

Meeting	Policing Performance Committee
Date	11 October 2022
Location	MS Teams
Title of Paper	SPA Biannual Public Opinion Polling
Presented By	Martin Smith, Strategy and Research Lead, SPA
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached – Yes	

PURPOSE

This paper presents initial results from the first round of routine public polling commissioned by the Authority. The polling was conducted during July and August 2022.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Authority has undertaken a series of standalone public polling exercises over the last 24 months, focused on gathering independent and representative data on public confidence on a range of issues. Four separate polling exercises were undertaken during 2020/21 to gather public confidence data on the [policing of the pandemic](#).
- 1.2 Those polls explored a range of themes, including the public’s attitude towards the police, the policing of lockdown restrictions, and the public’s ease in complying with restrictions. Those results were reported to the Policing Performance Committee at various stages during 2020 and 2021, and shared with the Independent Advisory Group and the wider public through the Authority’s website. Following this, surveys were carried out to gather views on use of [new and emerging technology in policing](#) and the [policing of COP26](#).
- 1.3 Building on the insights gained through previous polling, the Authority subsequently commissioned routine independent public polling for the period 2022-24. The polling contains a set of core questions exploring public attitudes towards the police; providing the ability to baseline and then track public confidence and trust; along with an option to include

topical, spotlight questions exploring areas of significant and emerging public interest.

2 ROUTINE PUBLIC POLLING

- 2.1 There has been significant value to the Authority in undertaking this independent and representative polling to complement a range of external data sources from both Scottish Government and Police Scotland. Additionally, as Scottish Government considers the future of the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS), it becomes increasingly important for the Authority to have a consistent time series of data to inform its oversight and scrutiny of Police Scotland.
- 2.2 The Authority has put in place regular independent public polling of a representative sample of Scottish citizens, with a view to enhancing its understanding of public confidence. This is aligned to the Authority's vision of policing in the public interest, by providing a sample which is representative of the demographic profile of Scotland; ensuring representation from diverse communities and those which could be considered seldom heard such as young people, or people from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities. The polling seeks views and levels of confidence in, and support for, policing in Scotland, both in general and related to specific areas of work.
- 2.3 The independent direct polling of Scottish citizens will provide the Authority with a better understanding of public trust and confidence and variation in this across the population, by analysing opinion from a broad representation of the demographic profile of the country. Providing these insights, and demonstrating that they have been taken into account in shaping policing practices and activities, also builds awareness and understanding of, and subsequently informs support for, operational policing activity.
- 2.4 This paper presents initial findings from the first round of polling carried out during July/August 2022 and covers views on policing, road safety and online safety and data privacy. The full report can be found as appendix A. It should be noted that 'Don't know' responses have been excluded from the statistics presented in the analysis.
- 2.5 In total there were 2,594 responses between 26th July and 1st August 2022. This is a sufficiently large enough sample to be representative of the Scottish adult population and allow a degree of disaggregation, which is central to upholding the validity of statistical observations and inferences.

3 Confidence in Policing

- 3.1 When asked about confidence in policing on a 0-10 scale (where 0 is no confidence at all and 10 is complete confidence) over a range of aspects,

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including keeping your area safe, tackling crime and preventing crime, the average scores across all aspects were greater than 5. This indicates that on average the public continue to hold broadly positive views on policing in Scotland.

- 3.2 On the question of confidence in the policing of their local area the average score given by respondents was 6.1 and with regard to the overall policing of Scotland the average score was 6.0.
- 3.3 When asked about the ability of the police to keep their area safe 36% of respondents reported a high level of confidence, while 24% were confident in the police's ability to tackle anti-social behaviour.
- 3.4 Confidence in the police in general, both at a local and national level, is lower among young people with 28% (local) and 29% (national) of those aged 16-34 reporting low confidence levels. Similar views emerge on trust, with 11% and 13% respectively, of those aged under 45 reporting they do not trust police in their local area or in Scotland 'at all'.
- 3.5 Around 12% of respondents in rural areas report low trust and confidence in policing, in contrast to around 25% in urban areas. Trust and confidence in the police were highest in the Highland region and lowest in the Glasgow region.
- 3.6 47% of respondents felt that the police in their local area have been doing a 'very good/somewhat good' job of policing in general while around 40% said their local force was doing a good job of keeping the area safe. However on both those measures less than 10% assessed their local service as doing a 'very good' job.
- 3.7 When asked about tackling anti-social behaviour 47% of respondents said their local police were doing a poor job, and 48% felt police performance was poor in bringing the community together.
- 3.8 Overall, male respondents, younger people, people of a lower social grade, and those living in more deprived areas were more likely to express the opinion that their local police service is performing unfavourably. People living in the least deprived areas of Scotland were more positive about policing (in relation to how good a job police in the local area are doing) than those in the most deprived areas.

4 Road Safety

- 4.1 Respondents to the survey were asked to assess, on a scale of 0-5, how large a threat they thought a series of behaviours related to road safety, such as driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, speeding or driving without a license or insurance, were to themselves and other road users, and to identify which they would most like police to crack down on.

- 4.2 From this respondents consider 'speeding, racing or aggressive driving' and 'driving under the influence of drink/alcohol' as both high-risk and high priority. Lower-risk and lower priority areas included 'driving an unsafe vehicle', 'driving without a license/insurance' and 'ignoring relevant signs and signals'. Older respondents perceived all scenarios as a larger threat than younger respondents.

5 Online Safety and Data Privacy

- 5.1 Respondents were asked which types of personal data they would be content for police to use to protect people from online harm and fraud, and on what conditions they would support this.
- 5.2 Respondents were more supportive of the police service making use of 'location data' (44%) and 'online identifiers such as an IP address' (42%) to protect people from online harm and fraud than who opposed it (37% and 39% respectively). However, the opposite was observed for 'social media', 'cookies, website and browsing history' and 'financial data and bank details' where more people opposed use than supported it. 48% of people were opposed to the use of cookies and browsing data and 62% to the use of financial or bank details.
- 5.3 Those with greater trust and confidence in the police were more supportive of using various forms of personal data, and those with more negative perceptions of the police were more resistant.
- 5.4 Those who supported the use of any form of personal data were asked what assurances they would like before this happened in practice. The majority, 80%, imposed at least one condition with 37% looking for assurance on both how data would be stored/used and that it would be fully anonymised.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 Overall, the headline views on policing remain positive. However, there are variations across a number of demographics that will be explored further, undertaking deep dive segmentation and intersectional analyses, where possible, for further reporting to committee. It should be noted that one of the benefits of conducting regular surveys is that the overall sample will grow during the next two years, permitting statistically-valid, intersectional analysis.
- 6.2 The results do highlight variance in views based on level of deprivation. This has been well-versed through the SCJS over the last fifteen years, and was observed in the Authority's polling results during the Covid-19 pandemic. Currently the Authority, with support from Police Scotland, are conducting a project which aims to understand and enhance confidence in policing in areas of deprivation. Polling analysis will feed into this work as it develops.

- 6.3 On a more long-term basis, it is anticipated that the Authority will be able to use this polling to monitor trends in views on policing and policing matters over time. This is particularly valuable as the SCJS 2021/22 underwent a change in methodology due to the Covid-19 pandemic and is also undergoing re-procurement where a permanent change to methodology is being considered. As such, it is unclear whether 2020/21 data and future iterations will be comparable with the existing SCJS time series. It is also planned that while the Authority's sample develops pool samples to gain further insights into underrepresented groups.
- 6.4 Data from polling will also be shared with operational policing colleagues and wider partners to ensure insights can be utilised and inform future research activity within the service.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

8 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no personnel implications associated with this report.

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no legal implications in this paper.

10 REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 It is critical that the policing system listens to the opinions of communities and promotes and enhances public confidence.

11 SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no social implications associated with this paper.

12 COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 12.1 There are no community implications associated with this paper.

13 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 There are no equality implications associated with this paper.

14 ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this paper.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to discuss the content of this report.



Public Perceptions of Policing in Scotland: Key Findings

Research report by The Diffley Partnership for the
Scottish Police Authority

August 2022



From many voices to smart choices

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Background and methodology

Diffley Partnership was commissioned to conduct regular polling of the Scottish adult (16+) public on policing in Scotland and related issues germane to the Scottish Police Authority (SPA). This report sets out the key findings of the first wave of polling, conducted in late July and early August 2022.

Methodology

The survey was drafted by Diffley Partnership on the basis of a steer by the SPA. The survey and its insights include both key indicators to be 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 26th July - 1st August, and received 2,594 responses. Responses were tabulated and analysed quantitatively, including significance testing for between-groups differences in opinion.

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 trust and confidence in the police and in their local police, before exploring thematic questions relating to road safety and data privacy.

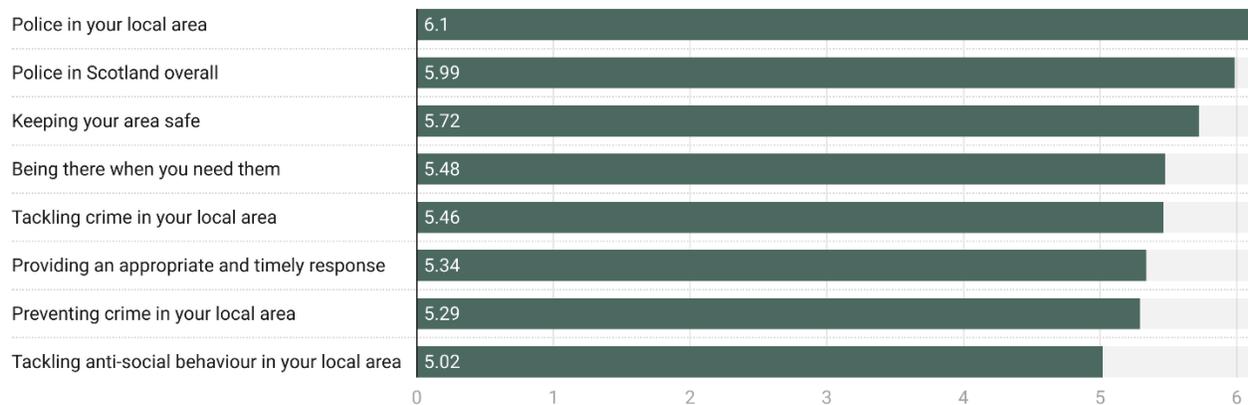
We explore each aspect in turn, with the aid of data visualisations, and comment on significant differences between demographic groups.

Trust & Confidence

People reported a greater level of confidence in the police (in general) and the police in their local area than on any particular aspect of policing.

Levels of Confidence in Policing

Average reported confidence in the police to do the following



How much confidence do you have in the police in the following regards? Please answer on a scale from 0-10, where 0 is 'No confidence at all' and 10 is 'complete confidence'

36% of people reported a high level of confidence in the police to keep their area safe, 32% in them tackling crime, and 30% in them being there when needed.¹ They fared marginally less well on preventing crime (where 29% reported high confidence in their abilities), and areas for apparent improvement include providing an appropriate, timely response (27%) and tackling anti-social behaviour (24%).

Confidence in the police in general – both nationally and locally – was markedly lower among young people, 8% of whom reported having ‘no confidence at all’ in their local police (compared to 4% of those above 55), and 28% and 29%, respectively, of young people reported low confidence in the police nationally and locally.

A similar picture emerges on questions of trust, with 11% and 13% respectively of those aged under 45 reporting that they do not trust the police in their area and in Scotland ‘at all’. Similarly, C2DE

¹ Responses on a scale from 0-10 classified as follows: 0-3 ('Low'), 4-6 ('Medium') and 7-10 ('High')

respondents and those in more deprived areas reported lower confidence and trust in the police than more affluent and professional groups.

The police also enjoy greater trust and confidence in rural areas than urban areas. Approximately a quarter of those in urban areas reported low trust and confidence in the police (both locally and nationally), compared to 12% in remote rural areas reporting both low confidence and trust in their local police.

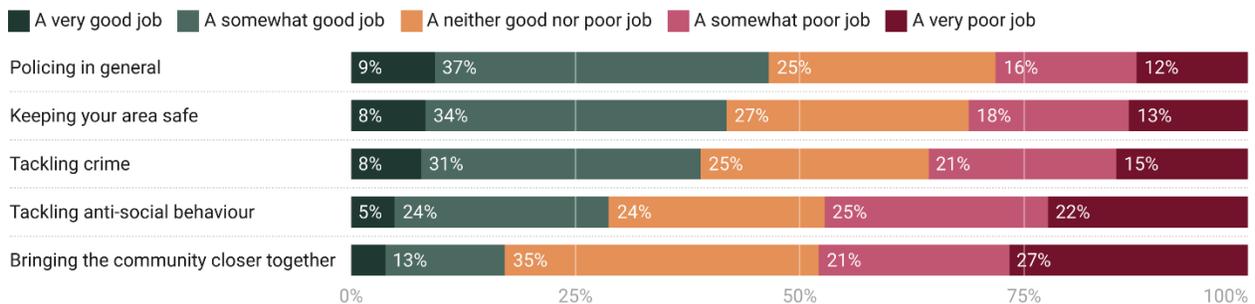
Correspondingly, trust and confidence in the police were both highest in in the Highlands and Islands parliamentary region, and lowest in Glasgow.

Performance

Just under half (47%) of respondents expressing an opinion believe that the police in their local area are doing a good job of policing in general, and two in five said their local force was doing a good job of keeping the area safe.

Performance of Local Police

Proportions of respondents reporting a good and poor performance on the following



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

However, on both items, less than one in ten said they were doing a 'very good' job. On tackling crime, 39% said they were doing a good job, against 36% saying a poor job, a margin of just three points.

Two items out of five were in net negative territory, with 47% of people saying their local police were doing a poor job of tackling anti-social behaviour, 18 points higher than the proportion saying they were doing a good job. Local services performed worst with regards to bringing the community together, with 48% saying their performance in this regard was poor, against only 17% reporting a good job.

With regards to 'policing in general', male respondents, younger people, people of a lower social grade, and those living in more deprived areas were more likely to report to review their local service's performance unfavourably.

Geographically, respondents in the Highlands and Islands were most positive (in net terms) about their local service's performance, followed by Lothian and North East Scotland. Glasgow was the

only parliamentary region where a plurality said their local service was doing a poor job, leading those reporting a good job by nine percentage points.

There is minimal discrepancy between rural and urban areas overall, though this increases when disaggregated further. In remote rural areas, remote small towns, and accessible small towns, the proportion reporting a good job was between 23 and 29 points higher than those reporting a poor job. In other classifications the margin was smaller, at between 13–17 points.

Regardless of deprivation quintile, a plurality reported a good job, though among respondents in the least deprived fifth of neighbourhoods, the margin was twice that of those in the most deprived.

Performance by Parliamentary Region

Net proportion reporting a good performance minus those reporting a poor performance on 'Policing in general' in each parliamentary region



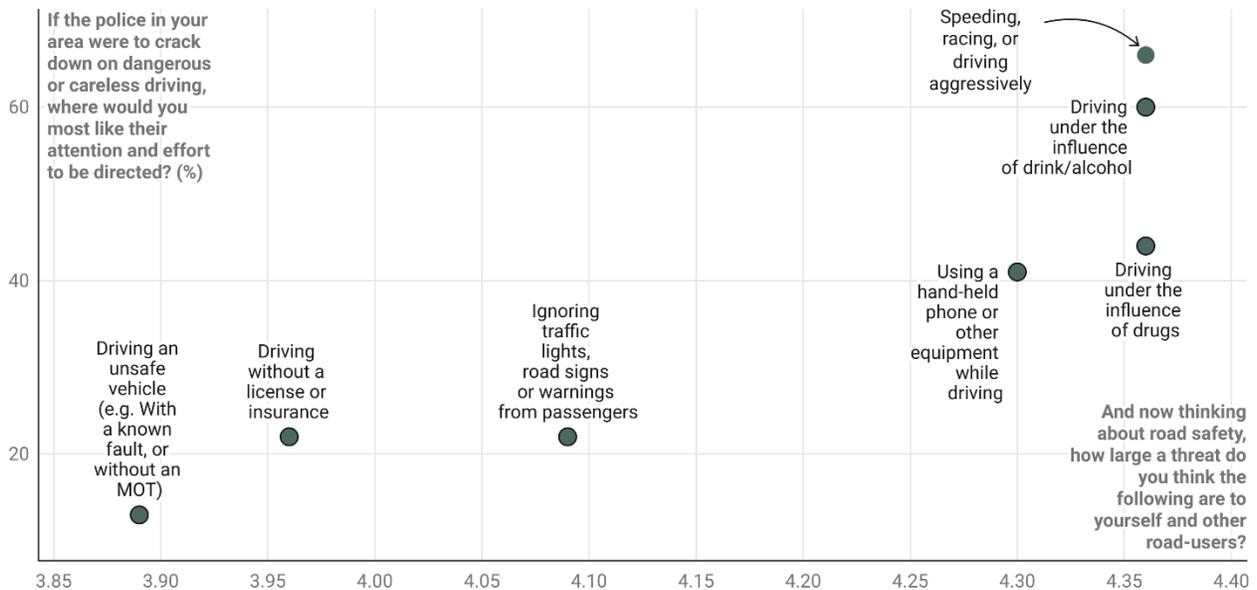
How good or poor a job do you think the police in your local area are doing at the moment in the following regards?

Road Safety

Respondents to the survey were asked to assess (on a scale from zero to five) how large a threat they thought a series of road safety hazards were to themselves and other road-users, and to identify which three hazards they would most like the police to crack down on. The results of both questions are summarised in the table below. Those items in the upper right-hand corner – namely, speeding, racing and aggressive driving, and driving under the influence of drink/alcohol – are seen to be both high-risk and high priorities.

Road Safety Threats and Priorities

Average perceived threat of and proportion prioritising action on each road safety risk



Conversely, those in the lower-left hand corner are seen as smaller threats and are less of a priority for the public. These include driving an unsafe vehicle, driving without a license/insurance, and ignoring relevant signs and signals. It should be noted, however, that all items fall, on average, within a relatively narrow band in terms of the threat that they represent.

The findings are broadly consistent across demographic groups, though older people perceived all items as a greater threat than their younger counterparts.

Online Safety & Data Privacy

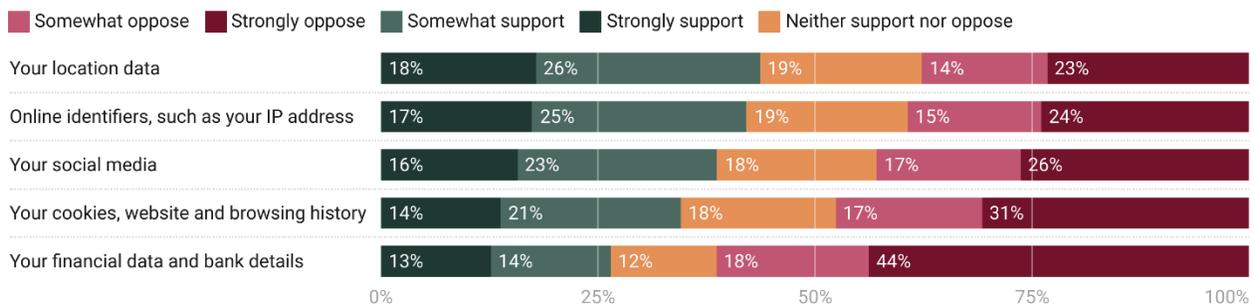
Respondents were asked which types of personal data they would be content for the police to use to protect people from online harm and fraud, and on what conditions they would support this.

For two forms of personal data – namely, location data and online identifiers – a plurality of respondents expressing an opinion supported their use to protect against fraud and online harm. However, the margin of this net support was small, leading opposition by only between three and six percentage points.

Conversely, the other three forms of data saw net opposition, and by larger margins: 48% of people opposed the use of their cookies and browsing data, and an outright majority opposed the use of their financial data, 35 percentage points ahead of the proportion expressing support.

Use of Personal Data

Proportions supporting and opposing the use of each form of (personal) data to protect against online harm and fraud



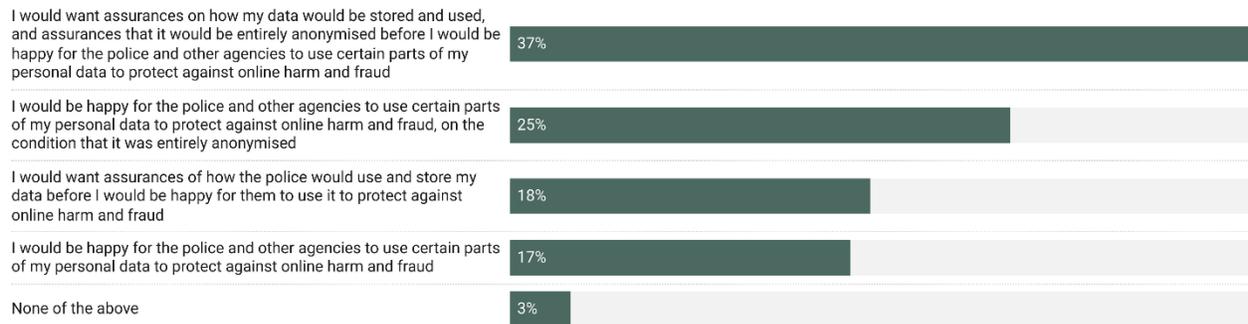
Considering the balance between protection from harm and the right to privacy, to what extent would you support the police and other agencies using the following data to try to protect you from harm and fraud when online?

Male and younger respondents were more likely to oppose each measure – and to do so strongly – while female respondents and older people were more likely to support each one. Perhaps unsurprisingly, people with greater trust and confidence in the police were more supportive of using various forms of personal data, and those with more negative perceptions of the police were more resistant.

Those who supported the use of any form of personal data in some measure were then asked what assurances they would like before this happened in practice. The overwhelming majority (80%) imposed at least one condition on their support, and a plurality (37%) wanted assurances both of how their data would be stored/used, and that it would be entirely anonymised.

Conditions for supporting the use of personal data

Proportions of respondents stipulating each condition in order to support the use of their personal data



And for those types of data that you said you would support the police using to tackle fraud, which of the following statements comes closest to your views?

Female respondents (43%) and all age brackets other than 16–34 (39–47%) were more likely to impose both of the above conditions, while male and younger respondents were primarily concerned with anonymisation.



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