



Meeting	Policing Performance Committee
Date	12 March 2024
Location	MS Teams
Title of Paper	Public Polling
Presented By	Amanda Coulthard, SPA Head of Strategy and Performance
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Yes – Diffley Partnership Report

PURPOSE

This paper provides the findings from the latest round of public polling, carried out during January 2024 by the Diffley Partnership on behalf of the Authority.

The paper also describes the next steps regarding polling and a move to incorporate qualitative research into the analytic approach in 2024-25.

The full report from the Diffley Partnership is provided in Appendix A.

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 During the period 2020 -2022 the Authority undertook a series of standalone public polling exercises, focused on gathering independent and representative data for the Scottish adult population 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, giving useful trend data over the period. Following this, surveys were carried out to gather views on use of new and emerging technology in policing and the policing of COP26.
- 1.2 Building on the insights gained through previous polling, the Authority subsequently commissioned regular independent polling of a representative sample of the Scottish public, with a view to enhancing its understanding of public trust and 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. The polling seeks views and levels of trust and confidence in, and support for, policing in Scotland, both in general and related to specific areas of work.

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.
- 2.2 Independent polling of the Scottish public provides 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.
- 2.3 This paper presents findings from polling carried out at the end of January 2024. This latest polling includes our core questions on the public's trust and confidence in policing, and looks at how the position currently stands in comparison to previous points in time. Questions have also been asked about the public's trust and confidence in other institutions in Scotland, as well as whether people have shifted their view over time.

- 2.4 In total there were 2,587 responses between 23rd-26th January 2024. This is a sufficiently large enough sample to be representative of the adult population in Scotland and allow a degree of disaggregation, which is central to upholding the validity of statistical observations and inferences. Data tables are also weighted to make them representative of gender and age.
- 2.5 The full report, produced by the Diffley Partnership on behalf of the Authority, can be found as Appendix A.

3. Trust and Confidence in Policing

- 3.1 In general terms, the pattern of both confidence and trust in the police in Scotland has continued to fall from levels reported previously, however most people with a view in Scotland are positive, or at least not negative, about whether policing in general is doing a good job (74% of people), with trust strongest for local policing (a rating of 5.81 out of 10).
- 3.2. Confidence in the police to maintain public safety and tackle crime continues to be much higher than confidence in tackling antisocial behaviour or in building stronger, more cohesive communities. The SPA-Police Scotland Community Confidence Action Research Project has gathered a significant amount evidence from four communities in Scotland to confirm this position that concern about how antisocial is being tackled in communities affects trust and confidence.
- 3.3. As has been reported previously to the Committee, there is disparity in confidence and trust within the overall results by deprivation, gender, region of Scotland, occupational grouping and health. As a summary of the key variations:
- males have lower trust and confidence
 - Working class people have lower trust and confidence
 - trust and confidence is lower in deprived communities
 - people with a limiting health condition have lower trust
 - people in urban areas, particularly in Glasgow, have lower confidence and trust
- 3.4. The report provided by the Diffley Partnership (Appendix A) expands on these main findings and explores variations by location and other socio-economic and demographic factors.

4. Trust and Confidence in Public Institutions

- 4.1 For this particular round of public polling, and in response to a request from the Committee, questions have been asked to establish the relative level of trust and confidence in policing compared with other public institutions.
- 4.2 Trust and confidence is higher for the two other main emergency services, namely the Fire and Rescue Service and the Ambulance Service, although we must recognise that the remit of the police service extends considerably beyond acting as an emergency service.
- 4.3 There is a greater similarity between trust and confidence in the police service and in the NHS, although the level is lower for the police service.
- 4.4 In relation to local and national government, confidence and trust in the police is significantly higher. Additionally, falls in confidence and trust in the police service in the last six months are less pronounced than the falls affecting local councils and the Scottish Government.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. Authority staff are working with the Diffley Partnership to analyse a pooled dataset of four full waves of polling data. In January 2024 additional questions relating to personal characteristics were asked (ethnicity, sexual orientation, and health), and these data will be analysed to inform the deeper dive of the pooled dataset. This work will be presented to the Committee in June 2024.
- 5.2 The Authority and Diffley Partnership will also be running a series of qualitative focus groups in 2024-25, with participants recruited on the basis of having characteristics of interest identified through the deep dive exercise.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. There are no direct financial implications in this report.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. There are no direct personnel implications in this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1. There are no direct legal implications in this report.

9. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are reputational implications in this report. It is critical that the policing system listens to the opinions of communities in Scotland, gathering this information in an independent and representative way, to promote and enhance public confidence in policing.

10. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1. There are no direct social implications in this report.

11. COMMUNITY IMPACT

11.1. There are no direct community implications in this report.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1. There are no direct equalities implications in this report.

13. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

13.1. There are no direct environment implications in this report.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Members are invited to discuss the contents of this report and the accompanying Appendix.



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.

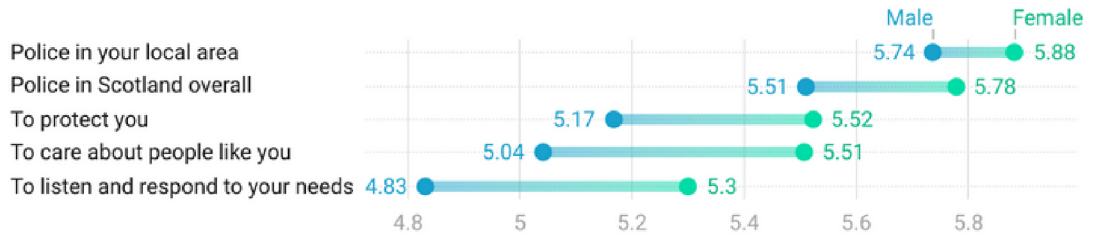
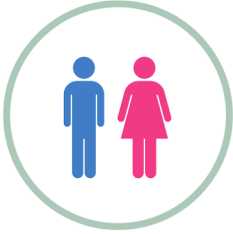
43%

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

Variations in Trust: Demographics

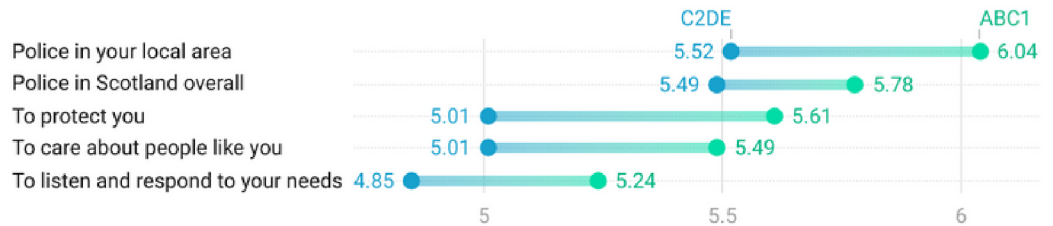
Trust in the police varies greatly depending on demographic factors.

01. Gender



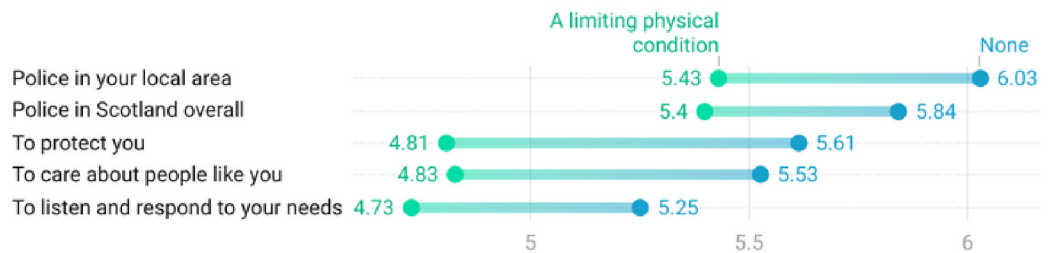
Males are significantly more likely to have less trust in police for all aspects.

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.

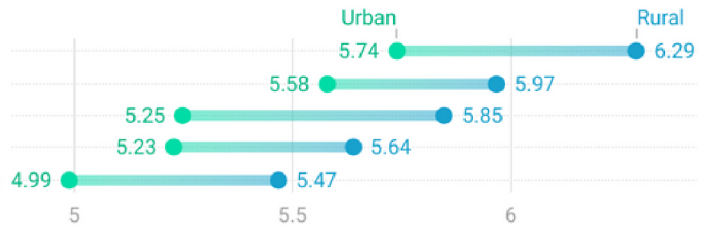
Variations in Trust: Geographics

Trust in the police also varies depending on geographic factors.

01. Urban vs Rural



Police in your local area
 Police in Scotland overall
 To protect you
 To care about people like you
 To listen and respond to your needs

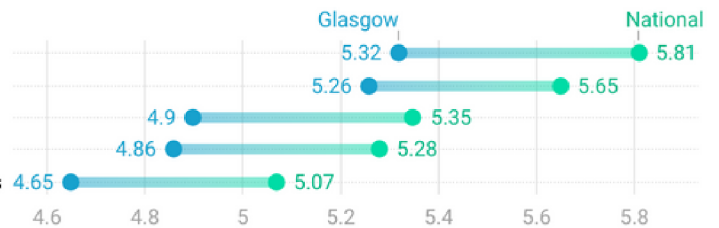


People in urban areas are more likely to have less trust in the police for all factors than those from rural areas. Those in rural areas are particularly trusting in their local police, with an average 6.29 out of 10.

02. Parliamentary Area



Police in your local area
 Police in Scotland overall
 To protect you
 To care about people like you
 To listen and respond to your needs



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



Police in your local area
 Police in Scotland overall
 To protect you
 To care about people like you
 To listen and respond to your needs



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).

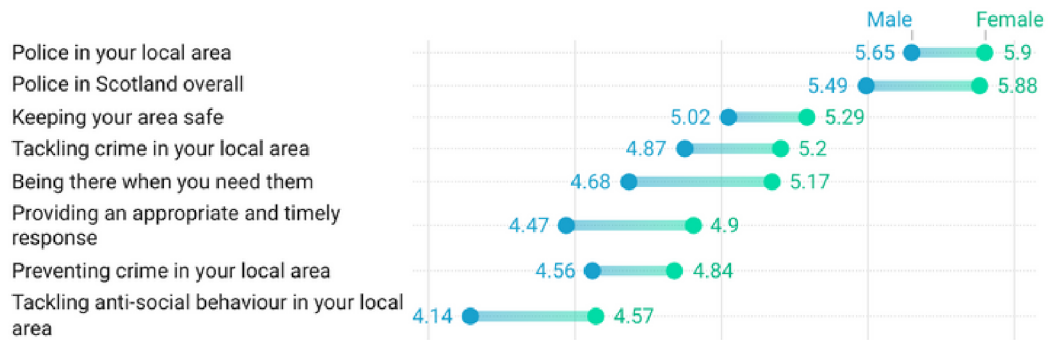
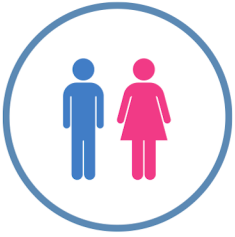
42%

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

Variations in Confidence: Demographics

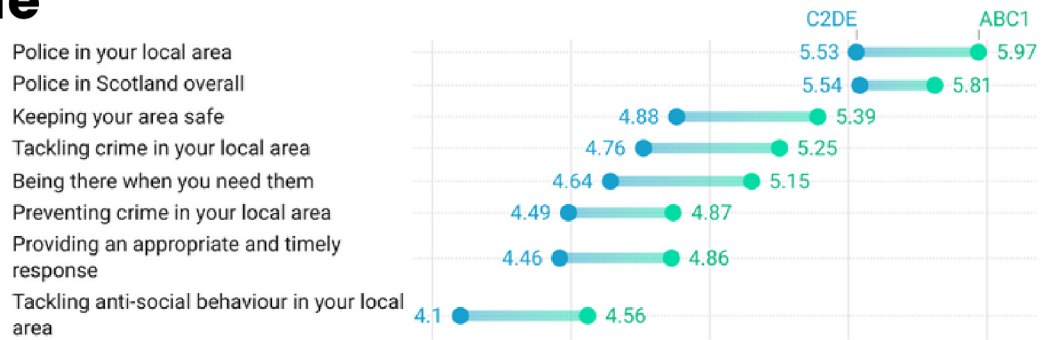
Levels of confidence in police vary significantly when looking at demographic factors

01. Gender



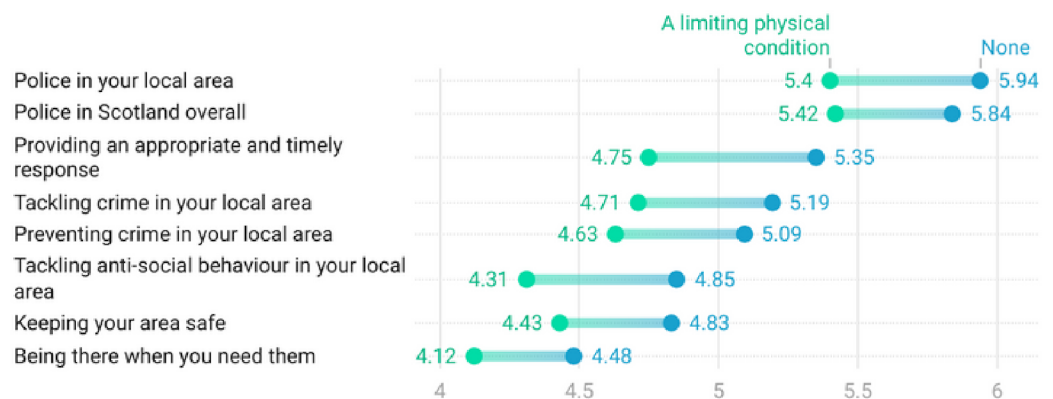
Males are significantly more likely to have less confidence in police for all aspects.

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.

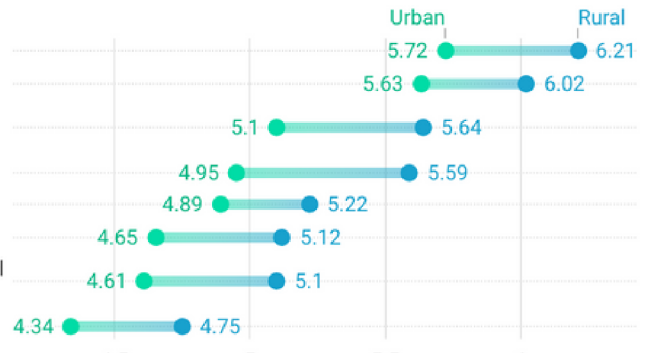
Variations in Confidence: Geographics

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

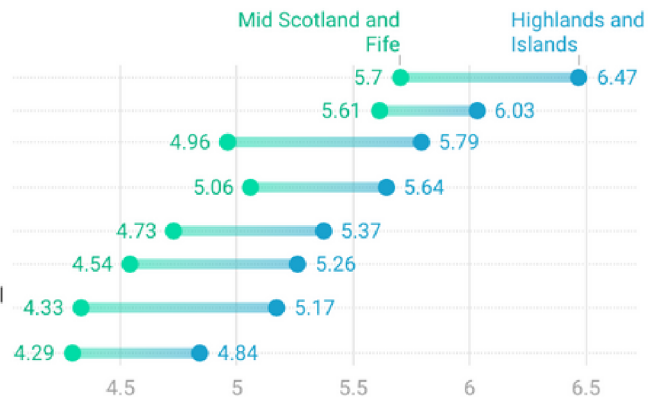


People in rural areas have more confidence in the police across the range of aspects. Those in urban areas are more likely to have less confidence than confidence in the police for aspects such as tackling anti-social behaviour in the local are.

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

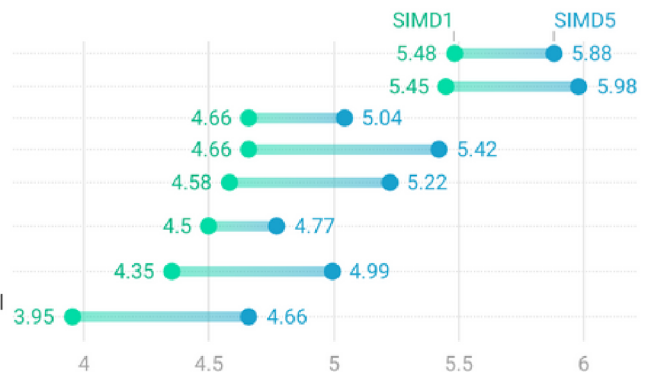


People in the Highlands and Islands region have the most confidence in the police, while those in the Mid Scotland and Fife region have the least confidence in police across a range of aspects.

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).

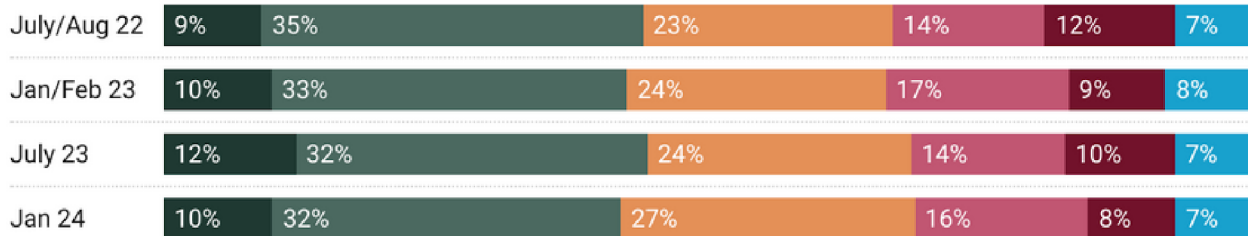
Performance of Local Police

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

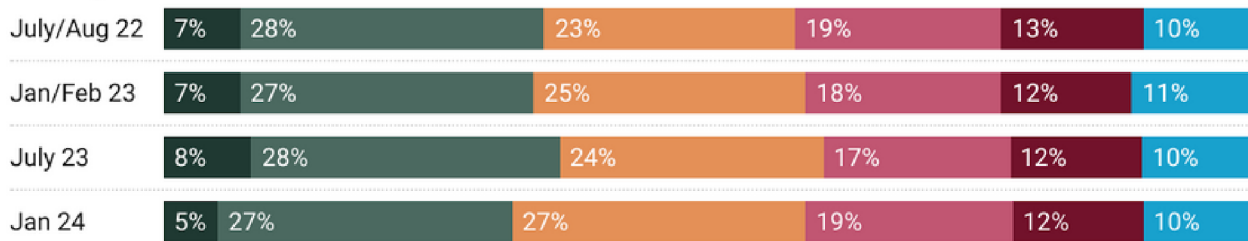
How good or poor a job do you think the police in your local area are doing at the moment in the following regards?

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

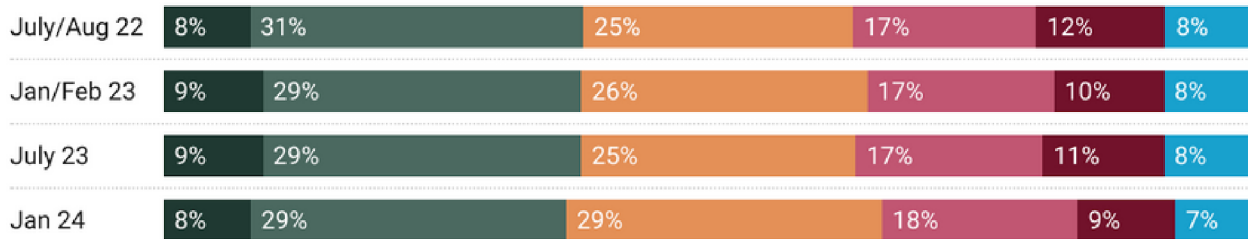
Policing in general



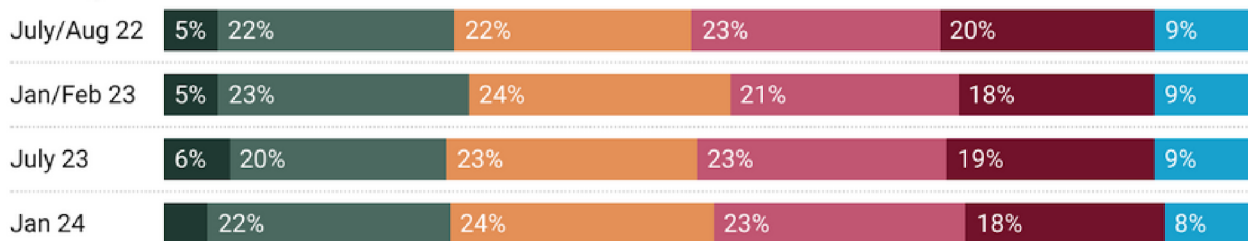
Tackling crime



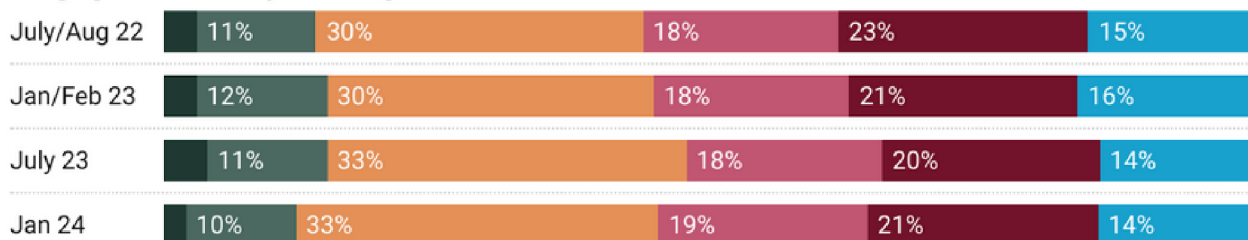
Keeping your area safe



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

8.11

The Ambulance Service

7.5

The NHS

6.89

Police in Scotland overall

5.65

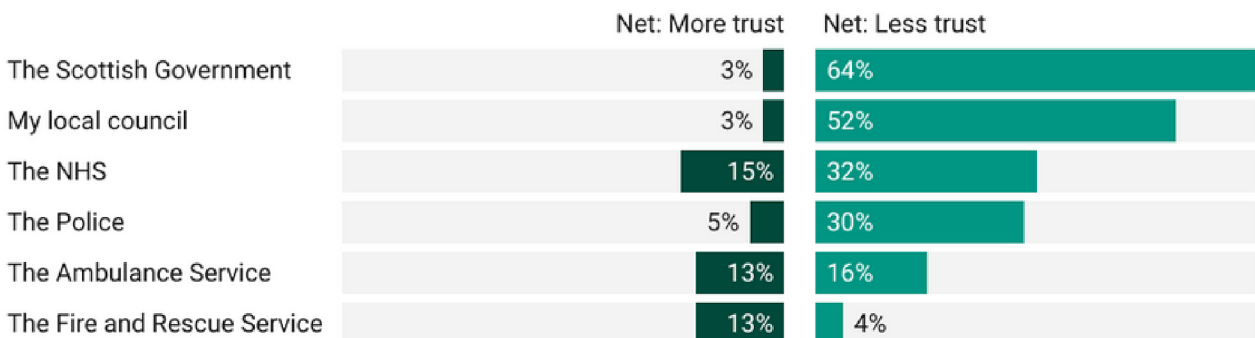
My local council

3.81

The Scottish Government

3.67

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.

