

Fact Sheet 6

PUBLIC CONFIDENCE SURVEY – COVID-19

How did we approach our public confidence survey?

In April 2020, the Authority commissioned Mark Diffley Consultancy Ltd. to run a series of surveys via the *ScotPulse* panel survey. Questions focused on public confidence and policing during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Four waves were conducted between April 2020 and February 2021. Five areas were consistently explored across three or more Waves. They related to:

- How good a job police in the local area were doing
- Views on levels of police presence in respondents' local areas
- Confidence in police responding to and dealing with incidents.
- Views on how police are handling the Covid-19 lockdown
- Views on the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices for Covid-19 breaches

The first three areas replicated questions from the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2019/20 (SCJS)¹, with the first area also replicated in the Scottish Victimisation Telephone Survey 2020.²

While not directly comparable due to different survey methods, this

Purpose

The principle of “policing in the public interest” forms a core part 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 based on delivering a set of strategic outcomes.

This series of public focused and user-friendly factsheets has been developed to provide insight into what the people of Scotland are saying about their police service. For further reading, the Scottish Police Authority have also published a range of associated material that will be signposted at the end of this document.

¹ Scottish Government. (2021). [Scottish Crime and Justice Survey 2019/20: Main Findings.](#)

² Scottish Government. (2021). [Scottish Victimisation Telephone Survey 2020: Main Findings.](#)

provides a broad indication about the reliability of the findings.

Why conduct public confidence surveying?

The Authority is the governance and oversight body for policing in Scotland. During the Covid-19 pandemic, independent public confidence surveying has been vital in informing oversight of Police Scotland at a time where policing powers and demands on policing have been significantly increased.

Main Findings

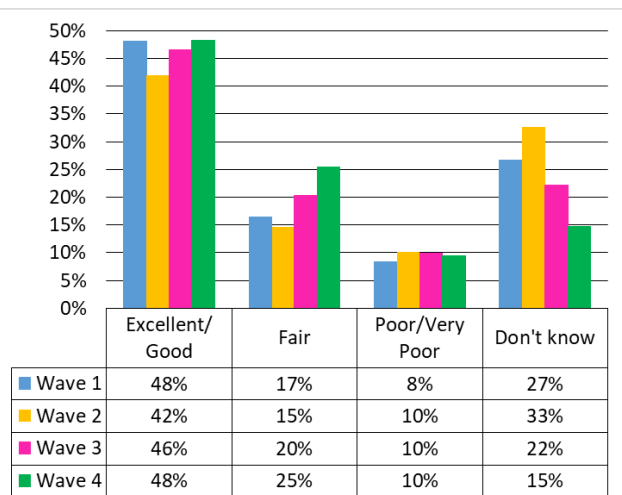
Views on police performance

The majority of respondents felt police in their local area were doing an 'Excellent/Good' job. (see Figure 1). These levels are slightly lower than the SCJS 2019/20 (55%) and the SVTS 2020 (60%).

It is notable that from Wave 2 positive views on policing increased from 42% to 48% in Wave 4. Negative views stagnated from Wave 2 onwards at 10% and 'Don't know' levels decreased from 33% to 15% in Wave 4.

It is possible that the high proportion of 'Don't know' responses in Wave 2 are a manifestation of sustained shielding, self-isolation and limited social interaction and leaving of the home.

Figure 1: Police in Local Area

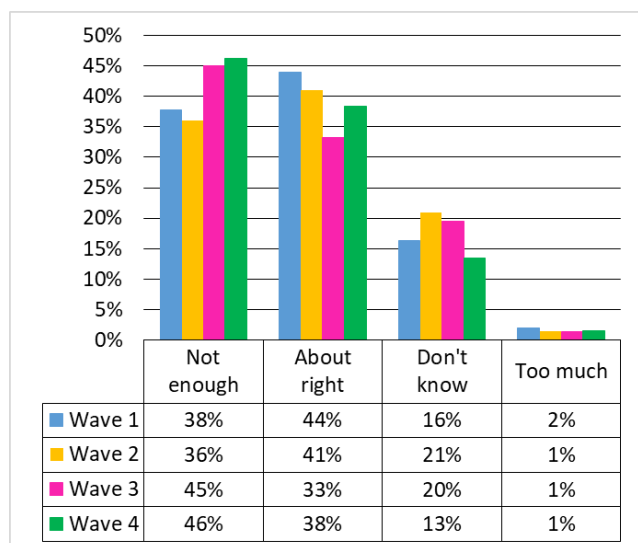


Views on police presence

In Waves 1 and 2, the majority of respondents felt police presence levels were 'About right', changing to 'Not enough' in Waves 3 and 4 (see Figure 2).

The proportion of 'Not enough' responses steadily increased from 36% in Wave 2 to 46% in Wave 4. 'About right' decreased from 44% to 33% between Waves 1 and 3, before rising in Wave 4 to 38%.

Figure 2: Police Presence Local Area (%)



Views on police handling of lockdown

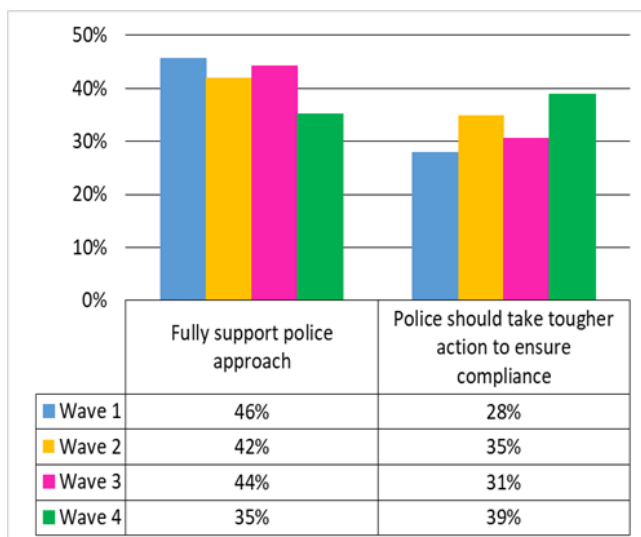
Within Waves 1 to 3, the majority of respondents fully supported the approach taken by the police in relation to lockdown, ranging between 42% to 46%.

In Wave 4, this changed with the majority feeling the police should take tougher action to ensure public compliance (39%) (see Figure 3).

Those who supported the approach of the police but felt they went too far sometimes ranged between 8% and 17%.

Between 1% and 4% felt the approach was too heavy handed, and 2% to 7% felt the police should have no role in enforcing the Covid-19 lockdown.

Figure 3: Police Handling Lockdown (%)



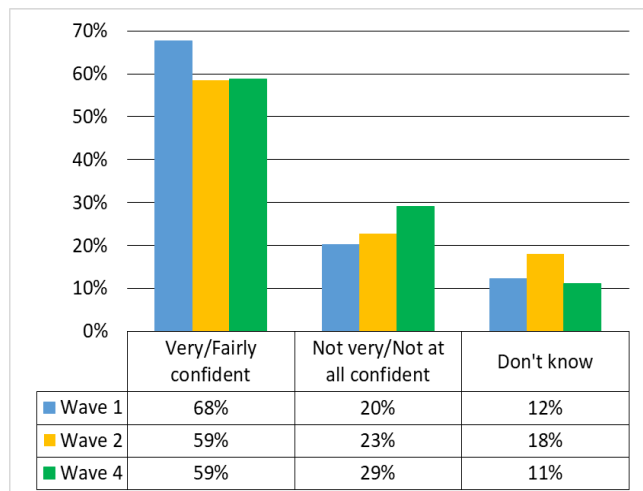
Confidence in policing – Responding quickly

Across the Waves, the majority of respondents have been 'Very/Fairly confident' in the ability of the police to respond quickly (see Figure 4).

The proportion has decreased over the Waves from 68% in Wave 1 to 59% in Waves 2 and 4. However, this remains a similar level to SCJS 2019/20 (64%).

'Not very/Not at all confident' responses have increased from 20% in Wave 1 to 29% in Wave 4.

Figure 4: Responding Quickly (%)



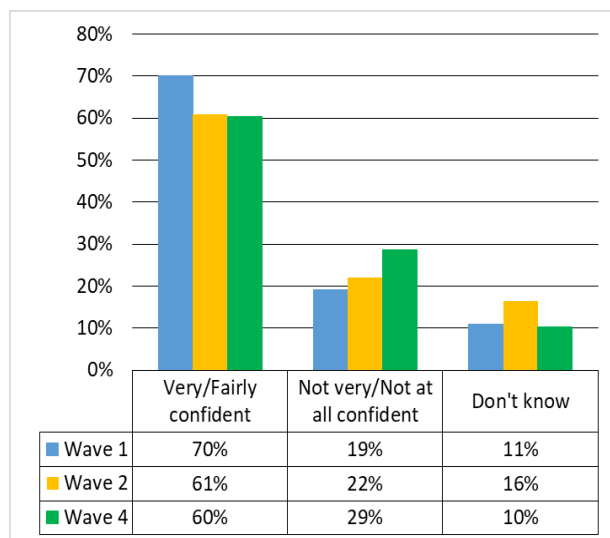
Confidence in policing – Dealing with incidents

The majority of respondents across the Waves felt 'Very/Fairly confident' in the ability of police to deal with incidents as they occurred (see Figure 5).

As with 'Responding Quickly', the proportion has decreased over the Waves from 70% in Wave 1 to 60% in Wave 4. However, again this is similar to levels in SCJS 2019/20 (64%).

At the same time, 'Not very/Not at all confident' increased from 19% to 29%.

Figure 5: Dealing with Incidents (%)



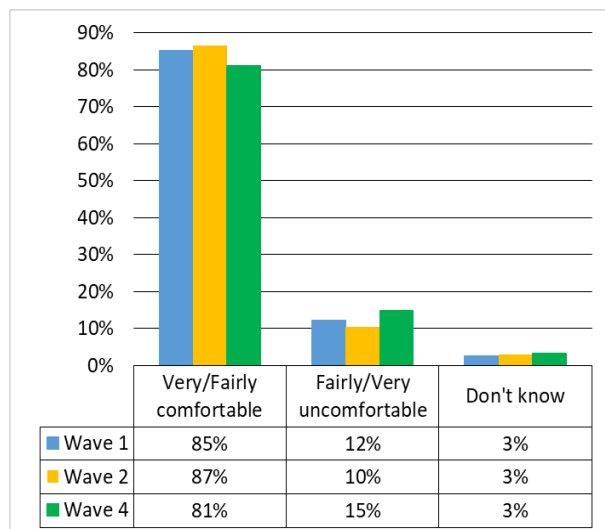
Views on issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices

Across the Waves, the majority of respondents were 'Very/Fairly comfortable' with police issuing Fixed Penalty Notices to people breaching lockdown rules in response to Covid-19 (see Figure 6).

Levels have fluctuated slightly, increasing from 85% in Wave 1 to 87% in Wave 2 and decreasing to 81% in Wave 4.

At the same time, levels of those who were 'Fairly/Very uncomfortable' have remained low, decreasing from 12% in Wave 1 to 10% in Wave 2, and increasing to 15% in Wave 4.

Figure 6: Fixed Penalty Notice (%)



Looking Forward

The Authority will continue to analyse the data from the four Waves and produce briefings, with a particular focus on demographic (e.g. age, gender etc.) and geographic analysis.

Additional areas of analysis will also be identified through collaboration with the Police Scotland Public Confidence Governance Board and the Independent Advisory Group.

Further Reading

[Oversight of policing Covid-19 in Scotland.](#)

Keeping up to date

To keep up to date with our work, please keep an eye on the Scottish Police Authority's website where you can find papers and watch livestream committee discussions, and follow us on Twitter:

@ScotPolAuth @policescotland

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