



Meeting	Policing Performance Committee
Date	16 September 2025
Location	Video Conference
Title of Paper	Public Polling Insights
Presented By	Amanda Coulthard, Head of Strategy & Performance, SPA
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Yes - Appendix 1 – Public Perceptions of Policing in Scotland (August 2025)

PURPOSE

This paper provides the Committee with highlights and insights arising from routine public polling conducted in August 2025.

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 Earlier in 2025 the Authority ran a competitive tendering exercise to procure future public polling activity 2025-28. In the early summer the Authority re-appointed The Diffley Partnership¹ as the preferred supplier, who will be carrying out public polling on behalf of the Authority, aligned to the Authority's mission of overseeing Scottish policing in the public interest.
- 1.2 The Authority's routine public polling, which has shifted from being conducted six-monthly to quarterly, continues to have a focus on trust and confidence in the police, and views on police performance using a set of streamlined core questions. Topical/thematic questions and/or focus groups can also be added on an *ad hoc* basis as part of the terms within the new contract.
- 1.3 The polling exercises undertaken by the Diffley Partnership form part of their ongoing *Understanding Scotland*² series of analytical publications, and use the established *ScotPulse*³ national polling panel to gather independent, non-self-selecting and representative data for the Scottish adult population. The Diffley Partnership applies weighting in their analysis, on age and sex, to make the insights more representative of Scotland's adult population structure.
- 1.4 The approach being taken by the Authority to establish the public's views on policing in Scotland contributes to the Authority's vision of evidence-based policing in the public interest, by providing a large sample which is as representative as possible of the diverse profile of the Scottish population.
- 1.4 This paper summarises:
 - (1) Public Polling Results from August 2025 – the first sweep of regular quarterly polling work, as per the new contract with the Diffley Partnership.
 - (2) Related research activity in progress and forthcoming, namely a focus on community cohesion, and a future focus on biometrics and policing.

¹ [Diffley Partnership](#)

² [Understanding Scotland \(Diffley Partnership\)](#)

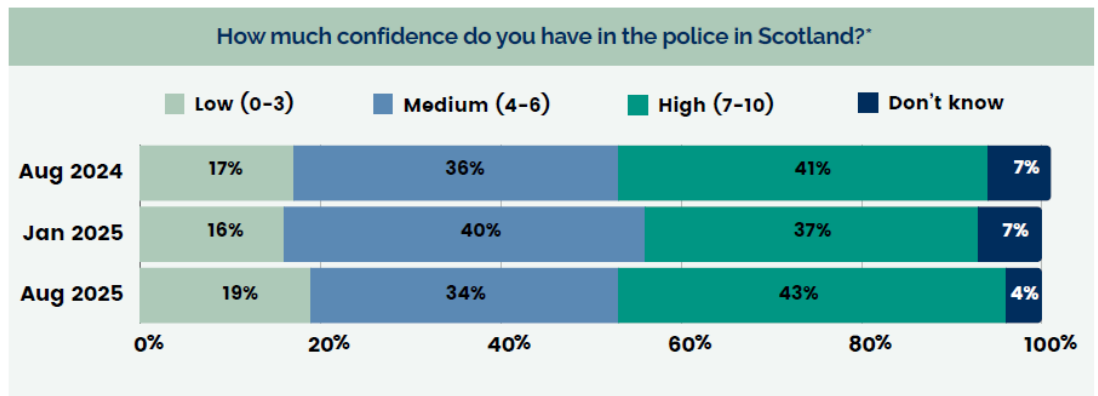
³ [ScotPulse | Scotland's largest opinion panel](#)

A more detailed report for the August 2025 polling results has been compiled by the Diffley Partnership and is attached as an Appendix to this paper. Additionally, the Diffley Partnership has prepared a two-page infographic summary of the main findings, which will be published in a forthcoming Insights piece on the Authority's website.

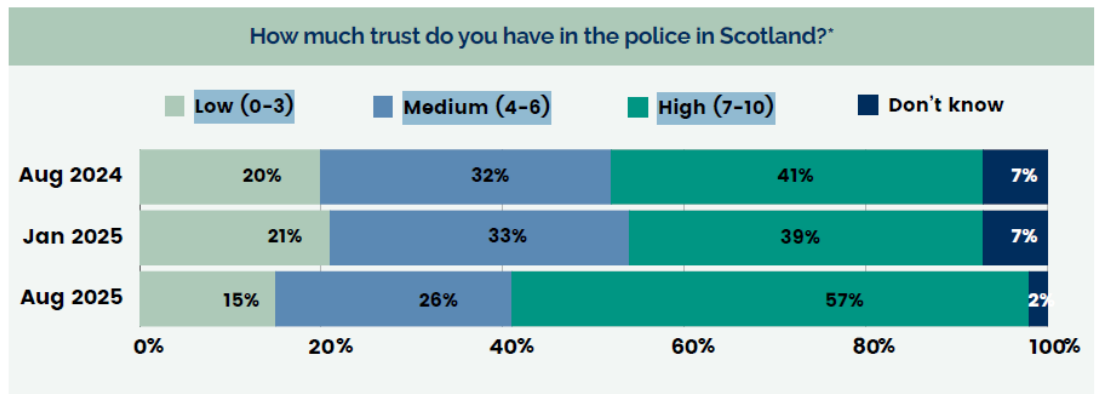
2. Key Highlights for August 2025

- 2.1 43% of respondents report having a high level of confidence in policing in Scotland, up from 37% in January 2025. A further 34% of respondents report a medium level of confidence in policing.
- 2.2 Levels of trust in the police have also risen between January 2025 and August 2025, with 57% of respondents reporting a high level of trust in the police, up from 39%.


5.7
Average
confidence in
the police,
from 0-10




6.4
Average
trust in the
police, from
0-10



- 2.3 We believe that these increases in trust and confidence may be partly because clear definitions about what the Authority means by trust and confidence are now included as part of the questions being asked of respondents. This belief is strengthened by looking at the

size of the 'don't know' response component to the two questions - where we can see there has been a notable reduction.

3. Further Detail on Methodology and Findings

- 3.1 This report (with detail in **Appendix 1**) provides the Authority with the results of public polling carried out in early August 2025 as part of the routine quarterly polling series. The report also contains key insights and compares the latest polling results with previous waves of polling, conducted using the previous contract. This is the first sweep of polling under the new contract with the Diffley Partnership.
- 3.2 The three core questions on trust, confidence and policing performance have been streamlined, based on how the questions were being responded to over the period 2022-25. Notably, the two core questions on trust and confidence now include a definition of what the Authority means by the terms trust and confidence, with question-wording revised slightly. We believe that this has helped to reduce the proportion of people answering the two questions with "Don't Know" responses, however it does mean that care must be taken when making comparisons with responses given in previous waves of polling i.e. those which pre-date August 2025.
- 3.3 The latest polling activity ran between 1st and 5th August, with 2,271 people aged 16 or more completing the survey via the *ScotPulse* platform. The sample has been weighted during analysis to ensure representativeness with the structure of the Scottish population by age and gender.
- 3.4 The main characteristics of the unweighted sample are as follows:
- 54% of respondents are female, 46% male
 - 14% of respondents are aged 16-34, 16% 35-44, 16% 45-54, 25% 55-64 and 29% 65+
 - 57% of respondents are from Social Grades ABC1, 43% from Social Grades C2DE⁴
 - 15% of respondents live in areas classed as SIMD 1 (most deprived quintile). 17% in SIMD 2, 22% in SIMD 3, 23% in SIMD 4, and 22% in SIMD 5 (least deprived quintile).

⁴ These social gradings are used extensively in market research contexts, having been developed by the National Readership Survey [Social Grade | National Readership Survey](#)

- 80% of respondents live in areas classed as urban, 19% in areas classed as rural
- In terms of regional representation, 16% of respondents live in North East Scotland, 14% in Central Scotland, 13% in Lothian, 12% in West Scotland, Mid-Scotland and Fife, and South Scotland, and 11% in Glasgow and Highlands and Islands.

3.5 The following key insights, using weighted data, are expanded upon within Diffley's main report, which includes insights based on demographic, social and geographic variances (**see Appendix 1**):

Confidence in the Police

- 3.6 Overall levels of confidence in the police remain largely unchanged in August 2025 compared with January 2025, scoring 5.7 out of 10. 43% of respondents report high confidence in the police (up from 37% in January, and up from 41% in August 2024). Less than one-fifth of respondents report having low confidence in the police.
- 3.7 The question used in August 2025 now includes a definition of what the Authority means by confidence, which we believe is responsible for reducing the number of 'Don't Know' responses (which have fallen to 4%, down from 7% in January 2025 and August 2024).
- 3.8 The question on confidence is now posed as:

How much **confidence** do you have in the police in Scotland?

By confidence, we mean how strongly you believe that Scotland's police officers will be **capable** and **effective** if you called them, for example, to investigate a crime, to tackle a crime in your area, or to respond to your 999/101 call.

Please answer on a scale of 0-10, where 0 is 'No confidence at all' and 10 is 'Complete confidence',

SCALE: 0-10, Don't Know, Not Applicable

Trust in the Police

- 3.9 Trust in the police also remains strong (6.4 out of 10 overall) and has risen, with 83% of respondents having high or medium trust in the police in Scotland (compared with 72% of respondents in January 2024 and 73% in August 2024).
- 3.10 We believe that the inclusion of a definition of what the Authority means by trust in the police has helped to reduce the number of “don’t know” responses considerably. Only 2% of respondents say they ‘don’t know’ in August 2025, down from 7% in January 2025 and August 2024.
- 3.11 The question on trust is now posed as:

How much **trust** do you have in the police in Scotland?
By trust, we mean how strongly you believe that Scotland’s police officers will treat you **professionally, respectfully** and **fairly** if you were to have contact with them.

Please answer on a scale of 0-10, where 0 is ‘No trust at all’ and 10 is ‘Complete trust’.

SCALE: 0-10, Don’t Know, Not Applicable

Views on Police Performance

- 3.12 Regarding aspects of police performance, 35% of respondents rate the police as doing a good job at keeping their local community safe. Around one-third of respondents also said that the police are doing a good job when it comes to responding appropriately to 999/101 calls, protecting vulnerable people, and investigating crimes (although the proportion of ‘Don’t Know’ responses ranges from 17% to 27%, which is to be expected as many people will not feel able to express a view on police performance unless they have experienced or witnessed policing services in a direct way).
- 3.13 A large proportion of respondents (48%) rate the police as performing poorly at reducing crime and antisocial behaviour, which is in contrast with the views expressed on keeping their local community safe. Authority staff and the Diffley Partnership will monitor this closely in coming waves of polling with a view to

conducting a deeper dive on aggregated datasets to examine the characteristics of respondents who rate police performance differently on these two similar aspects of policing.

- 3.14 The question being used to monitor the public's view on police performance has been streamlined compared with previous waves of polling, and now reads as:

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

RANDOMISE

- Reducing crime and antisocial behaviour
- Keeping your local community safe
- Investigating and solving crimes
- Responding appropriately to 999/101 calls
- Protecting and supporting vulnerable people

SCALE: 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

4. Related Research Activity and Future Plans

- 4.1. Plans are in place to build on previous research on the theme of antisocial behaviour by examining the related theme of community cohesion in more depth. The Diffley Partnership is running a series of focus group sessions in September 2025 on the theme of community cohesion and its relationship with community safety and the role played by external agencies. The Authority also intends to ask thematic questions in next quarterly wave of polling (November 2025) polling on community cohesion and will work with Police Scotland and others to formulate an appropriate question set.
- 4.2. Looking further ahead, the Authority will look to use February 2026's polling to explore the theme of biometrics in policing, building on polling carried out earlier in 2025 on the same theme. This will allow trends in public support for biometrics and other emerging technologies in policing to be tracked with greater confidence.

- 4.3. Finally, staff at the Authority are developing a mechanism for capturing stakeholder and public suggestions on question topics and questions and intend to launch an online hub early in 2026.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

8. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. There are no direct reputational implications in this report, however the act of conducting regular independent polling on public interest aspects of policing, and publishing the results, enhances the Authority's reputational aim of ensuring policing in the public interest.

9. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. There are no direct social implications in this report.

10. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 10.1. There are no direct community implications in this report, however the act of conducting regular independent polling across communities in Scotland, and analysing results at a disaggregated level (e.g. by geography, gender, age, deprivation), supports the Authority in maintaining an awareness of potential variations in community views of policing in Scotland.

11. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. There are no direct equalities implications in this report.

12. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

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

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Members are invited to note and discuss the contents of this report and the content within the accompanying appendix.





August 2025

Public Perceptions of Policing in Scotland



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Diffley
Partnership

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Introduction

Scottish Police Authority (SPA) commissioned Diffley Partnership to conduct regular polling of Scottish adults (16+) on attitudes to policing. This report sets out the key findings of the seventh wave of polling, conducted from 1st - 5th August 2025, with comparison to previous waves where relevant.

Methodology

Diffley Partnership designed the survey questionnaire in close consultation with SPA. Invitations to complete the survey were sent out through the online ScotPulse panel, and received 2,271 responses.

Results were weighted to Scottish adult population estimates (2023) by age and gender. Then, they were tabulated and analysed, examining descriptive statistics as well as between-group differences in opinion.

Previous waves of polling were undertaken with the same methodology. However this wave, the questionnaire was streamlined to focus on key metrics. In addition, a definition was added to questions on confidence and trust, to ensure a common understanding of these terms. As a result of the addition of a definition to question wording, polling differences between waves cannot be directly attributed to change over time.

Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

This report summarises the key findings of this polling, including:

- Confidence in police in Scotland.
- Trust in police in Scotland.
- Performance of the police in Scotland across different aspects.

Each element is explored in turn with the aid of data visualisation, including significant differences between groups, where appropriate.



Confidence in the Police

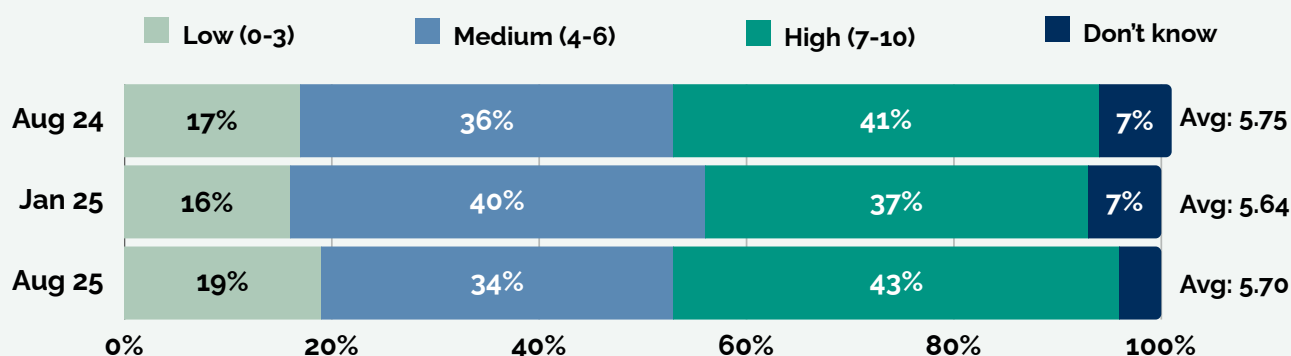


Respondents were asked how much confidence they have in the police in Scotland on a scale from 0, "No confidence at all" to 10, "Complete confidence". This wave, respondents were also given a definition of confidence: 'By confidence, we mean how strongly you believe that Scotland's police officers will be capable and effective if you called them, for example, to investigate a crime, to tackle a crime in your area, or to respond to your 999/101 call.' The graph below shows results from the last three waves of data collection.

43%

Had a high level of confidence in the police in Scotland

How much confidence do you have in the police in Scotland?*



*In Aug 2025, question wording included a definition of what is meant by 'confidence'.

A plurality of over two in five (43%) rated their confidence in the police in Scotland as high (7-10), while one in three (34%) rated their confidence as medium (4-6) and one in five (19%) rated their confidence as low (0-3). Compared to the last wave, the proportion of those that rated their confidence in the police in Scotland as high or low increased, while the proportion of those that rated their confidence as medium or said they don't know how much confidence they have in the police decreased.

5.70

Average confidence in the police, from 0-10

Taken together, these changes may indicate that the addition of a definition allowed respondents to answer with more certainty.

The average (mean) of all respondents' confidence ratings was 5.70, a slight increase of 0.05 from last wave's average of 5.64.



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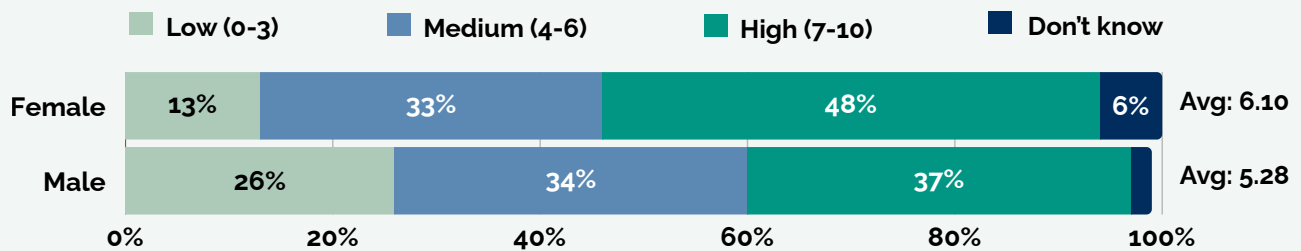
Confidence: Demographic Differences

Confidence in the police continued to vary significantly by demographic characteristics.

Gender



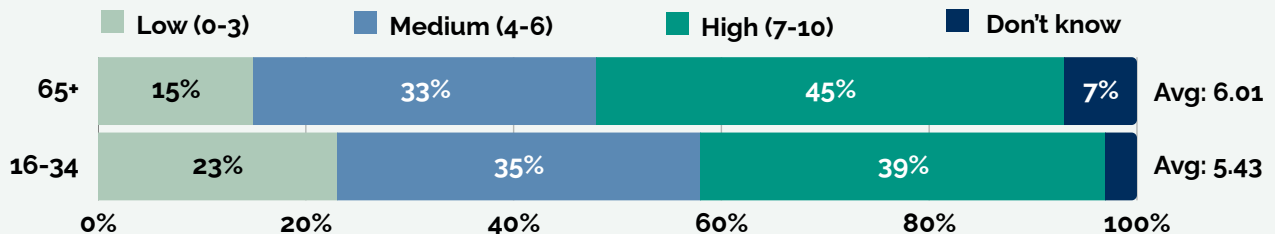
Female respondents were more likely than male respondents to rate their confidence in the police as high (48%; 37%) while male respondents were more likely than female respondents to rate their confidence in the police as low (26%; 13%). These patterns were consistent with findings from previous waves.



Age



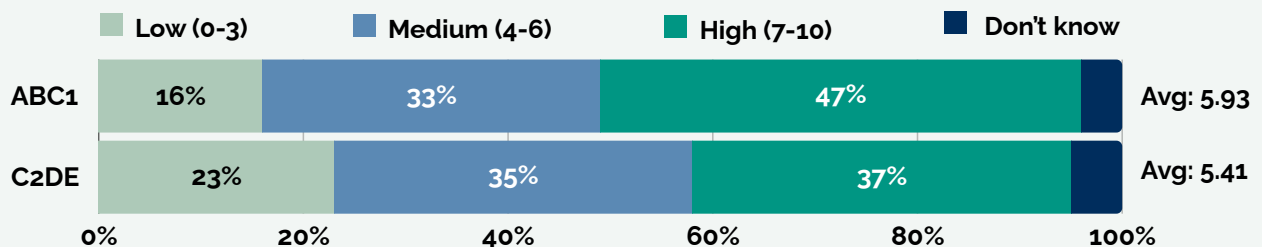
More older respondents, aged 65+, had high confidence in the police than younger respondents, aged 16 to 34, (45%; 39%). Younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to report low confidence in the police (23%; 15%). This was also consistent with previous waves.



Social grade



Respondents in higher social grades (ABC1) were more likely than those in lower social grades (C2DE) to have high confidence in the police (47%; 37%), while those in lower social grades were more likely than those in higher social grades to rate their confidence in the police as low (23%; 16%).



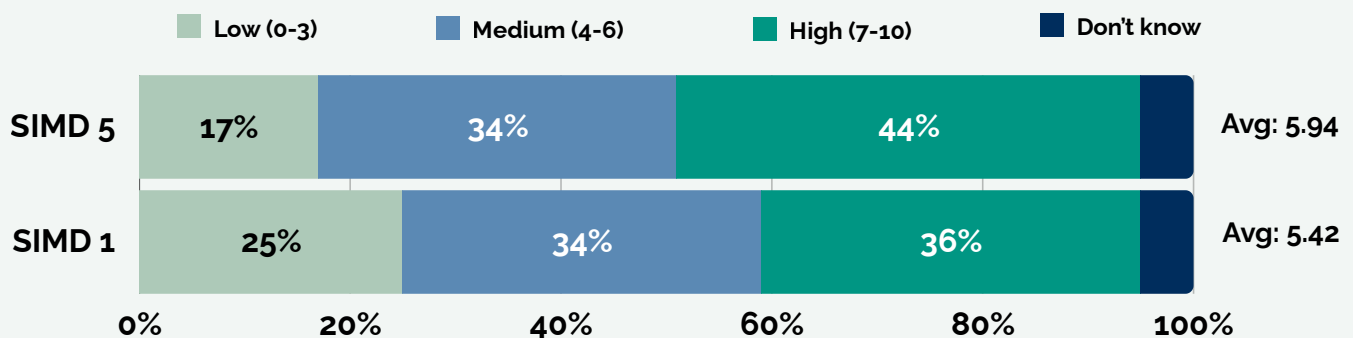
Confidence: Geographic Differences

Confidence in the police continued to vary significantly depending on geographic factors.

SIMD



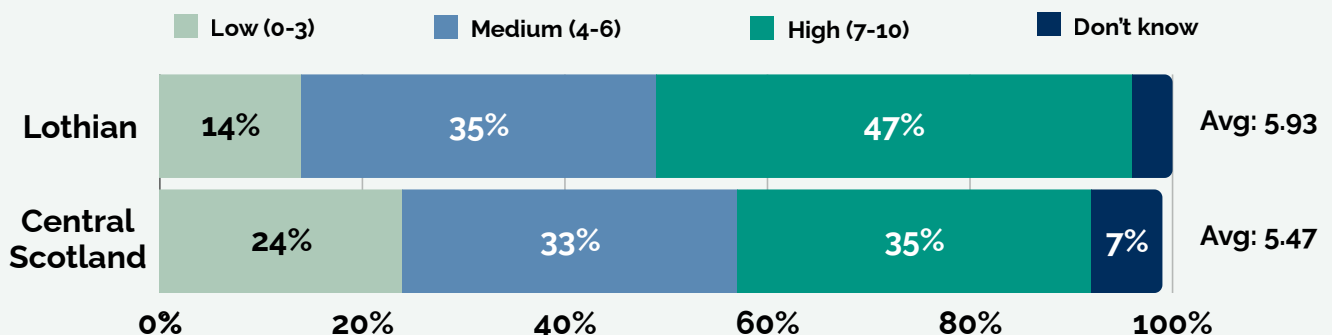
Similar to previous findings, confidence in the police also correlated with neighbourhood deprivation (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation). Residents in the least deprived (SIMD 5) areas were more likely than those in the most deprived (SIMD 1) areas to have high confidence in the police (44%; 36%). Similarly, residents of SIMD 1 areas were more likely to have lower confidence in the police than those in SIMD 5 areas (25%; 17%).



Parliamentary region



Confidence in the police varied by Scottish Parliamentary region. Those in the Lothian region were more likely to have high confidence in the police while those in the Central Scotland region were less likely to have high confidence in the police (47%; 35%). On the other end of the spectrum, residents of Central Scotland were more likely to have low confidence in the police compared to those in the Lothian region (24%; 14%).



Trust in the Police

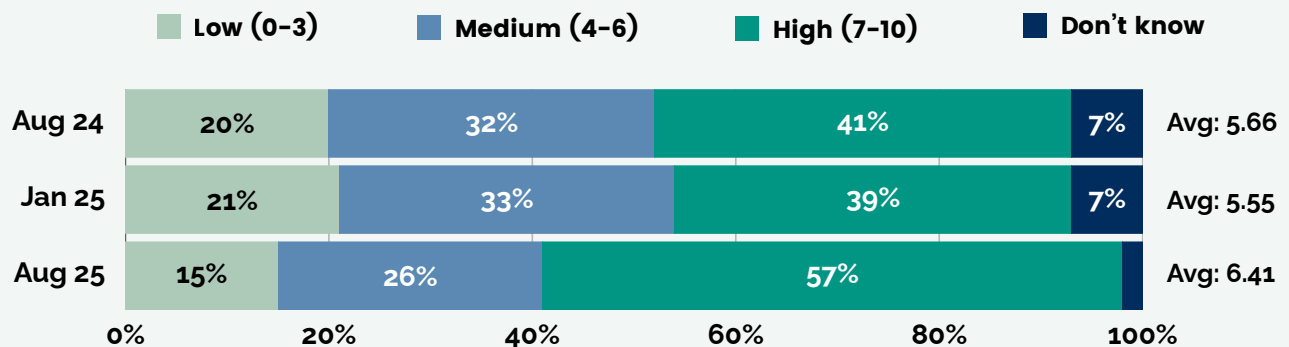


Respondents were asked how much trust they have in the police in Scotland on a scale of 0, "No trust at all" to 10, "Complete trust". This wave, respondents were given a definition of 'trust': 'By trust, we mean how strongly you believe that Scotland's police officers will treat you professionally, respectfully and fairly if you were to have contact with them.' The graph below shows results from the last three waves of data collection.

57%

Had a high level of trust in the police in Scotland

How much trust do you have in the police in Scotland?*



*In Aug 2025, question wording included a definition of what is meant by 'trust'.

This wave, almost three in five (57%) rated their trust in the police in Scotland as high (7-10), while one in four (26%) rated their trust as medium (4-6) and one in seven (15%) rated their trust as low (0-3). These findings vary substantially from those of previous waves, with a significant increase in the proportion that rated their trust in the police in Scotland as high, and sizable decreases in the proportions that rated their trust as medium, low or said they don't know.

6.41

Average trust in the police, from 0-10

These changes likely stem from the addition of a definition to the question wording, perhaps encouraging respondents to reflect on the professionalism and respectfulness of police rather than their capability or performance. Reflecting these changes, the average (mean) rating for trust in the police notably increased compared to recent waves, from 5.55 to 6.41.



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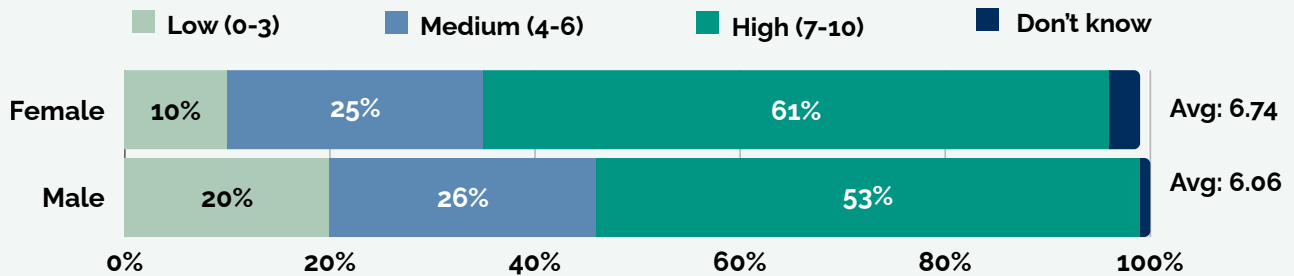
Trust: Demographic Differences

Trust in the police varied significantly depending on demographic group.

Gender



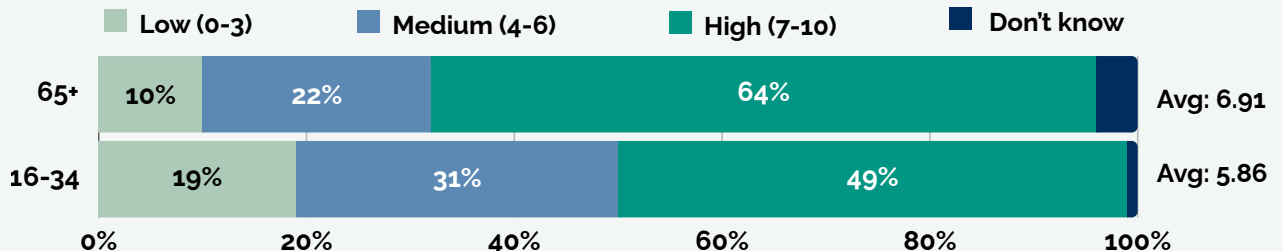
As in previous waves, female respondents were much more likely than male respondents to have high trust in the police (61%; 53%). In contrast, male respondents were more likely to report low trust in the police (20%; 10%).



Age



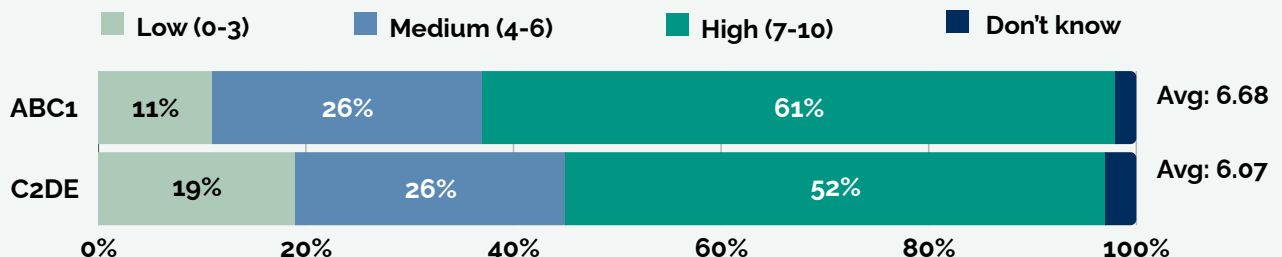
Consistent with previous findings, older respondents, aged 65+, were more likely than young respondents, aged 16 to 34, to have high trust in the police (64%; 49%), while younger respondents were more likely than older respondents to have medium (31%; 22%) or low trust (19%; 10%).



Social grade



As seen for confidence, respondents in higher social grades (ABC1) were more likely than those in lower social grades (C2DE) to have high trust in the police (61%; 52%), while those in lower social grades were more likely than those in higher social grades to rate their trust in the police as low (19%; 11%).



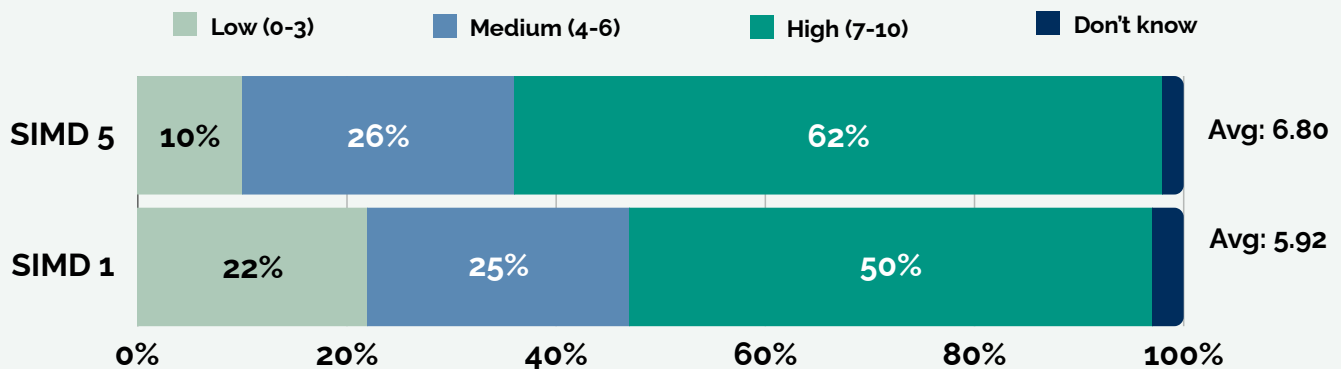
Trust: Geographic Differences

Trust in the police continued to vary by geographic factors.

SIMD



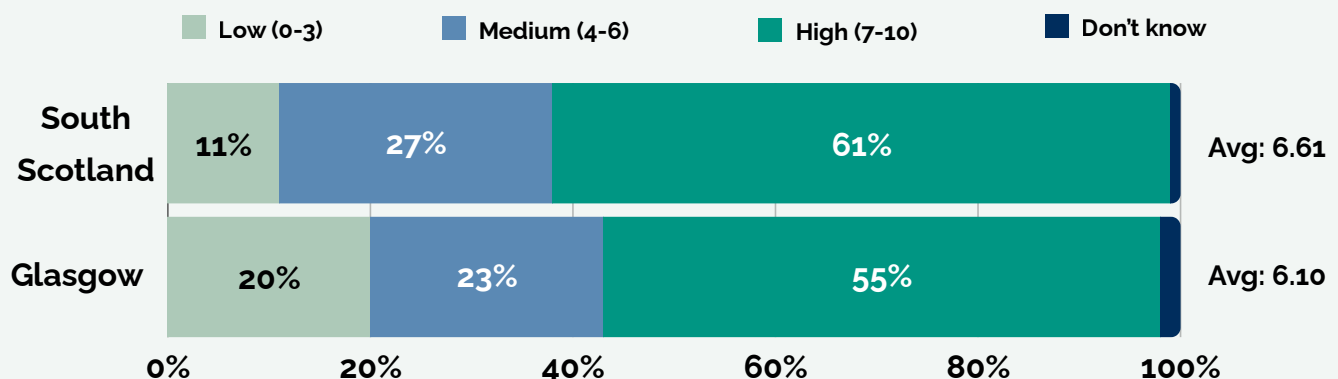
Trust in the police was also related to respondents' SIMD areas, similar to previous findings. Residents of the most deprived areas (SIMD 1) were more likely to have lower trust in the police than those in the least deprived areas (SIMD 5) (22%; 10%). Likewise, residents in SIMD 5 areas were more likely than those in SIMD 1 areas to have high trust in the police, although this was at least half of both groups (62%; 50%).



Parliamentary region



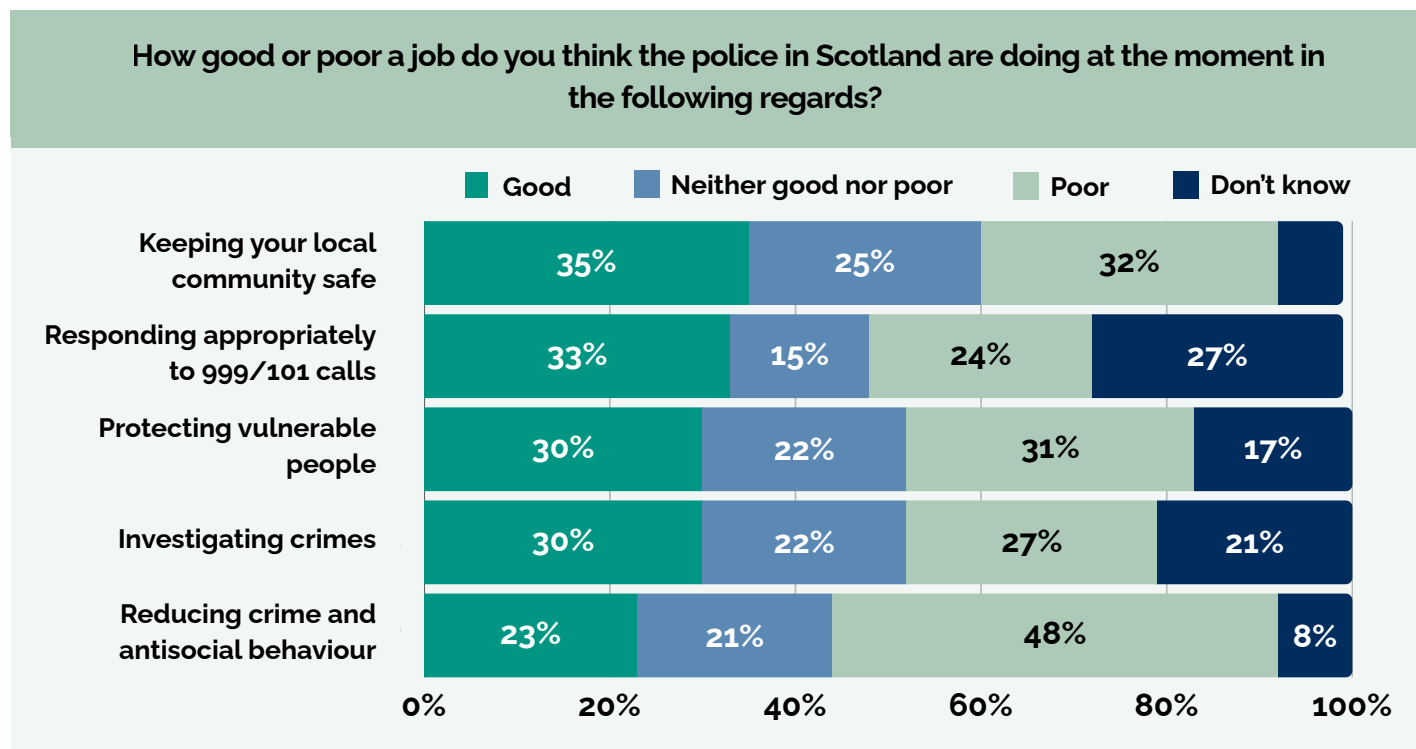
There were also regional differences in trust in the police. One in five (20%) respondents in the Glasgow Scottish Parliamentary region had low trust in the police while only one in nine (11%) of those in South Scotland said the same.



Police Performance



Respondents were asked how good or poor they think the police in Scotland are doing at the moment, across key metrics including: keeping their local community safe, responding appropriately to 999/101 calls, protecting vulnerable people, investigating crimes and reducing crime and antisocial behaviour. Results are depicted in the graph below.



Across all aspects, respondents were most positive about the performance of the police in keeping local communities safe; one in three respondents (35%) believed the police were doing a good job keeping their local community safe, although about the same (32%) believed the police were doing a poor job in this regard. Similarly, one in three (33%) thought the police were doing a good job responding appropriately to 999/101 calls, with one in four (24%) that said they thought the police were doing a poor job at this. Overall, don't know responses were highest when considering how the police are doing responding appropriately to 999/101 calls, at over one in four (27%), perhaps as a result of low interaction with the police through this means.

Following slightly behind, three in ten (30%) thought the police were doing a good job protecting vulnerable people and investigating crimes, although similar proportions believed the police were doing a poor job in these areas at 31% and 27% respectively. Respondents were least positive about police performance reducing crime and antisocial behaviour; one in four (23%) said they were doing a good job at this, while nearly half (48%) said they were doing a poor job at this.

Performance: Gender Differences

Perceptions of police performance varied by gender. Across all variables measured, female respondents were slightly more likely than male respondents to say that the police were doing a good job, while male respondents were much more likely to say that they thought the police were doing a poor job.

This difference was particularly notable with regards to investigating crimes. Under two in five (37%) female respondents believed the police were doing a good job investigating crimes compared to about one in four (23%) male respondents. Meanwhile, one in five (20%) of female respondents said the police were doing a poor job at this, compared to one in three (34%) male respondents.



Performance: Social Grade Differences

Perceptions of police performance were also related to social grade across all aspects surveyed. For many aspects, respondents in lower social grades (C2DE) were more likely than those in higher social grades (ABC1) to believe the police were doing a poor job, and respondents in higher social grades were more likely than those in lower social grades to believe the police were doing a good job.

This pattern was most pronounced when considering police performance keeping their local community safe, investigating crimes and protecting vulnerable people. For example, two in five (40%) of those in ABC1 thought the police did a good job keeping their local community safe, compared to the three in ten (30%) of those in C2DE who said the same; conversely, over one in three (36%) of those in grades C2DE thought the police were doing a poor job keeping their community safe, compared to under three in ten (28%) of those in ABC1.



Performance: Neighbourhood Deprivation Differences

In line with previous findings, perceptions of police performance varied by neighbourhood deprivation. Across all aspects measured, respondents in the most deprived areas (SIMD 1) were more likely than those in the least deprived areas (SIMD 5) to believe the police were doing a poor job.

In general, those in the least deprived areas were not more likely to be positive about police performance than those in the most deprived areas, with one exception. When considering the performance of the police in keeping their local community safe, nearly two in five (39%) of those in the least deprived areas believe the police were doing a good job in this respect, compared to just three in ten (30%) of those in the most deprived neighbourhoods.

Interestingly, respondents in the least deprived neighbourhoods were more likely than those in the most deprived neighbourhoods to respond that they don't know how the police are doing at the moment with regards to investigating crimes (24%; 14%), responding appropriately to 999/101 calls (36%; 20%) and protecting vulnerable people (19%; 12%), perhaps as a result of less contact with the police surrounding these aspects.

