Zero Waste Scotland: Fly-tipping Survey

Report by The Diffley Partnership

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Diffley Partnership

ZERO WASTE SCOTLAND

Contents

1 Background and methodology

Diffley Partnership was commissioned by Zero Waste Scotland to conduct a national poll of adults in Scotland asking about perceptions of fly-tipping, the reporting of fly-tipping and where responsibility for dealing with fly-tipping should lie. This report sets out key findings of this polling, conducted in November 2022.

The purpose of this piece of work is to provide insight into what is already well understood about flytipping and where there are misconceptions around the three areas covered. This information is useful for organisations involved or interested in flytipping prevention, supporting delivery of the new National Litter & Flytipping Strategy, to help inform the design of interventions and understand where engagement and messaging needs improved.

1.1 Methodology

The survey questionnaire was drafted by Diffley Partnership based on meetings with Zero Waste Scotland. Invitations to complete the survey were sent out through the online ScotPulse panel between the 9-14 November and received 1,058 responses. Responses were tabulated and analysed quantitatively.

Results are weighted to the Scottish population by age and gender.

1.2 Presentation and interpretation of findings

This report summarises the key findings of this polling, drawing out noteworthy findings and between-group differences.

The report begins by exploring how people categorise different types of waste, the reporting of fly-tipping, where responsibility for dealing with fly-tipping lies and how information.

Findings on each aspect are presented in turn, with the aid of data visualisations, and commentary on notable findings between groups of interest.
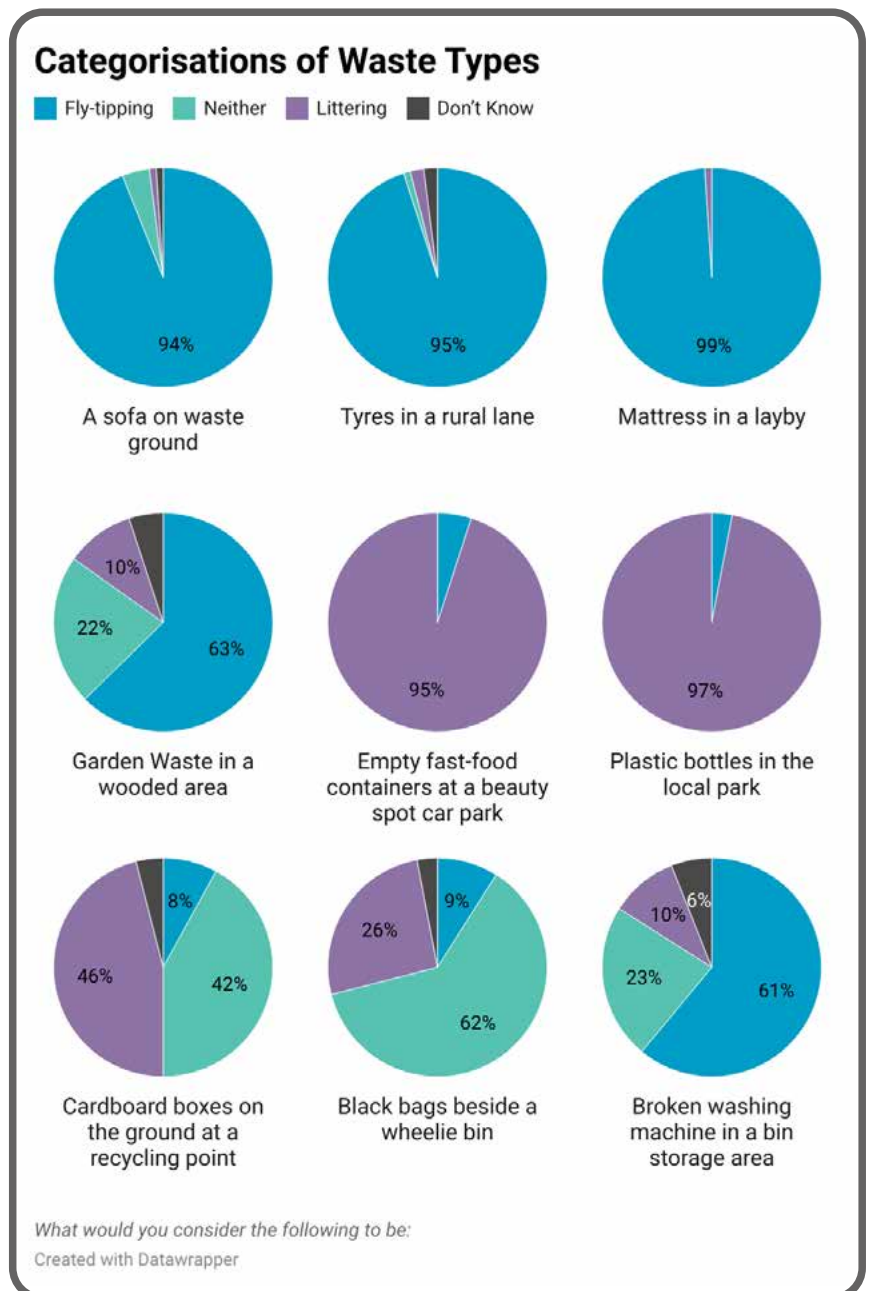
2 Categorisation of waste

The survey statistics demonstrate that Scots are not entirely clear on the distinction between fly-tipping and littering. While over 90% agree that large items like sofas, tyres, and mattresses being left in various areas are examples of fly-tipping, and similar proportions agree that smaller items like fast-food containers and plastic bottles are examples of litter. However, there is more of a split in opinion regarding other options.

For instance, respondents struggle to decide whether medium sized items such as cardboard boxes and black bags being left in areas where rubbish would ordinarily be disposed are examples of littering or fly-tipping. Similarly, there is less certainty that leaving large items like garden waste and a broken washing machine in specific areas is fly-tipping.

Young people (aged 16-34) are less sure of their opinions on whether items like a sofa on waste ground or garden waste in a wooded area are fly-tipping than respondents from the oldest age groups. Similarly, respondents from the most affluent areas (SIMD 5) are unclear on how they would characterise the sofa example compared to respondents from all other areas, who are more likely to say this is fly-tipping.

Categorisations of Waste Types

Legend: Fly-tipping · Neither · Littering · Don't Know

- A sofa on waste ground — 94%
- Tyres in a rural lane — 95%
- Mattress in a layby — 99%
- Garden Waste in a wooded area — 63%, 22%, 10%
- Empty fast-food containers at a beauty spot car park — 95%
- Plastic bottles in the local park — 97%
- Cardboard boxes on the ground at a recycling point — 46%, 42%, 8%
- Black bags beside a wheelie bin — 62%, 26%, 9%
- Broken washing machine in a bin storage area — 61%, 23%, 10%, 6%

What would you consider the following to be:
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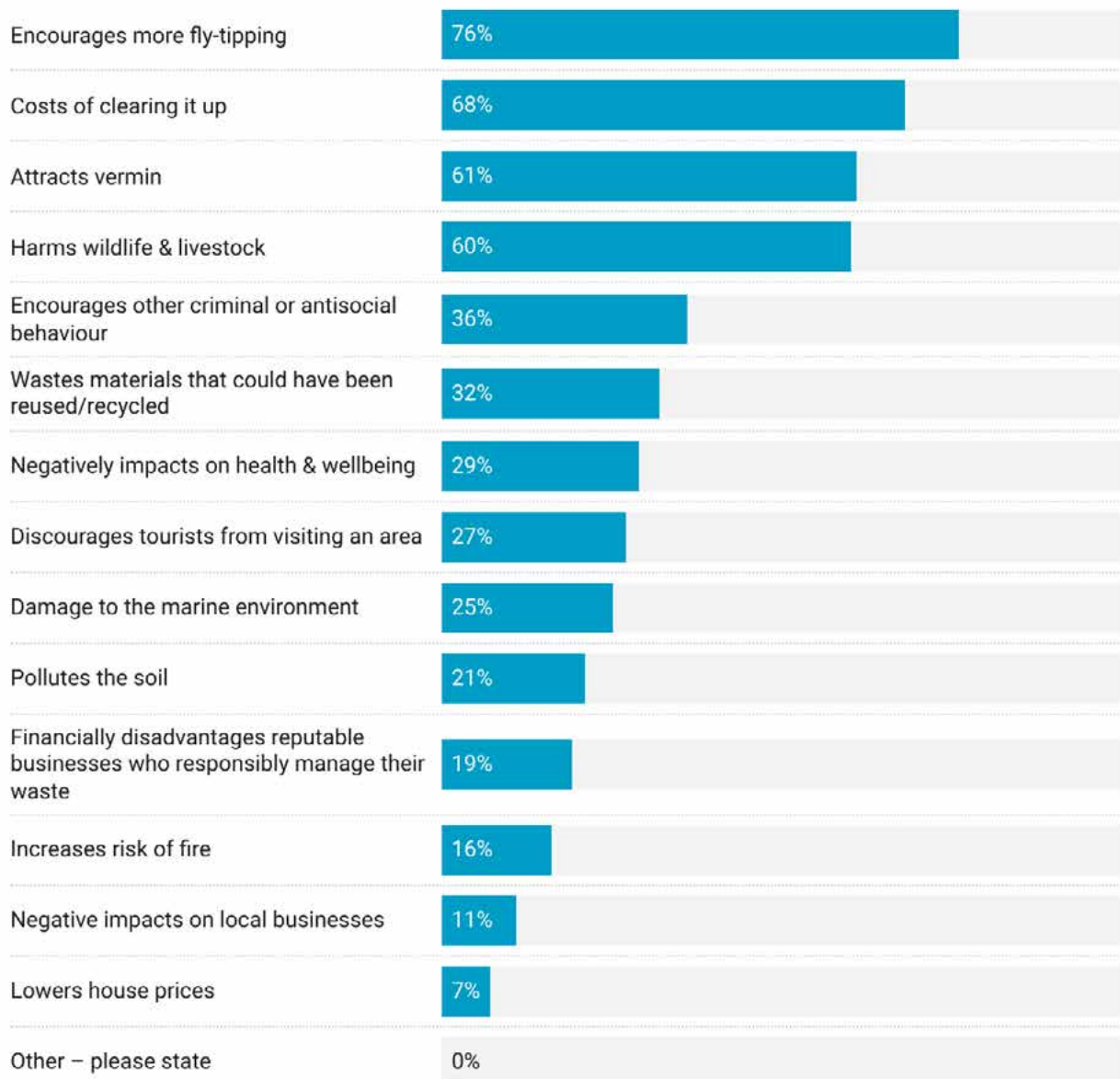
3 Issues created by fly-tipping

The statistics demonstrate that encouraging more fly-tipping and the cost of clearing it up are the most popularly identified issues created by fly-tipping among respondents. These top-ranking issues are followed by issues involving animals: fly-tipping attracting vermin (61%) and harming wildlife and the livestock (60%).

Interestingly, the economic impacts of fly-tipping were less obvious to participants, with its impact on house prices, local businesses, and businesses that correctly manage their waste being mentioned by 7%, 11%, and 19% of respondents respectively.

Biggest Issues Created by Fly-tipping

■ % Mentioned in Top 5

Issue	%
Encourages more fly-tipping	76%
Costs of clearing it up	68%
Attracts vermin	61%
Harms wildlife & livestock	60%
Encourages other criminal or antisocial behaviour	36%
Wastes materials that could have been reused/recycled	32%
Negatively impacts on health & wellbeing	29%
Discourages tourists from visiting an area	27%
Damage to the marine environment	25%
Pollutes the soil	21%
Financially disadvantages reputable businesses who responsibly manage their waste	19%
Increases risk of fire	16%
Negative impacts on local businesses	11%
Lowers house prices	7%
Other – please state	0%

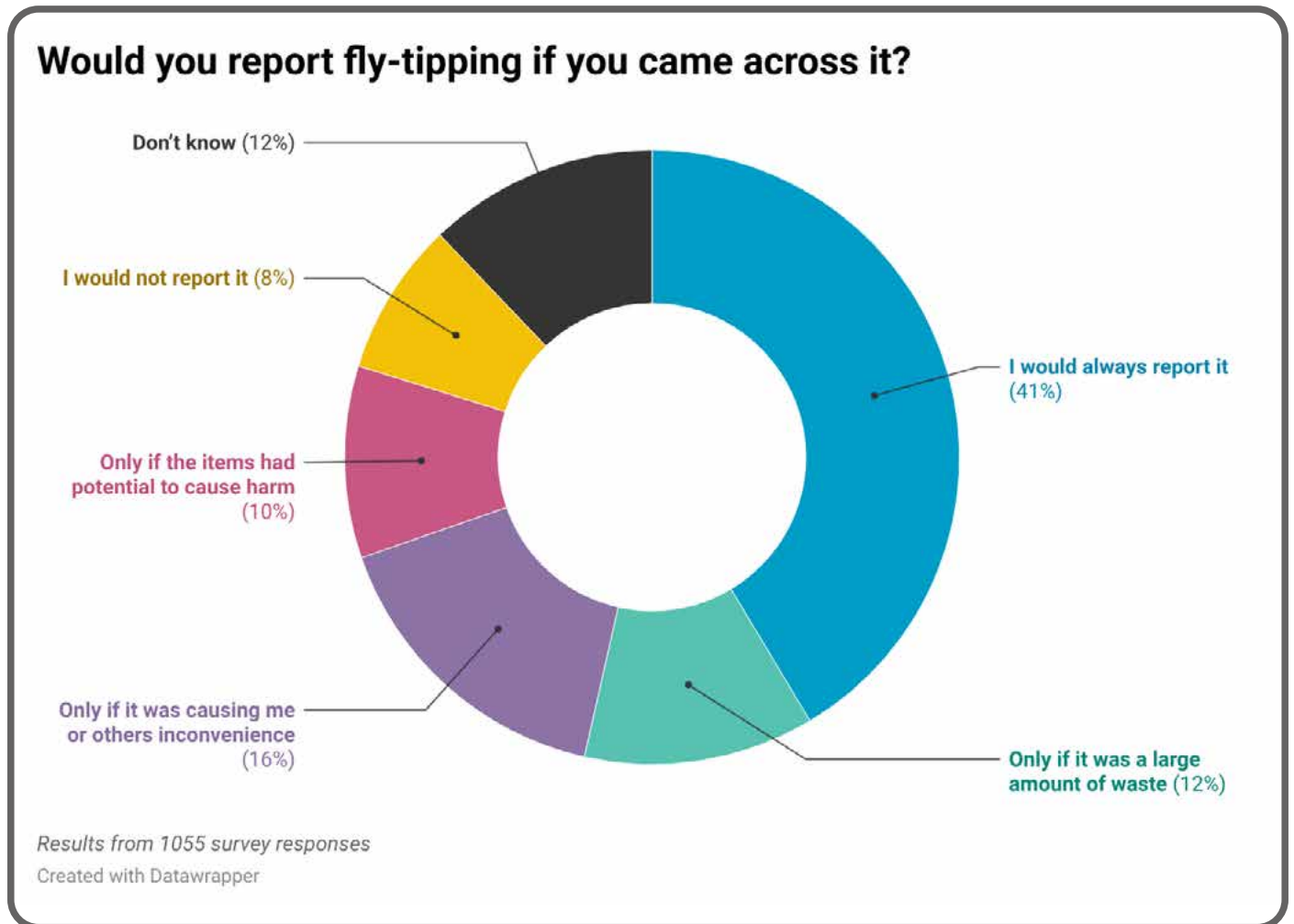*What do you consider to be the 5 biggest issues created by fly-tipping*

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4 Reporting fly-tipping

4.1 Would you report fly-tipping?

This data demonstrates that around two-fifths (41%) of Scots state that they would report fly-tipping if they came across it. A further 38% cumulatively state that they would only report it under certain circumstances: 16% if it was causing inconvenience, 12% if it was a large amount, and 10% if there was potential to cause harm. 8% of people state that they would not report fly-tipping, and 12% did not know.

Would you report fly-tipping if you came across it?

- Don't know (12%)
- I would not report it (8%)
- Only if the items had potential to cause harm (10%)
- Only if it was causing me or others inconvenience (16%)
- I would always report it (41%)
- Only if it was a large amount of waste (12%)

Results from 1055 survey responses
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There are significant differences of note between the responses of various demographic groups. For instance, men (47%) were more likely to say they would always report fly-tipping than female respondents (35%). All age groups over 45 were more likely than age groups under 45 to say they would always report fly-tipping: 51% of those aged 65 and over responded this way, compared to 28% of 16-34 year olds.

Conversely, 16-34 year olds were more likely than all other age groups to only report fly-tipping if it was causing inconvenience (31%). The same is true of respondents from the most affluent areas (measured by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation quintile): only 25% say they would always report fly-tipping, but 24% would report it if it was causing inconvenience. This is in contrast to 45% and 46% of respondents from the most deprived areas stating they would always report it.

4.2 Reasons for not reporting fly-tipping

Those who stated that they would not report fly-tipping (8%) were prompted to provide their reasoning for why they would not report fly-tipping.

Why would you not report fly-tipping if you came across it?

■ I am not sure who to report fly-tipping to
■ I do not know how to get in contact with the relevant bodies
■ It does not concern me
■ I would not feel confident to recognise fly-tipping
■ Other (please specify)

10%

14%

53%

21%
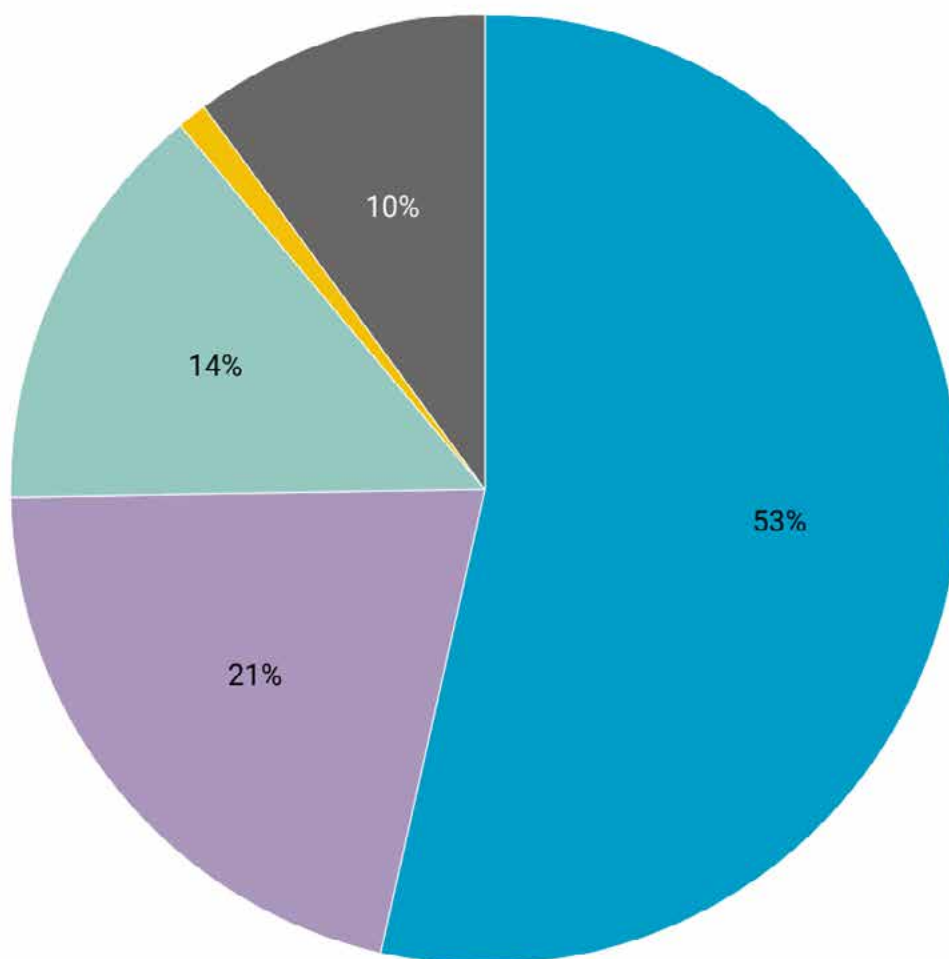
Results from 86 survey responses
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Of those who would not report fly-tipping if they came across it, a majority (53%) state that they are unsure of who to report fly-tipping to, and a further 21% state that they do not know how to contact relevant bodies.

14% simply do not feel that the issue concerns them.

Interestingly, given the mixed results in the public's classification of situations in question
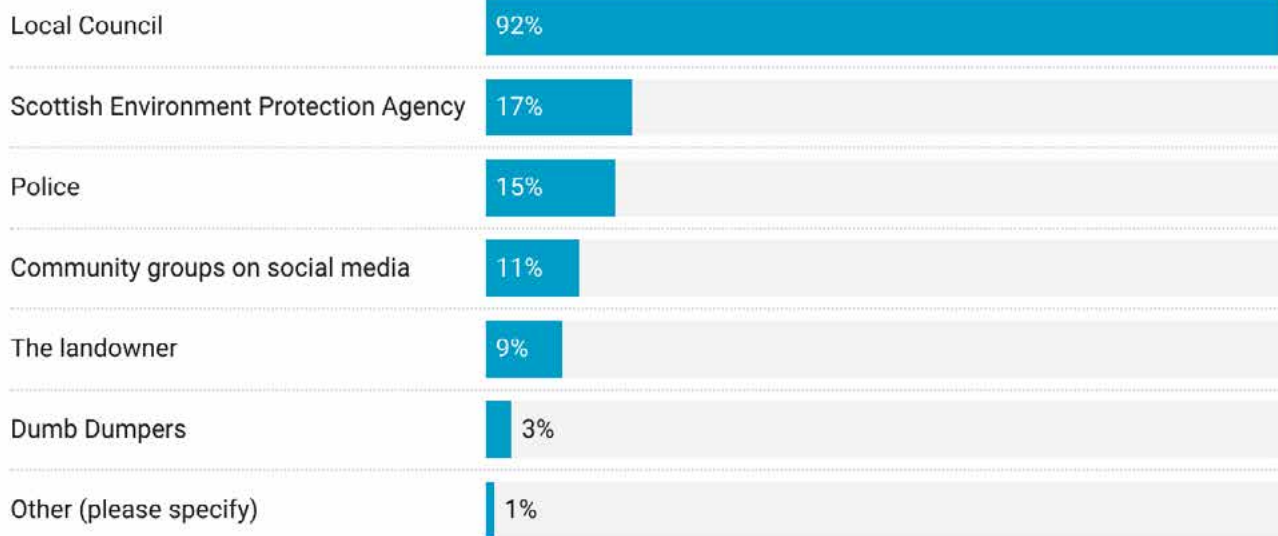
1 as fly-tipping or littering, only 1% state that they would not report fly tipping because they are not confident in recognising it.

Some gave open answers elaborating on other reasons they would refrain from reporting fly-tipping. The most popular open response provided was that nothing would be done about it. Second to this, several responses felt that someone else likely has/will report it anyway. Finally, a couple of responses did not want to cause problems for their neighbours.

4.3 Who would you report fly-tipping to?

Who would you report fly-tipping to if you came across it?

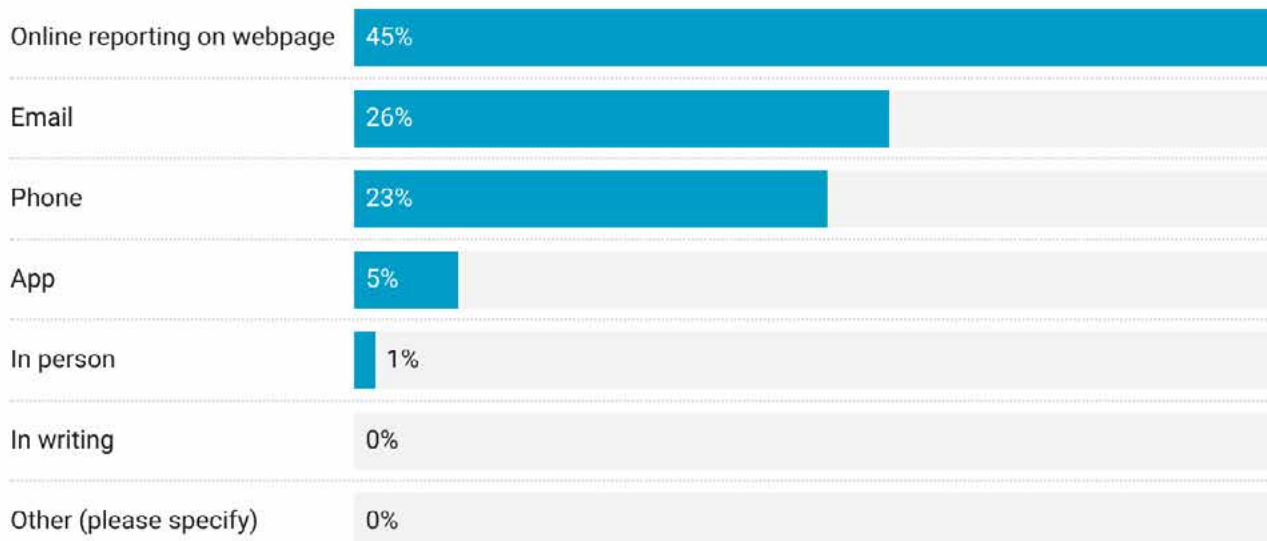|	
Local Council	92%
Scottish Environment Protection Agency	17%
Police	15%
Community groups on social media	11%
The landowner	9%
Dumb Dumpers	3%
Other (please specify)	1%

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Of those that would either always or in certain circumstances report fly tipping, 92% would direct their report to their local council. The local council are clearly the most popular point of call, with SEPA, the police, and community groups on social media also mentioned by over 10% of respondents. Interestingly, those from the most affluent areas (SIMD 5) are much more likely than respondents from all other areas to consider reporting fly-tipping to community groups on social media.

4.4 Preferred method for reporting fly-tipping

What method would you prefer to use to report fly-tipping?

Method	Percentage
Online reporting on webpage	45%
Email	26%
Phone	23%
App	5%
In person	1%
In writing	0%
Other (please specify)	0%

Results based on 968 survey responses
Created with Datawrapper

A plurality of respondents, 45%, report that they would prefer to report fly-tipping on a website online. Around a quarter report that they would like to use email or the phone (26% and 23% respectively). Other options are far less popular, with making a report in writing not even gaining 1% of the vote.

As could be expected, higher percentages of middle aged respondents (35-54) would prefer using a webpage to report fly-tipping than those aged 55 and over. Conversely, older age groups (those over 55) are more

open to using email or the phone than those aged 35-44. Regarding the option of an app, respondents from Glasgow were significantly more likely than respondents from Lothian to want to use an app: 12% of Glaswegians favoured this option compared to 2% of respondents from Lothian.

Among those who selected app, the most consistently given answer was that an app run by a local authority would be the type of app that people would prefer to use to report fly-tipping.

5 Responsibility for costs of fly-tipping

5.1 Perceptions on current responsibility

Who do you think is currently responsible for the costs of cleaning up fly-tipping?

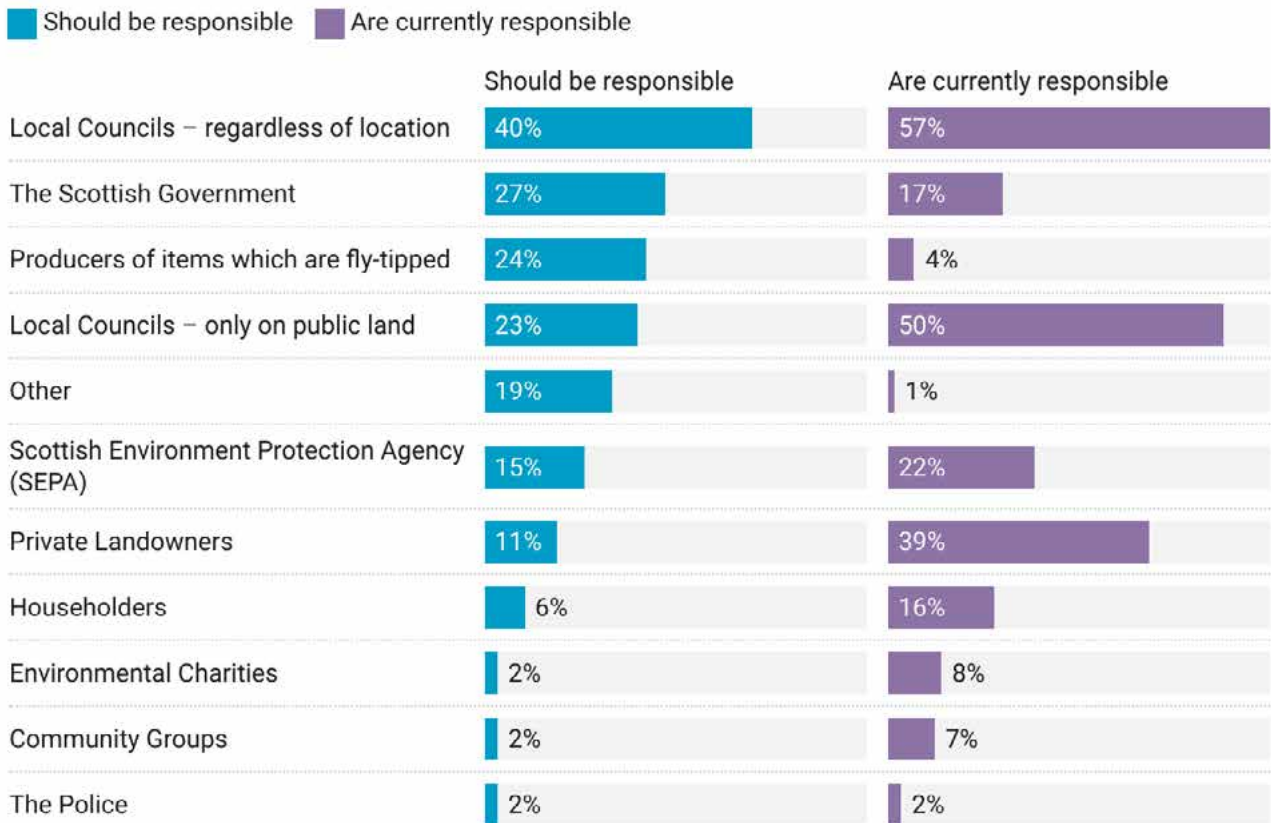|	
Local Councils – regardless of location	57%
Local Councils – only on public land	50%
Private Landowners	39%
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)	22%
The Scottish Government	17%
Householders	16%
Environmental Charities	8%
Community Groups	7%
Producers of items which are fly-tipped	4%
The Police	2%
Other	1%
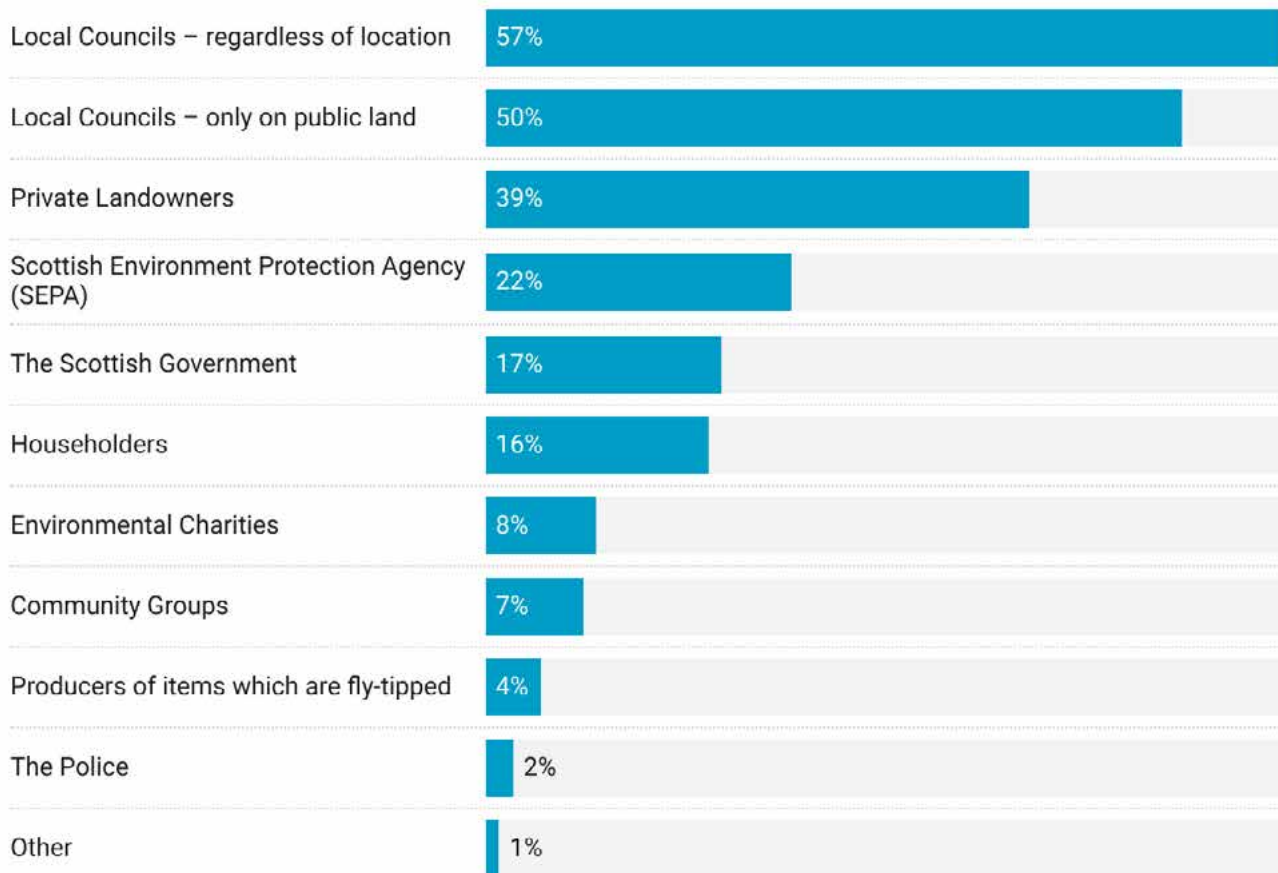
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Overall, a majority of Scots stated that local councils are responsible for the costs of cleaning up fly-tipping, both on public land (50%) and regardless of the location of the fly-tipping (57%). Almost 4 in 10, (39%) believe the costs are currently taken on by private landowners.

responsibility for the cost of fly-tipping should be distributed. The asymmetry demonstrates a clear disconnect between public expectations and perceptions of reality.

5.2 Who should be responsible for the costs

The chart below shows how these statistics compare to how respondents think the

Responsibility for the cost of fly-tipping

■ Should be responsible   ■ Are currently responsible

	Should be responsible	Are currently responsible
Local Councils – regardless of location	40%	57%
The Scottish Government	27%	17%
Producers of items which are fly-tipped	24%	4%
Local Councils – only on public land	23%	50%
Other	19%	1%
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)	15%	22%
Private Landowners	11%	39%
Householders	6%	16%
Environmental Charities	2%	8%
Community Groups	2%	7%
The Police	2%	2%

Results from 1058 survey responses
Created with Datawrapper

While a plurality, 40%, still believe local councils, regardless of location, should be responsible for costs, a further 27% highlight a national level role for the Scottish Government. Almost a quarter (24%) believe the producers of fly-tipped items should be responsible for the cost, compared to 4% who believe this is currently the case. Additionally, the proportion who think private landowners should be responsible for costs is far less (11%) than the proportion who believe they are currently paying for fly-tipping clean-up costs (39%).
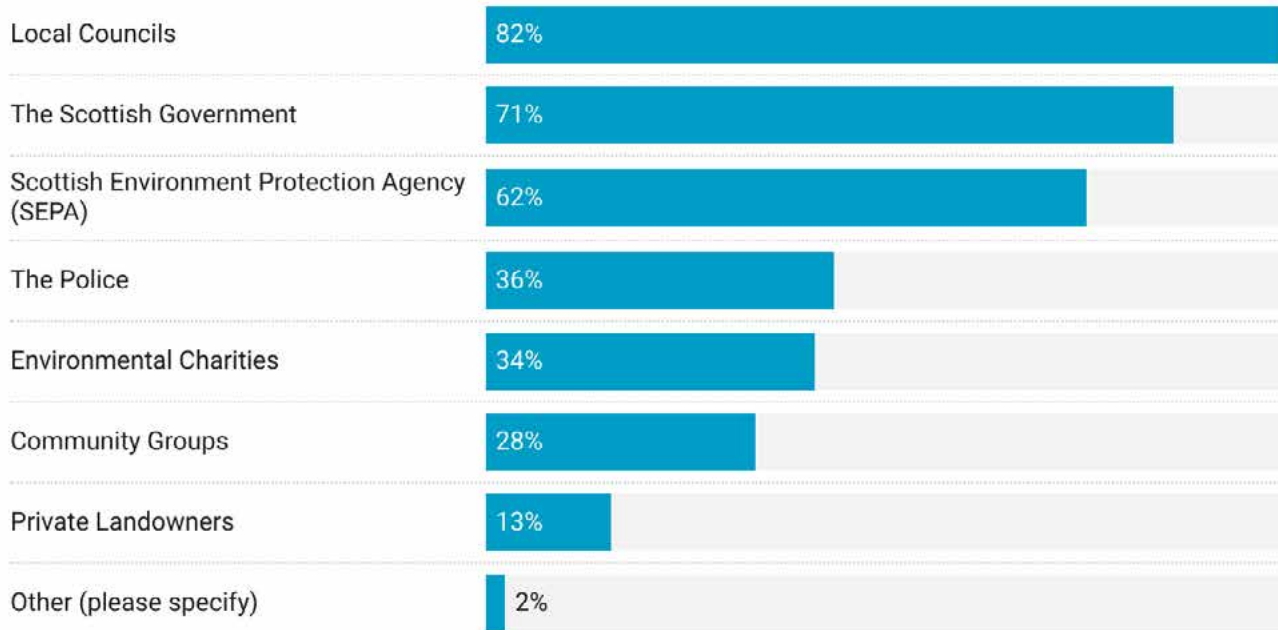
Looking to the future, different demographic groups believe different groups should be responsible for fly tipping. For instance, 37% of respondents aged 16-34 believe that the Scottish Government should be responsible for the costs, significantly higher than the 21% of 65+ respondents who feel the same way. Similarly, 52% of respondents from the most affluent areas (SIMD5) believe local councils should carry the costs, significantly higher

than the 35% of SIMD3 respondents who feel the same way.

5.3 Responsibility for information on fly-tipping

Following a similar pattern to the data above, the vast majority (82%) of Scots believe local councils should be responsible for providing information to prevent fly-tipping. However, seven in ten (71%) also see a role for Scottish Government, and 62% mentioned SEPA as a source of information. Interestingly, while overall more than a third (36%) see a role for the police in spreading information to prevent fly-tipping, this rises to 42% among men and 57% amongst 16-34 year olds.

Who do you think should be responsible for providing information to prevent fly-tipping?

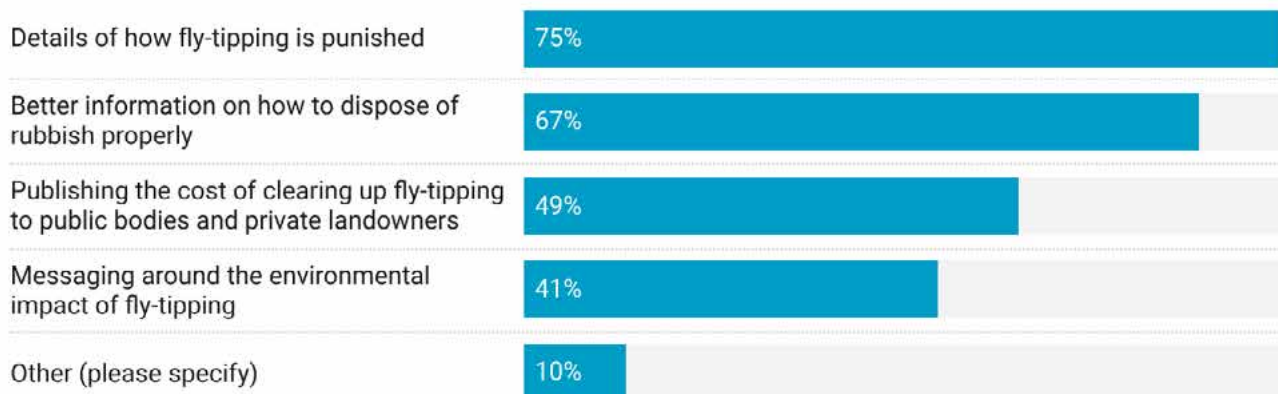|	
Local Councils	82%
The Scottish Government	71%
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)	62%
The Police	36%
Environmental Charities	34%
Community Groups	28%
Private Landowners	13%
Other (please specify)	2%

Results from 1058 survey responses
Created with Datawrapper

When it comes to what information people think should be provided, the chart below demonstrates that three-quarters (75%) think warnings about punishment for fly-tipping could play a role in dissuading this behaviour. Additionally, two-thirds (67%) see better information about how to properly dispose of rubbish as useful. Less than half of Scots (49%) believe publishing the cost of clearing up fly-tipping or messaging around its environmental impact would be helpful to prevent fly tipping.

What information do you think would help prevent fly-tipping?

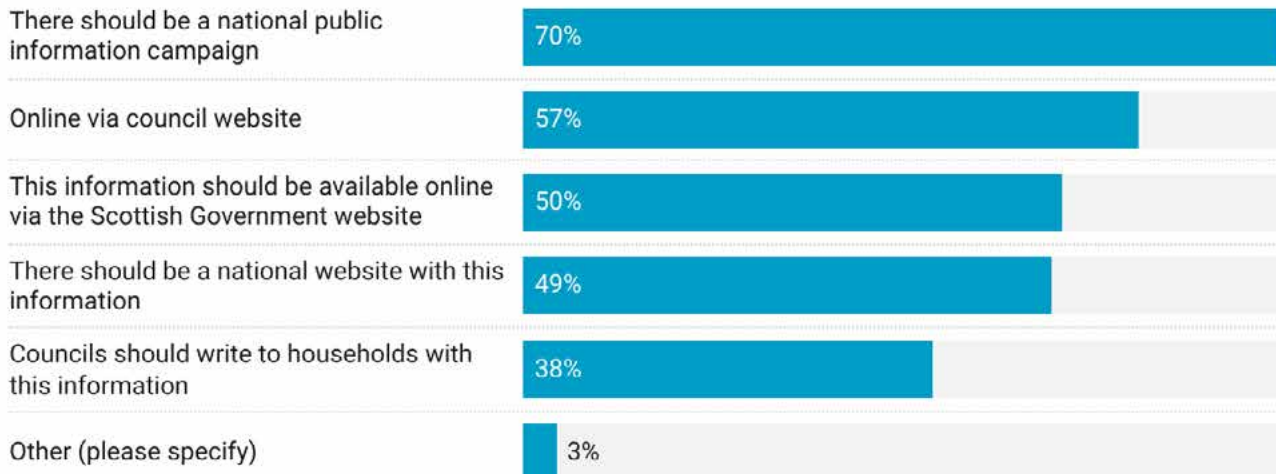|	
Details of how fly-tipping is punished	75%
Better information on how to dispose of rubbish properly	67%
Publishing the cost of clearing up fly-tipping to public bodies and private landowners	49%
Messaging around the environmental impact of fly-tipping	41%
Other (please specify)	10%

Created with Datawrapper

Those aged 16-34 were less likely than older age groups to view publishing the cost of fly-tipping as an effective strategy. Only 32% from this age group support this option, compared to 57% of the 65+ age group. The chart below shows where respondents believe this information should be made available.

Where do you think information regarding preventing fly-tipping should be made available?

There should be a national public information campaign	70%
Online via council website	57%
This information should be available online via the Scottish Government website	50%
There should be a national website with this information	49%
Councils should write to households with this information	38%
Other (please specify)	3%

Created with Datawrapper

The most popular option for displaying information about fly-tipping is to use a national public information campaign. Second to this, around six in ten (57%) Scots believe the information should be available online via the council website, and half think it should be available on the Scottish Government website. Slightly less than half (49%) support the creation of a national website displaying this information. The least support is present for councils writing to households with this information.