

# Scottish Litter Survey

A baseline assessment of public perceptions and attitudes towards litter and littering behaviour

December 2021

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# Foreword

Welcome to Keep Scotland Beautiful's first annual Scottish Litter Survey, a comprehensive baseline assessment of public perceptions and attitudes towards litter and littering behaviour.

Over the last eighteen years we have worked in partnership with local authorities to coordinate the Local Environmental Audit Management System (LEAMS) which provides valuable data and trends regarding local environmental quality in a variety of settings, and a national picture of current standards. Measurements are based around a range of indicators, including litter, dog fouling, graffiti, vandalism, flytipping and weed growth.

We continue to work in partnership with Zero Waste Scotland and local authorities on the transition of LEAMS towards the development and implementation of the new Litter Monitoring System (LMS) to provide greater consistency of approach and improve transparency in cleanliness grades.

We also continue our work with local communities across the country to help protect and improve their local area, through our campaigns including Clean Up Scotland and Upstream Battle, and programmes such as Beautiful Scotland and It's Your Neighbourhood.

The data and evidence from our campaigns, audits and monitoring formed the basis of our report – Time for a new approach to tackling litter – published in December 2020. It set out clearly the situation in Scotland with regard to the decline in local environmental quality and the primary drivers. The report also set out a package of recommendations on how the Scottish Government, public agencies, local authorities, communities, and other stakeholders could work collaboratively to take action to reverse this decline.

We have been working with the Scottish Government, Zero Waste Scotland and SEPA for the last year to progress these recommendations, and to support the development of a new National Litter and Flytipping Strategy for Scotland. A consultation paper on the new strategy will be published later in December 2021.

We intend that the outputs of this Scottish Litter Survey will form a positive contribution to the consultation process, providing a clear picture of how the public in Scotland feel about litter, the impact it has on their communities, and what they think would help tackle the blight of litter and littering behaviour.

This Scottish Litter Survey covers the following areas:

- Attitudes to litter
- Changes in levels of litter
- Impacts of litter
- How to tackle litter

We will use the outputs of this survey to inform our work nationally, to support the delivery of the new National Litter and Flytipping Strategy, and locally, with local authorities, communities, and other stakeholders, to drive practical action to improve local environmental quality, reduce consumption and tackle litter across Scotland.

In future years, we intend to overlay the qualitative data from our annual public perception surveys and our programme of citizen science, with quantitative data generated from LMS. This will provide a robust and integrated picture of local environmental quality in Scotland that will help to inform the delivery and implementation of the new National Litter and Flytipping Strategy and how we develop and implement our campaigns, activities and services.

We hope you find this first Scottish Litter Survey informative – please get in touch if you want to discuss the findings in more detail or find out how we can help your organisation or community.

**Barry Fisher, Chief Executive, Keep Scotland Beautiful**

The Scottish Litter Survey was produced in association with The Diffley Partnership and part of their Understanding Scotland Series.



# Headlines



- 1** 70% of respondents believe that litter is a problem locally, and 88% believe that it is a problem nationally. Even among those who do not see litter as a problem in their own community, there is a belief that it is an issue in Scotland.
- 2** Half of people believe levels of litter to have stayed about the same in the past 12 months. However, 38% report litter becoming more common, especially in urban areas. People report a sharp rise in levels of discarded personal protective equipment and a more moderate increase in food and drinks packaging. Conversely, people report a decrease in plastic bags and chewing gum being littered.
- 3** There is a clear appetite for greater action to tackle and prevent litter in Scotland; we find particular support for improving waste disposal facilities and educational campaigns.
- 4** Individuals and consumers are considered most responsible for preventing litter, while individuals and local authorities are deemed jointly responsible for cleaning it up.
- 5** The Scottish population believe litter to have the largest impact on the natural environment and animals. This is especially high among young people. Litter is thought to have a smaller, though still notable, impact on house prices and local economic activity.



# Attitudes to litter

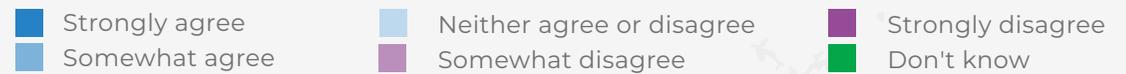
Younger and male respondents were more likely to see litter as a problem, both in their area and in Scotland. 87% of people living in the most deprived communities in Scotland believed litter to be a problem in their area, compared to 63% in the most affluent fifth of neighbourhoods. People living in urban areas were also more likely to report that litter was a problem in their area, with 72% of urban respondents saying so, compared to 60% of rural respondents.

There was less variation with regards to the suggestion that litter is a problem across Scotland, on which there was a stronger consensus, even in those areas that reported lower concerns about local litter levels.

Geographically, respondents in Glasgow were the most likely to report that litter was a problem in their area. Conversely, those in the Highlands & Islands and North East Scotland were the least likely to say so.

## Attitudes to litter

Proportions of respondents agreeing and disagreeing with the given statements.

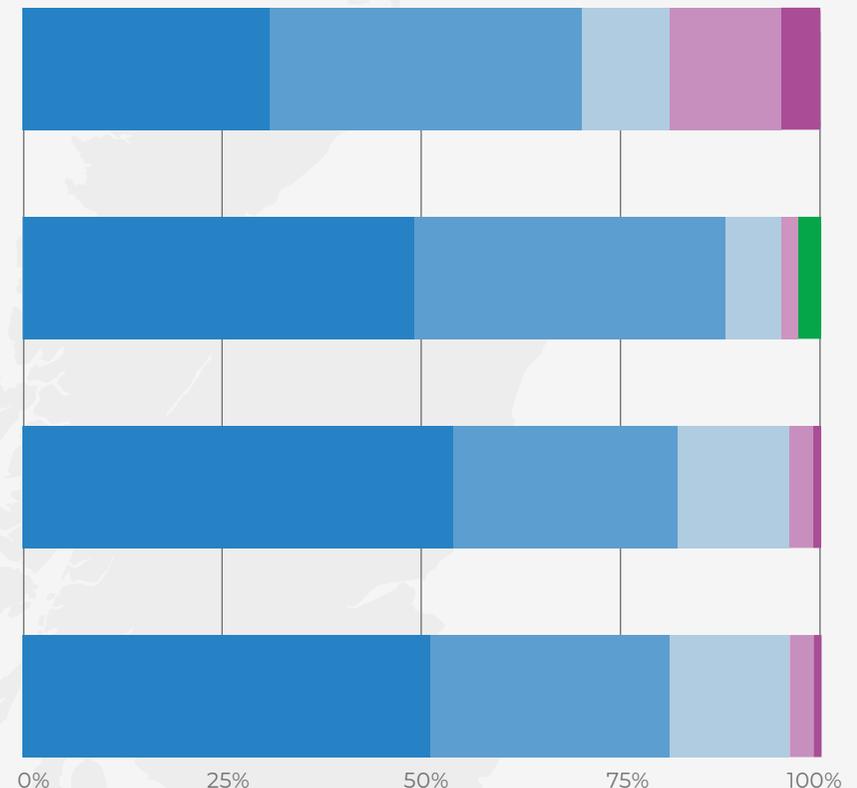


Litter is a problem in my area

Litter is a problem across Scotland

I would like to see more action being taken to prevent littering in my area

I would like to see more action being taken to clean up litter in my area



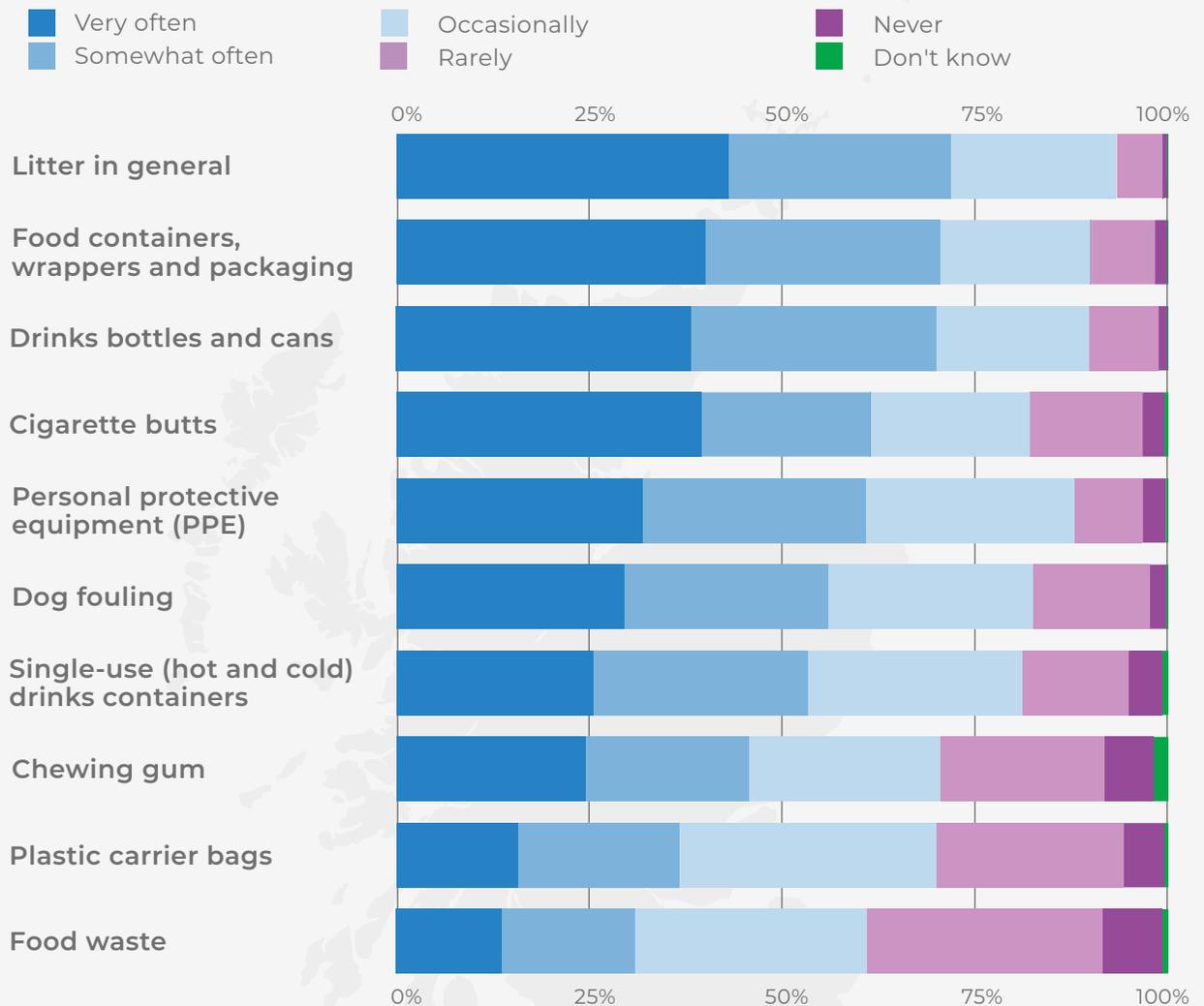
Looking at the list above, how often, if at all, does each apply to you?

# What are the most common types of litter?

Food and drink packaging were perceived to be the most frequent types of litter, with food waste and plastic bags among the least commonly seen.



## Types of litter reported regularly



How frequently, if at all, do you see the following types of litter in your local area?

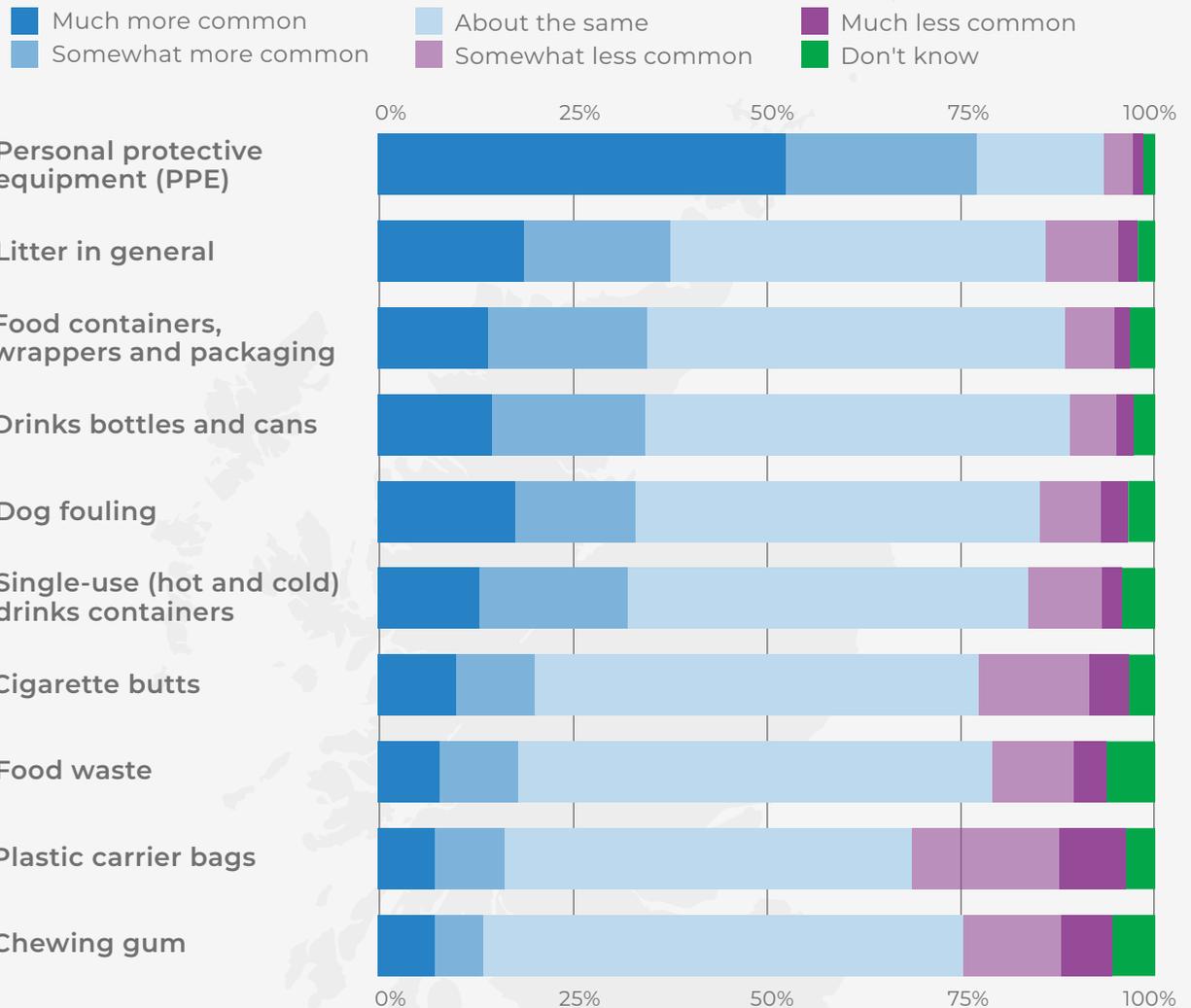
# Changes in the levels of litter

All areas reported an overall rise, however. The Highlands & Islands region saw the smallest proportion of respondents citing an increase in levels of litter in general (31%), compared to 20% reporting a decrease. Glasgow reported the largest increase in litter in general, with 49% of respondents saying that levels had increased in the past 12 months.



## Changes in levels of littering

Proportions of respondents reporting seeing more and less of certain types of litter.



And thinking about the same types of litter, do you think they have become more or less common in your local area over the past 12 months?

# Changes in the levels of litter

Perhaps unsurprisingly, PPE has seen the sharpest rise. Litter overall, and most forms of litter are perceived to have become more common, though cigarette butts are largely unchanged, while gum and plastic bags have reduced in frequency.



## Changes in levels of littering

Proportions of respondents reporting seeing more and less of certain types of litter.

	More common	Less common	About the same	Don't know
Personal protective equipment (PPE)	77%	5%	16%	2%
Food containers, wrappers and packaging	34%	8%	54%	3%
Drinks bottles and cans	35%	8%	55%	3%
Litter in general	38%	11%	48%	2%
Dog fouling	33%	11%	52%	3%
Single-use (hot and cold) drinks containers	22%	13%	51%	4%
Food waste	18%	15%	61%	6%
Cigarette butts	20%	19%	57%	3%
Chewing gum	13%	20%	62%	6%
Plastic carrier bags	16%	28%	52%	4%

And thinking about the same types of litter, do you think they have become more or less common in your local area over the past 12 months?

# Impacts of litter

Environmental impacts top people's concerns, with financial and economic impacts a less potent concern.

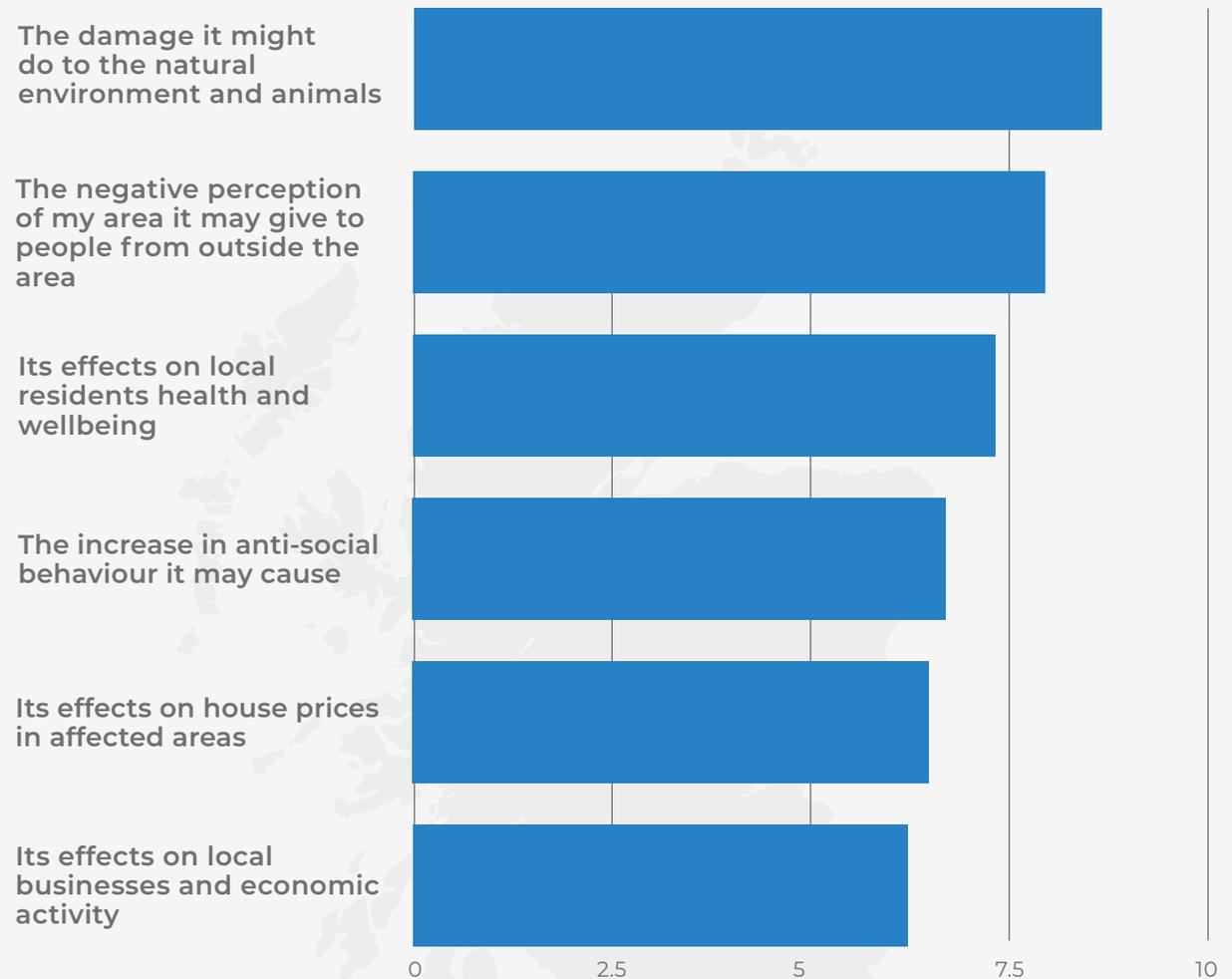
More affluent respondents were particularly concerned by the reputational impacts of litter. They also deemed litter to have a larger impact than their less affluent counterparts in all regards other than its impact on animals and the natural environment.

Furthermore, across all age brackets, the environmental impact of litter was deemed the largest consequence. Young people deemed litter to have larger impact on the natural world than other age brackets, but saw it as having a lesser impact on house prices and economic activity.



## Attitudes to litter

Weighted averages of perceived impacts out of 10.



On a scale from 0-10, how much of an impact do you believe litter has on the following?

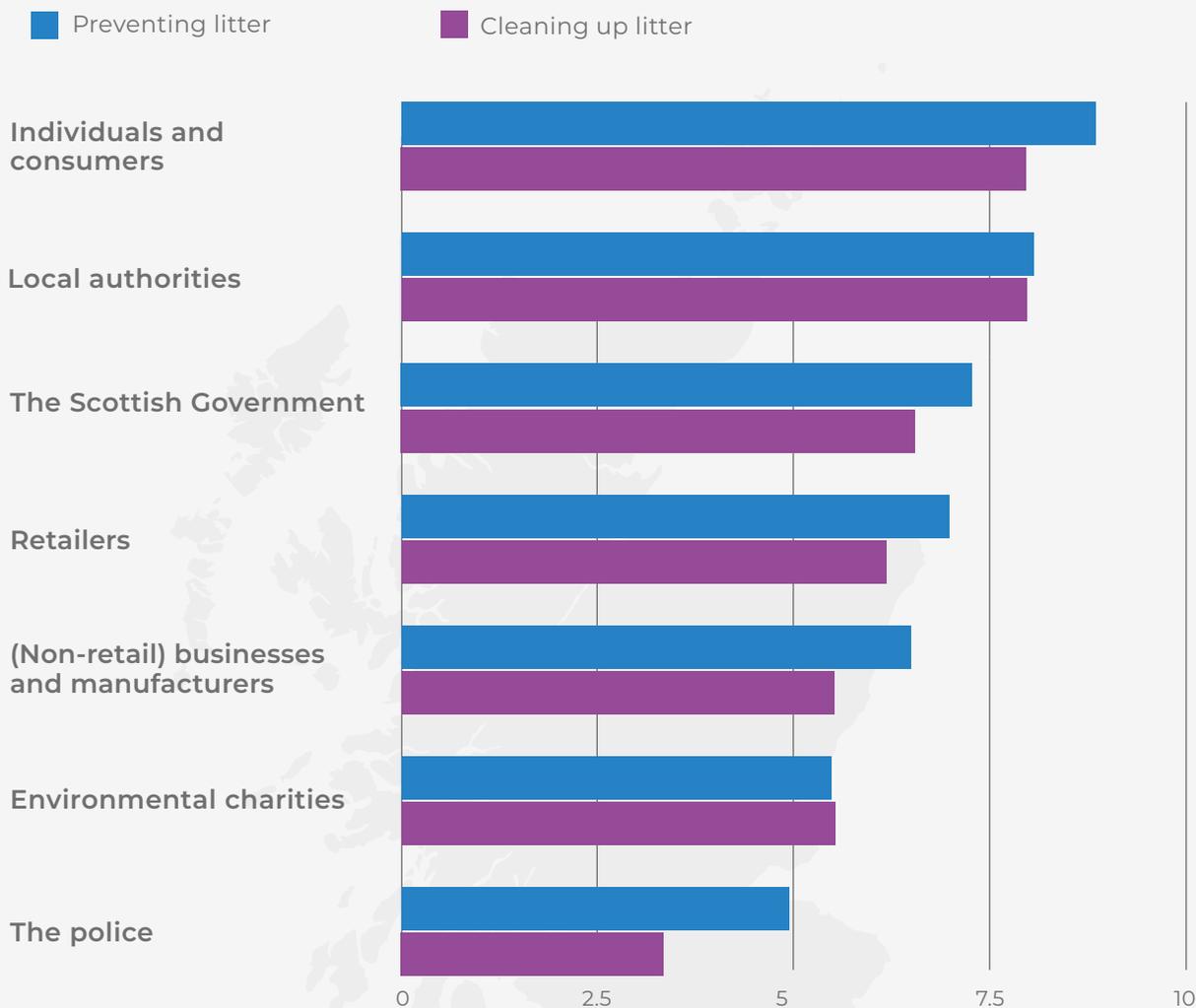
# Responsibility for litter

Individuals are deemed most responsible for both preventing and cleaning up litter, followed by Local and Scottish Governments.

Younger respondents were more likely to hold government responsible, while middle-aged and older respondents were more likely than others to hold retailers responsible.



## Responsibility for preventing and cleaning up litter



How responsible do you believe the following are when it comes to preventing littering/cleaning up litter?

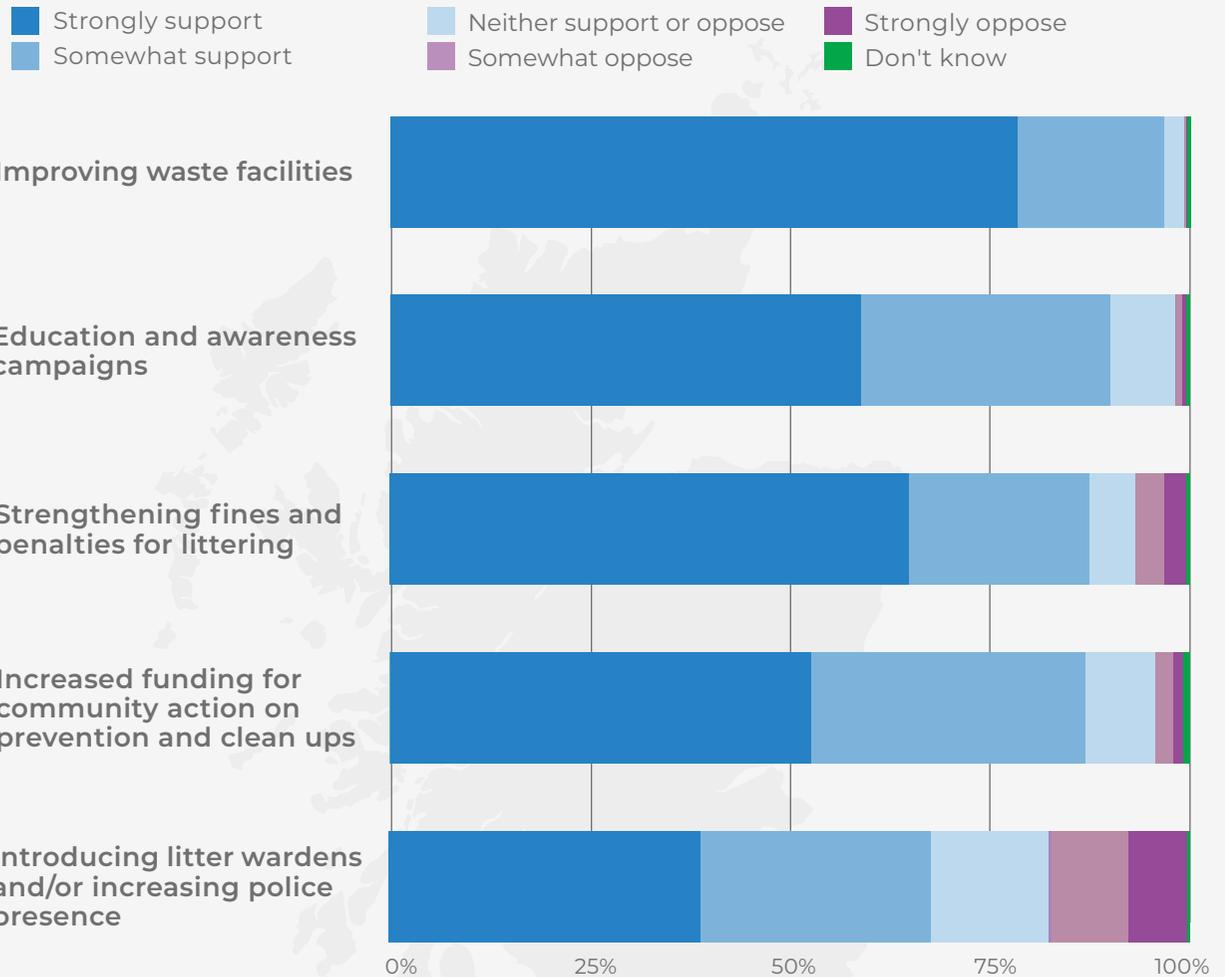
# How to tackle litter

While all proposed solutions enjoy majority support, younger respondents demonstrated above-average support for preventative and educational solutions, such as awareness campaigns or improved disposal facilities, while older respondents were more supportive of larger fines and enhanced policing than the population as a whole.



## Tackling litter

Support and opposition for initiatives aimed at tackling litter.



To what extent would you support or oppose the following initiatives to tackle littering?

# Individual Behaviours

The public shows a strong degree of conscientiousness when it comes to littering, though largely have yet to shift their consumption patterns decisively. This is especially true of younger respondents.



## Littering behaviours

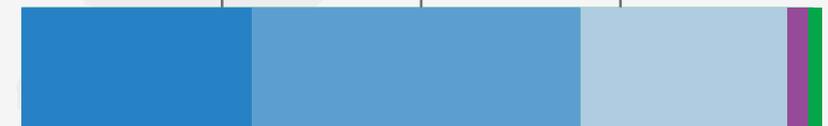
Reported behaviours people take to reduce their impact.



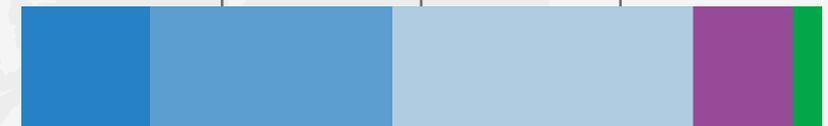
I make a conscious effort to dispose of my rubbish responsibly when i am out



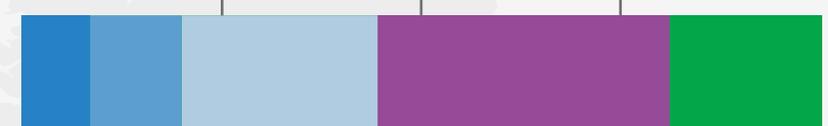
I make an effort to switch from single-use products to reusable ones



I avoid buying products that use excessive packaging



I avoid buying from brands /organisations whose products i regularly see littered



I take part in local clean ups / litter picking activities



0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Looking at the list above, how often, if at all, does each apply to you?

# How to get involved

## Scottish Government consultation on new National Litter and Flytipping Strategy

The Scottish Government plan to publish a consultation paper later in December 2021 on a new National Litter and Flytipping Strategy for Scotland.

Keep Scotland Beautiful has been working with the Scottish Government, Zero Waste Scotland and SEPA to develop the new strategy and the consultation paper.

This is an important opportunity for all stakeholders interested in improving local environmental quality, reducing consumption, and tackling litter to have their say on how we should work together to make a positive difference to communities across Scotland.

We will be taking part in the engagement events being organised to support the consultation process, as well as engaging with our own networks nationally and locally to share our thoughts and to gather views on the paper. If you want to discuss the consultation paper with us, please get in touch via [info@keepscotlandbeautiful.org](mailto:info@keepscotlandbeautiful.org)

## Join #TeamKSBScot and be part of the solution.

Individual actions can make a big difference on a local, national and global scale. Support our work today and you will be helping to tackle litter, reduce waste, combat climate change and inspire community action to protect the places we love.

Visit [www.keepscotlandbeautiful.org](http://www.keepscotlandbeautiful.org) to find out how you can get involved.





We support the Sustainable Development Goals.

Keep Scotland Beautiful is your charity for Scotland's environment. We work with you to help combat climate change, reduce litter and waste, and protect and enhance the places we care for.



Keep Scotland Beautiful

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