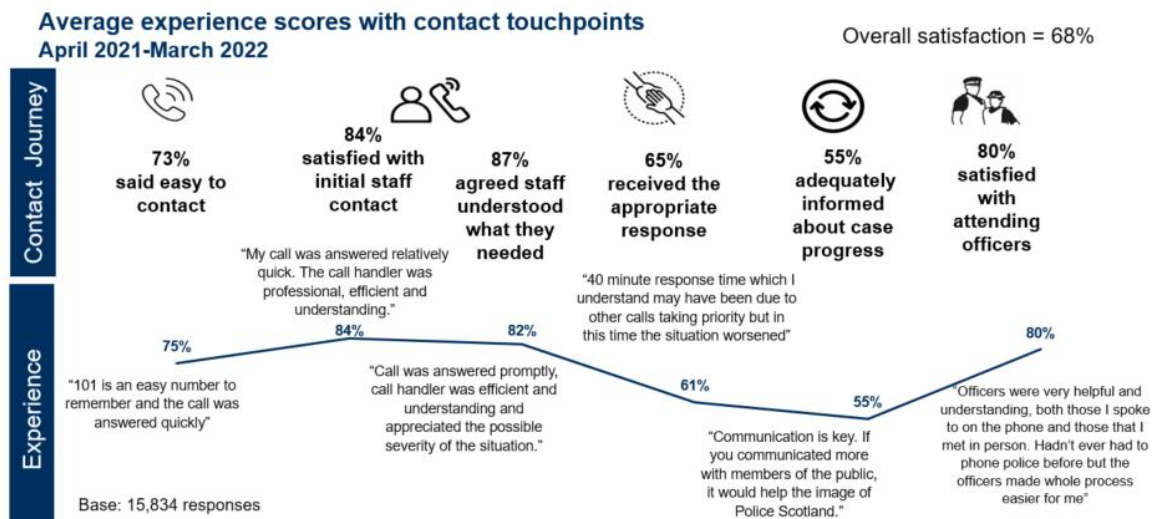
The survey asks about the individuals experience of local policing services – covering first contact, understanding needs, attending officers (where appropriate) and overall satisfaction – so that the service is able to understand the user journey in more detail and identify areas for improvement or good practice.

Between April 2021 and March 2022, 15,834 individuals completed the survey. Satisfaction with overall experience during this period was 68%. Further categories of user experience are as follows and shown in **Figure 3** below:

- Satisfaction with ease of contact was 73%;

- Satisfaction with treatment by the service adviser during initial contact was 84%;
- 87% of respondents believed that contact staff understood their needs;
- Satisfaction with receiving an appropriate response was 65%;
- 55% of respondents said they were adequately informed about the progress of their case;
- Satisfaction with attending officers was 80%.

**Figure 3: User Experience Police Scotland data**



The data also tell us that how contact is managed is just as important as the outcome for individuals. Analysis of open-ended text comments provided by respondents found that positive public experience is a result of:

- **Accessibility:** ease of contact including 101 waiting times, online reporting, providing reassurance.
- **Effectiveness:** professionalism, clear communications, keeping people informed, showing fairness and respect.
- **Approachability:** listening without judgement, bringing kindness and compassion, and cultural intelligence (use of inclusive language and knowledge of diversity between and within communities).

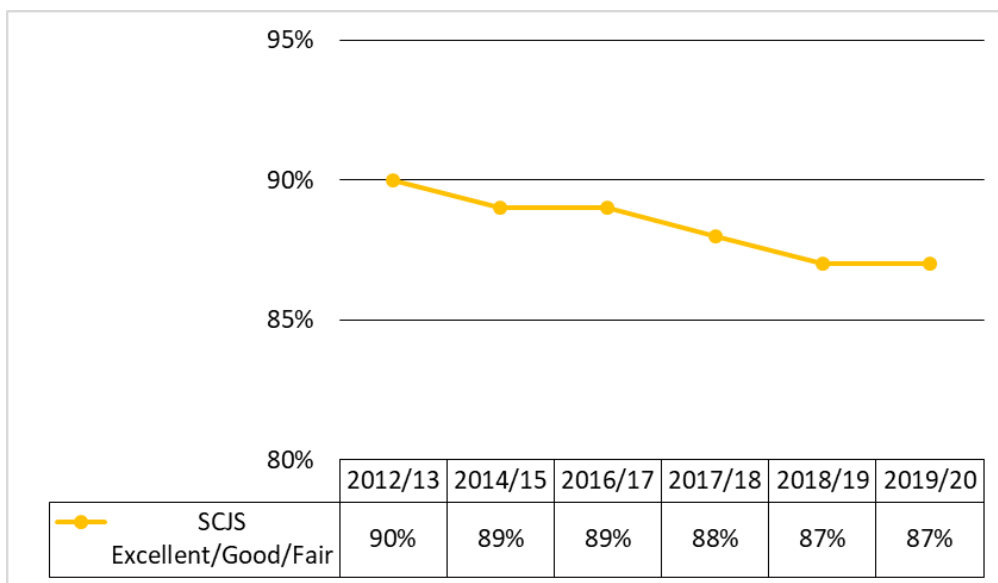
In [recent research conducted by Police Scotland and Victim Support Scotland](#), survivors of crime emphasised that there must be effective communication between them, police and support services. The quality of engagement and communication, and a quick referral to support services impacts a person's recovery and reduces perceived delays to justice. Being kept up to date, feeling supported in the most appropriate way and being taken seriously all enhance confidence and trust, and helps people to feel less alone or isolated. Every interaction with police has an impact - one negative experience can deter someone from reporting a crime and contacting or cooperating with the police again.

## Long term national polling on police effectiveness

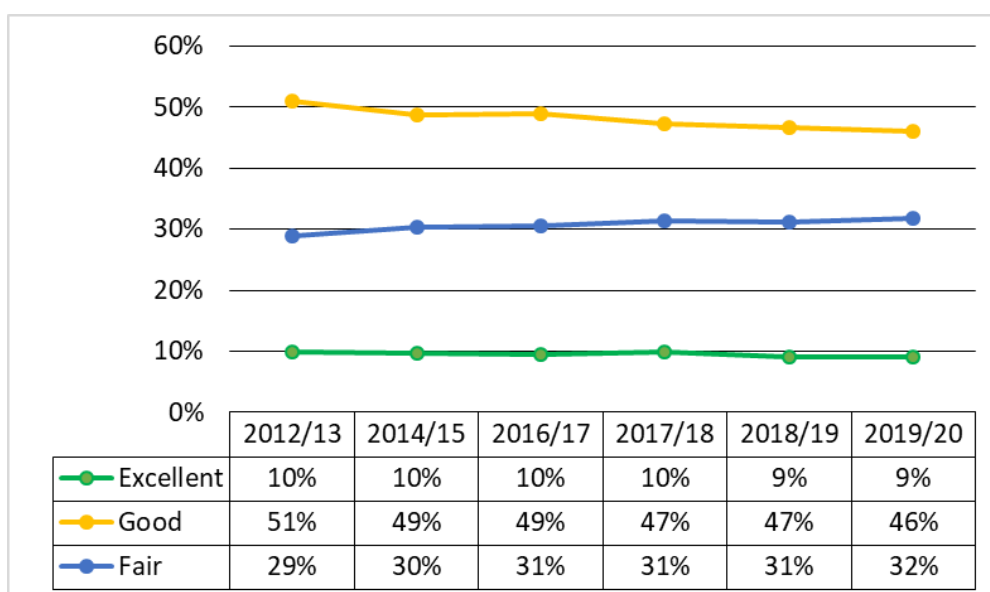
The [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey \(SCJS\)](#) has consistently shown high levels of confidence in the police (rated as doing an excellent, good or fair job), with the largest proportion feeling police have been doing a 'good' job and views on a whole being relatively consistent over the years – see **Figures 4 and 5**.

This is mirrored in the [Scottish Telephone Victimization Survey \(SVTS\)](#) 2020 where 82% of respondents felt police in their local area were doing an "Excellent/Good/Fair" job.

**Figure 4: Policing Performance SCJS – Excellent/Fair/Good (%)**



**Figure 5: Policing Performance SCJS – Excellent, Fair and Good (%)**



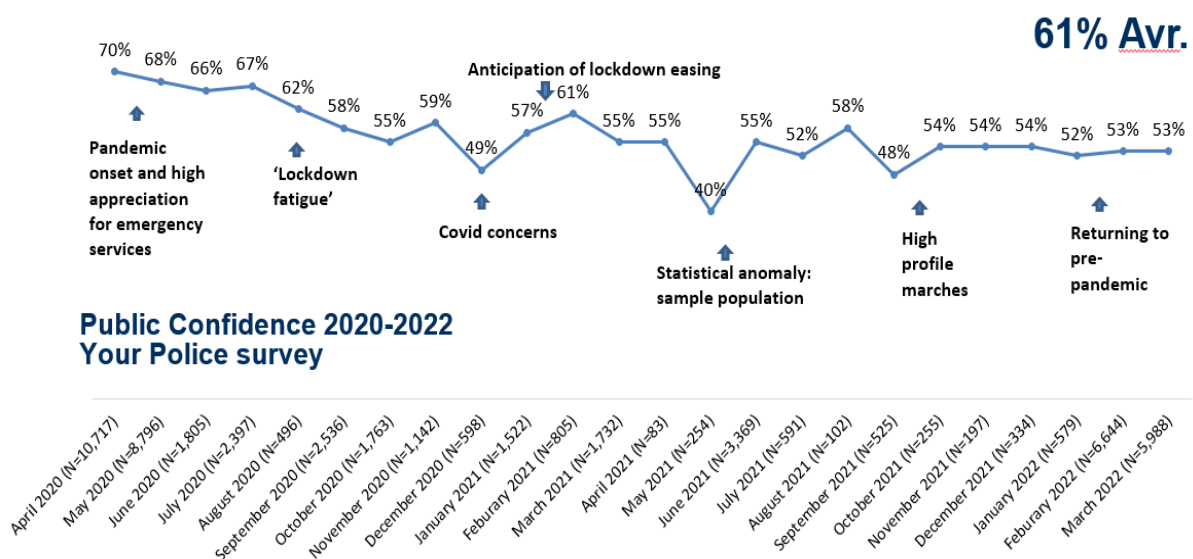
# Drivers of public confidence – insights from Your Police Survey

The 'Your Police' survey is a Police Scotland survey first launched in 2019 to listen and understand the views of Scotland's diverse communities. It is refreshed and runs continuously each year on the Citizen Space platform. Accessible formats in easy read and British Sign Language (BSL) are also available. It is widely distributed among partners at local and national levels. It is an open and continuous survey so that anyone can take part and give their views on their police service at any time.

The survey is one of the ways the service engages with local communities to listen to feedback about their needs, confidence and perceptions of their police service. Data and insights are used to support local police planning, service development and scrutiny.

The graph below (**Figure 6**) highlights confidence levels from April 2020-March 2022 (when don't know and not answered responses are removed). Over this period the average level of public confidence was 61%.

**Figure 6: Your Police response rates**



## Confidence can be impacted by external events

Research carried out by Police Scotland shows public perceptions and confidence can be impacted by external factors that are not always within the control of the service. Public confidence in policing during the pandemic (2020-21) was affected by changes to COVID-19 rates of transmission locally and nationally; local lockdowns (Protection Level 4) and the national lockdown in January 2021.

National and international events raised by the public regarding police legitimacy have included George Floyd's death in police custody and subsequent Black Lives Matter movement, misogyny and violence against women and girls following the

murder of Sarah Everard, Rhona Malone tribunal, and other publicised police misconduct.

## **There are three main drivers of confidence**

The top **three drivers of confidence** are consistent across population groups and locations, as found from this qualitative analysis. These drivers are interdependent and apply to responsive contact, community policing, events and protests:

- **Visibility and accessibility** - presence in local areas in providing reassurance;
- **Values and behaviours** - how we 'show up' and demonstrate fairness, respect and integrity; and
- **Community engagement** – staying connected and keeping communities informed.

The open-ended text analysis carried out within the service links these drivers with factors such as making people feel safe and providing reassurance; accessibility and availability of police if needed; and, crime prevention and protection.

## **Confidence is associated with perceptions of local police**

Our statistical analysis shows **strong positive correlations** of public confidence with:

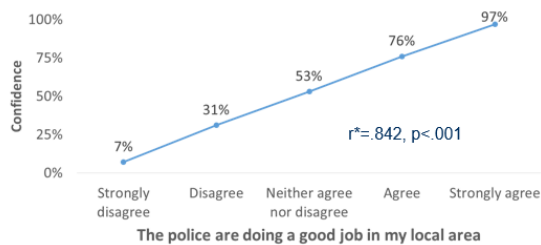
- perceptions of local police doing a good job in local area;
- listening to local concerns; and
- dealing with issues affecting local areas.

There are moderate positive correlations with perceptions on police officers being friendly and approachable; having respect for police in local area; and, feeling of safety in local area. This correlation analysis show factors with strong positive correlations of public confidence has been laid out in **Figure 7** below.

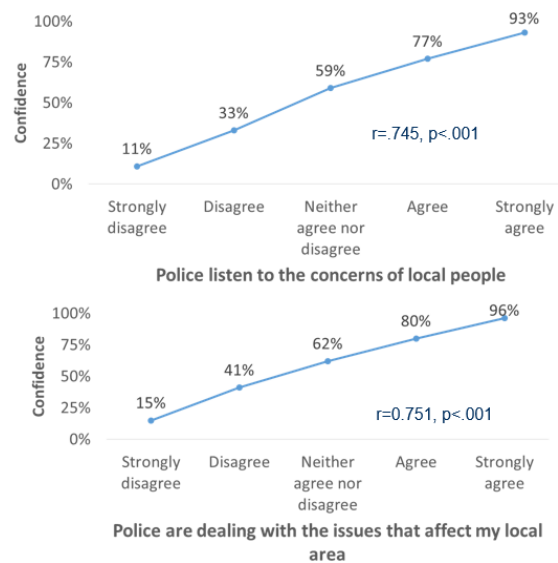
## Figure 7: public confidence graphs

Confidence is likely to increase with perceptions of police:

- **Doing a good job in local area**
- **Listening to concerns of local people**
- **Dealing with issues affecting local areas**



Note - Correlation SPSS analysis (Pearson's correlation) was conducted to investigate the relationship between public confidence in policing and responses to other questions in Your Police survey. \*r is a correlation coefficient, a statistic that indicates the strength and the direction of the relationship between variables. Values from 0 to 1 indicate a positive correlation, values from 0 to -1 indicate a negative correlation. The closer the coefficient is to 1 or -1 the stronger the relationship between variables.



## Understanding Public Confidence in different groups

While the headline statistics on policing performance are positive, intersectional time series analysis provides a more complex view. In conducting bivariate and multivariate analysis of Scottish Government and SPA public polling, a number of cohorts have been identified which will become key focus areas for future work.

As detailed in the following sections, these cohorts are segments of the population that:

- are either consistently at the upper and lower extents of views across the years;
- whose views swung between the uppermost and lowermost extents of the data across the years; or
- whose views consistently differed substantially from their comparator.

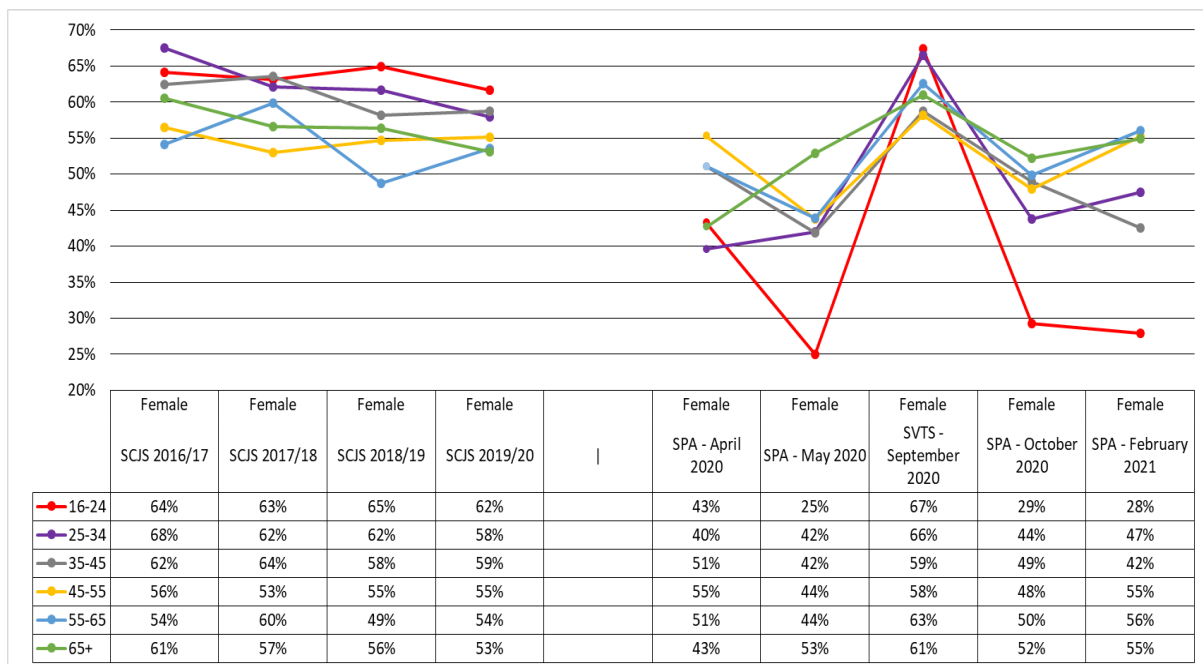
### Younger females (16-24) in general and younger males and females (16-24) over the course of the pandemic

Younger females are more likely to consider that the police in their local area had been doing an 'Excellent/Good' job than older people in the SCJS 2016/17 – 2019/20 (see **Figure 8**). However, this trend reversed in the Authority surveys, with younger females (16-24) consistently becoming the least likely to state this view.

In particular, 16-24 females became substantially less likely to select this than the other age categories from phase 2 (May 2020). The Authority May 2020 rate for female (16-24) at 25% is the lowest rate anywhere in the dataset whilst the male (16-24) rate in the same survey was 45%.



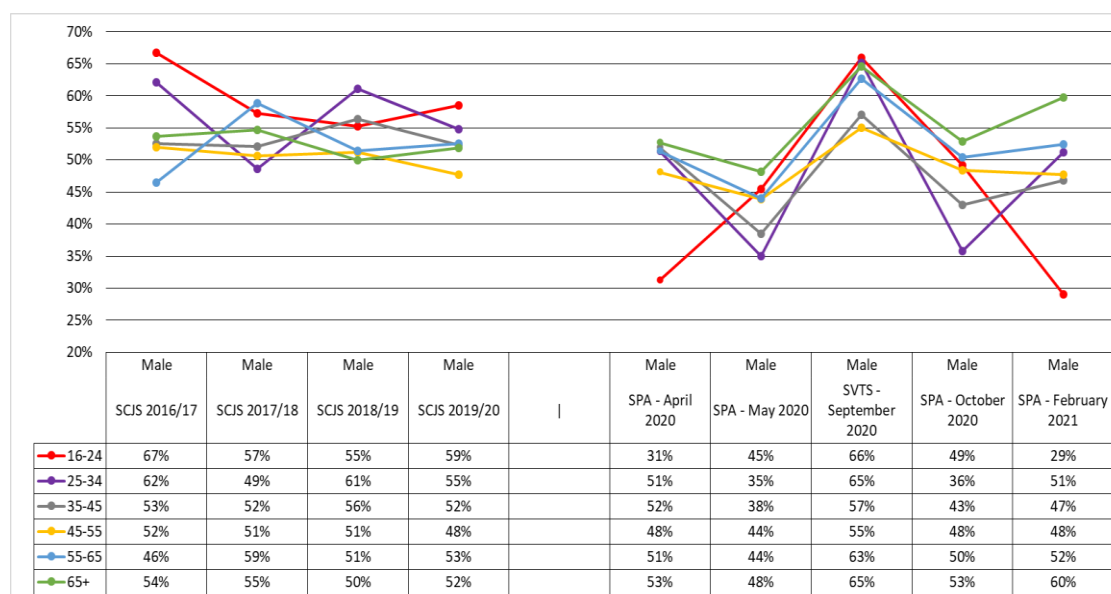
**Figure 8: Age and Gender - Female (%)**



Regarding males, **Figure 9** shows that the 25-34 category has had more significant fluctuations than other age categories. Additionally, males aged 16-24 have also consistently been amongst the most positive about policing performance in relation to other age categories. However, fluctuation was observed in the Authority surveys, with males aged 16-24 going from being the least likely to select 'Excellent/Good' in April 2020 to being amongst the most positive in May 2020 and October 2020, and falling again to least positive in February 2021.

In relation to the other age categories, the inverse was seen with positive views for males decreasing between April and May 2020, rising between May and October 2020, and rising again (or remaining the same) between October 2020 and February 2021.

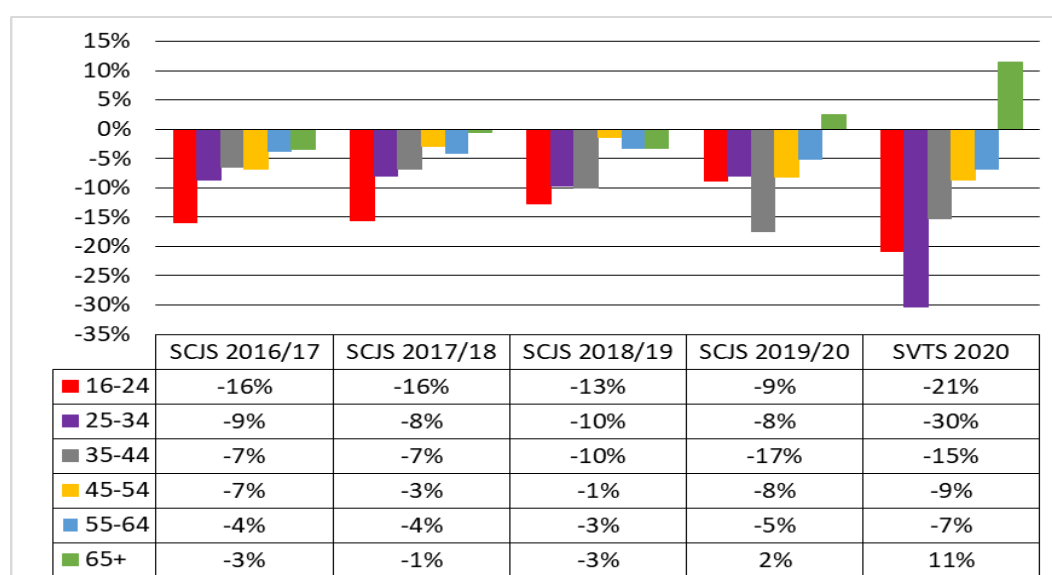
**Figure 9: Age and Gender – Male (%)**



**Under 35s (16-24 and 25-34) in the 15% most deprived areas**

The margin between respondents in the 15% most deprived areas and the rest of Scotland is larger for younger age groups, with those aged 16-24 generally having the largest difference followed by aged 25-34 – see **Figure 10**. A notable exception is in the SCJS 2019/20 where the biggest difference is with 35-44, with a 17 percentage point difference between those in the 15% most deprived areas (41%) and the remainder (58%) – followed by 16-24 and 25-34.

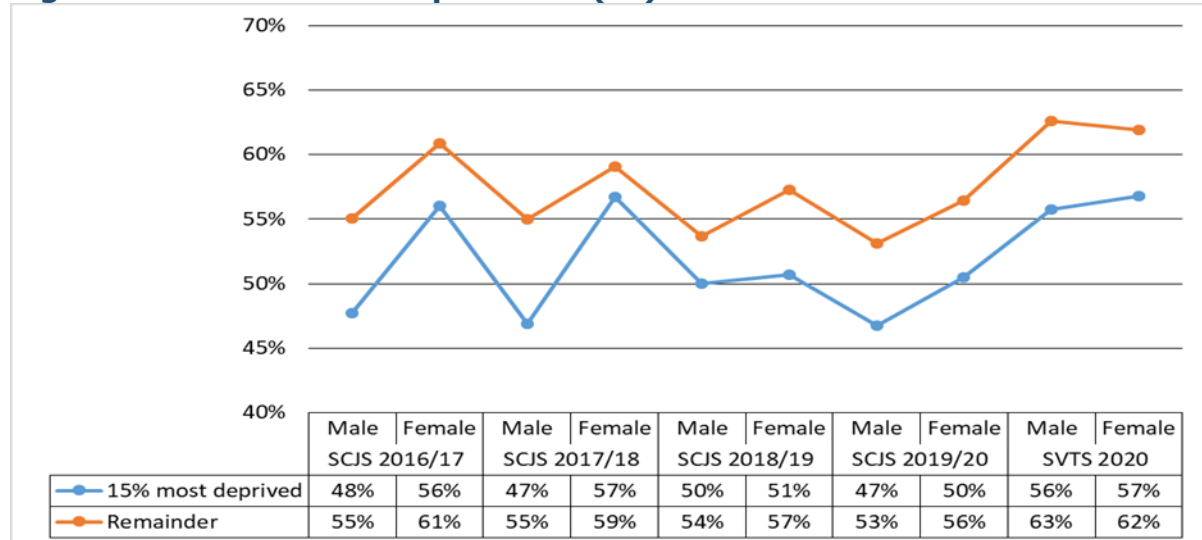
**Figure 10: Difference between proportion of 'Excellent/Good' between 15% most deprived and remainder (proportion of 15% most deprived subtracted from remainder)**



## Males and females in the 15% most deprived areas

Males and females in the 15% most deprived areas are consistently less positive about policing performance than those in the remainder – see **Figure 11**.

**Figure 11: Gender and Deprivation (%)**

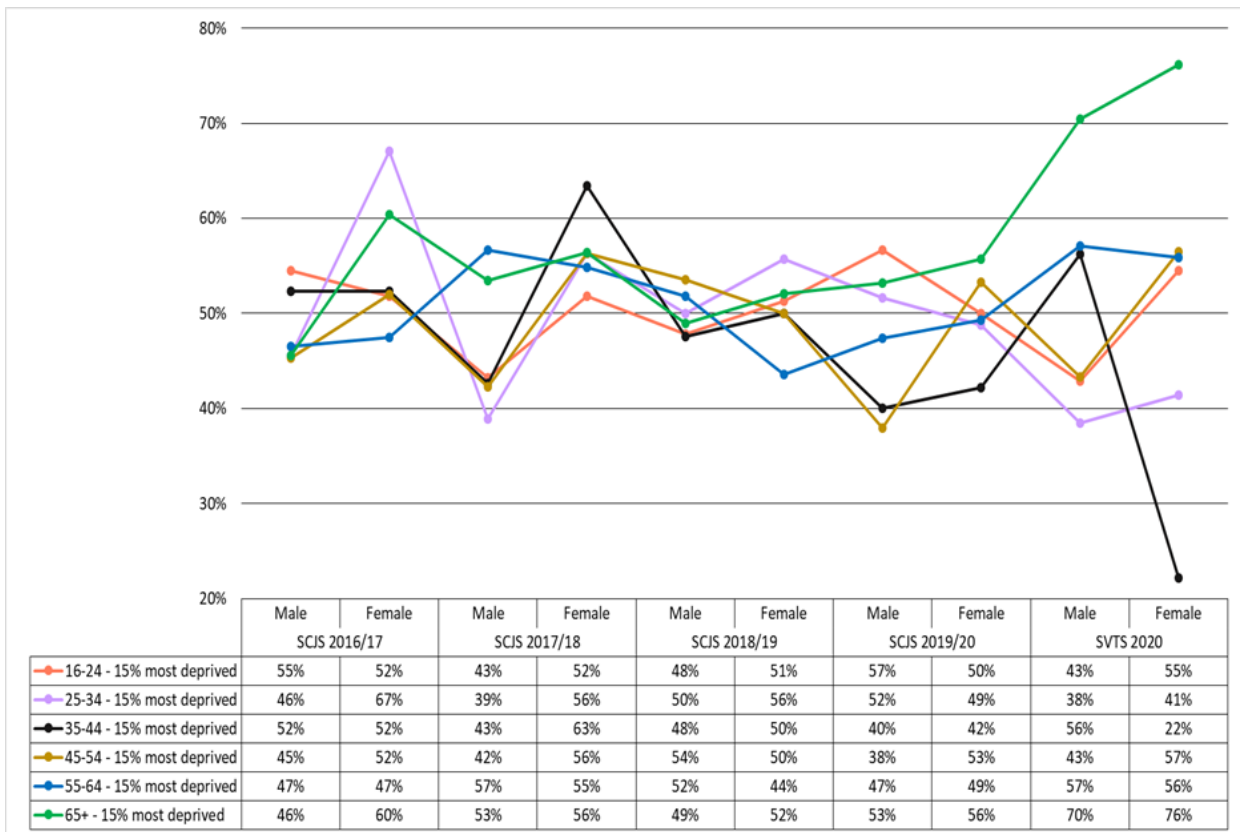


## Females aged 25-44 and males under 35 (16-24 and 25-34) in the 15% most deprived areas

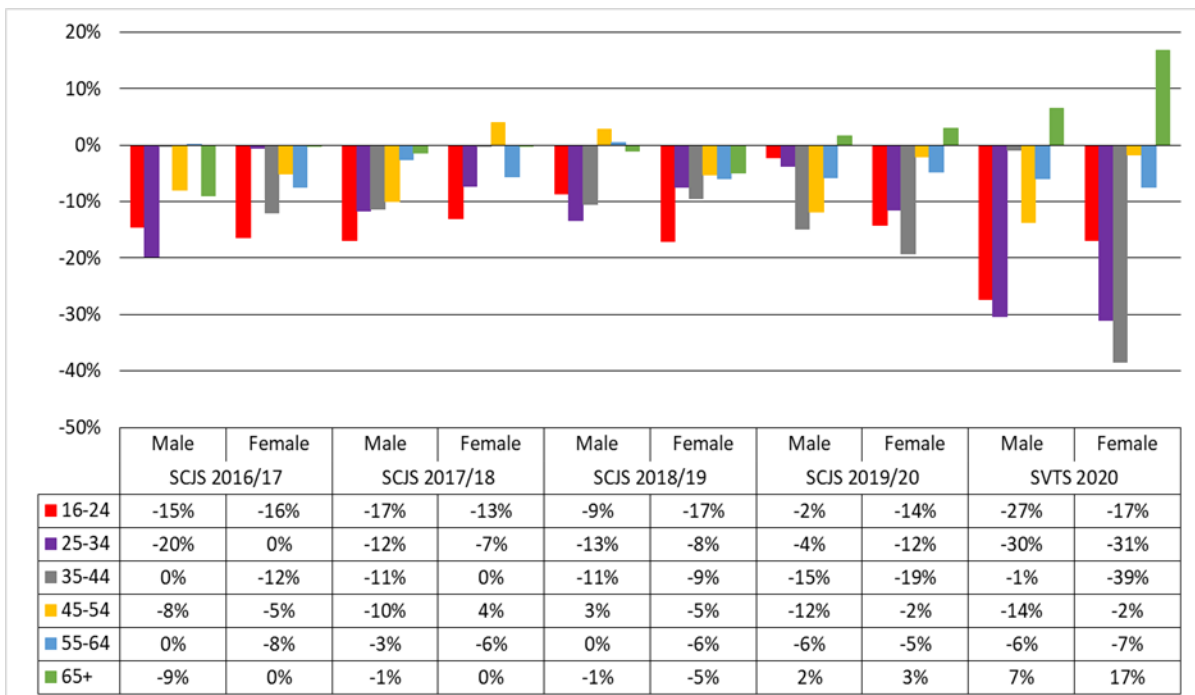
Females in the 25-34 age group in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland have experienced a consistent decrease in positivity about policing performance since 2016/17 – see **Figure 12**. Those aged 35-44 have also experienced a decrease since 2017/18. It was particularly notable that females 35-44 in the 15% most deprived areas saw a 20 percentage point reduction between the SCJS 2019/20 and the SVTS 2020 (42% to 22%) whilst corresponding males rose from 40% to 56%.

**Figure 13** also shows the proportion of males aged 16-24 and 25-34 who thought the police were doing an 'Excellent/Good' job in the 15% most deprived areas became closer to those in the remainder each year – with the exception of the SVTS 2020.

**Figure 12: Gender, 15% Most Deprived and Age (%)**



**Figure 33: Difference between proportion of 'Excellent/Good' between gender and deprivation by age (proportion of age in 15% most deprived subtracted from age in remainder)**



## Police Scotland 'Your Police' Intersectional Analysis

Confidence in local policing is lowest within demographic groups from Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) Quintiles 1 and 2 (where 1 is the most deprived and 5 is least deprived).

Analysis undertaken by Police Scotland found that those less likely to express confidence include:

- individuals who identify as non-binary or other gender;
- people who identify as transgender;
- people who identify as gay;
- people with physical and mental health conditions;
- victims and witnesses of crime; and
- people from urban areas compared to rural and remote.

These groups were more concerned about crime and felt less safe. During 2020-21 they were also most likely to think the police should take tougher action to ensure public compliance with the COVID-19 restrictions.

Enhancing confidence within these groups requires police understanding of culture and lived experiences to ensure communication and engagement is appropriate and supportive. This includes keeping communities informed about how local police are taking their concerns seriously and responding to crimes and other incidents that specifically affect diverse communities. It also requires Police Scotland to visibly show and make clear that the service is here for people who are often marginalised.

Analysis of open-ended responses in the Your Police survey show that children and younger people would like Police Scotland to offer advice and education on the reporting process and support available to them if they are a victim or witness of crime. People who are LGBTQ+ express a desire for meaningful community engagement and action to prevent hate crime. For people with disabilities, there is a need for accessible contact and engagement options, including the expanded use of BSL, and responding to incidents which disproportionately affect marginalised communities.

Work is on-going to improve how we listen and respond to the needs of seldom-heard communities so that we can effectively engage with all communities in the most appropriate and supportive ways.

Whilst public confidence often fluctuates due to wider factors, it is clear from consistent sampling of the local policing User Experience Survey that individuals' experience of policing has remained consistent and high. This is shown in **Figure 14** below for the period April 2020-March 2022.

**Figure 14: public confidence vs user experience – Police Scotland data**

