

Bedford CSP Consultation – 2026

The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) carries out regular Strategic Assessments. This makes use of a range of partnership information including; Police recorded Crime and Anti-social behaviour (ASB) data, demographic information and environmental services data.

Based on the Strategic Assessment, a Community Safety Strategic Plan is either written or refreshed. Data from this consultation will be used in the 2026 Strategic Assessment and to develop future Strategic Plans for the Partnership.

Public consultations form an important part of the Partnerships evaluation process, gathering information about the community's perception of crime and disorder and awareness of key issues in both their local area and the town centre.

The 2026 consultation has been designed to:

- Understand the public's awareness and perception of the Partnerships ability to tackle crime and ASB
- Understand how safe people feel in their local communities and the positive and negative factors that contribute to their feelings of safety
- Gain an understanding of the issues that cause the greatest level of public concern
- Track how perceptions and concerns have changed over the last three years

The survey also includes a question to identify if respondents have themselves been a victim and whether they reported this to the Police. The information in these questions helps us to identify any barriers to reporting which the Partnership can look to address.

By collecting and using geographic, equality and diversity monitoring data, the CSP is also able to compare the opinions of different sections of the community.

As with previous consultation exercises, much of this year's survey was delivered via face to face engagement at community events. This creates a positive opportunity to raise awareness of the CSP and promote many of the support services that are available.

An online version of the survey was made available through the Borough's web site and promoted through the Partnership's social media channels and direct messaging platforms.

The data collected in this survey may have a wider use within the Partnership and is shared with CSP members in the Borough to help set priorities, develop plans and support funding bids.

This exercise took place over the summer of 2026, between early April and the end of July.

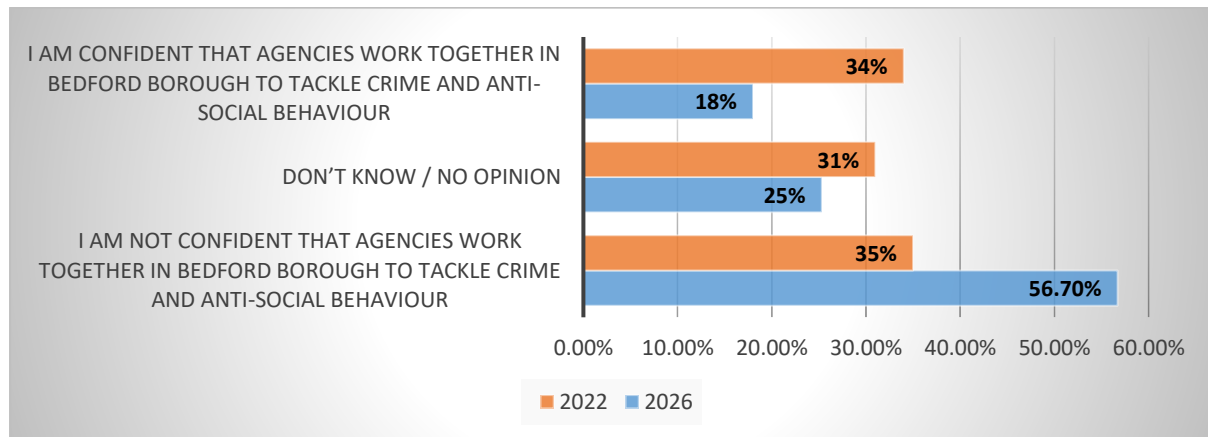
Over the period a total of 428 respondents completed survey, where a valid postcode was provided this has been matched to the local Ward. Completed surveys were received from all 28 wards in the Borough.

- 61% of respondents recorded a post code from an urban ward
- 39% of respondents recorded a post code from a rural ward.

Awareness and Confidence in the CSP

50.5% of respondents stated that they 'Had heard of the Safer Bedford, Community Safety Partnership before completing the Survey. This is a positive increase from the last time the survey was conducted where only 35.5% gave the same answer.

When asked about levels of confidence in the Partnership ability to work together to tackle Crime & ASB, only 18% stated that they were confident. Overall levels of confidence recorded in the 2026 survey are lower than those recorded in 2022 and 2019.

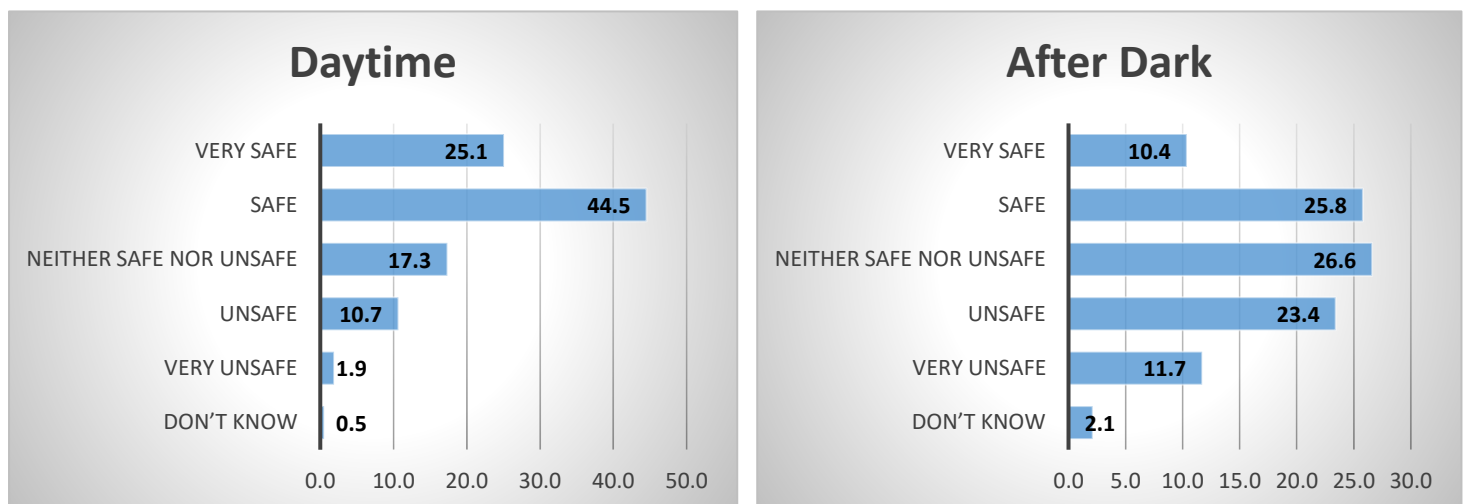


Recommendation: The Partnership needs to look for more opportunities to raise awareness of joint working in the Community

Perceptions of Safety, ASB & Crime in the Local Area

Respondents were asked a number of questions about the local area where they live.

How safe or unsafe do you feel when outside in the local area where you live?

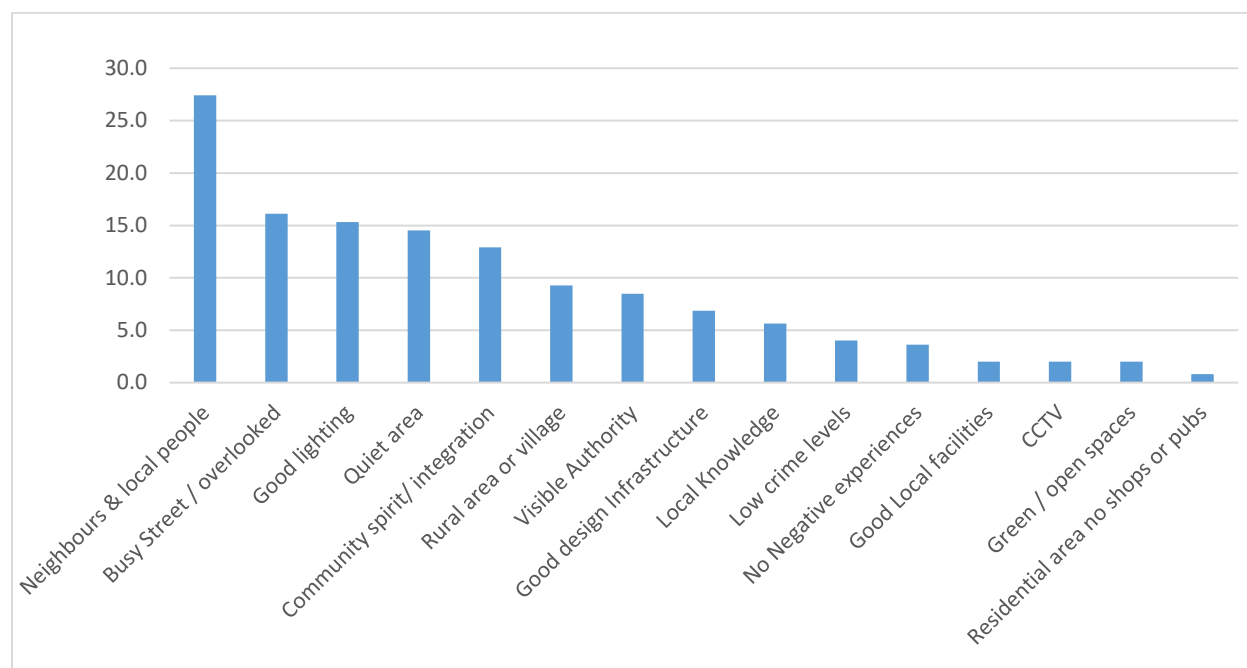


- 69.6% felt 'Very Safe' or 'Safe' in the daytime, compared to 76% in 2022
- 36.2% felt 'Very Safe' or 'Safe' after dark, compared to 31% in 2022
- 1.9% felt 'Very Unsafe' in the daytime, compared to just 3% in 2022
- 11.7% felt 'Very Unsafe' after dark, compared to 15% in 2022
- 13.3% of females stated that they feel 'very unsafe' in their local area after dark, compared to 10.1% of males.

Respondents were asked to provide examples of what makes their local area 'Safe' or 'Unsafe'. This was an open text question, each of which has been reviewed to identify key themes.

'What makes your local area a safe place?'

248 respondents completed this question listing one or more reasons, the graph below shows the percentage of respondents that mentioned each theme.



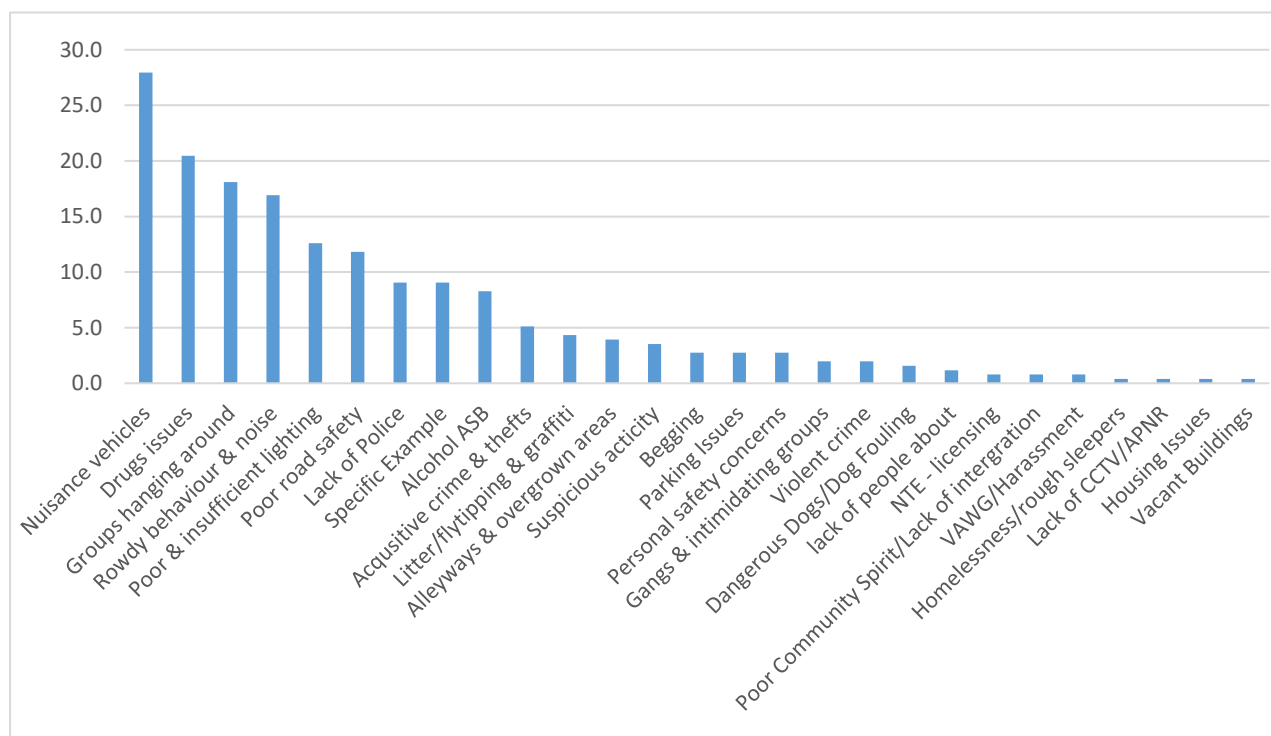
The top 10 themes are listed below, alongside those themes that were identified in the 2022 report.

	2026 - Top Ten	% Total		2022 - Top Ten	% Total
1	Neighbours & Local People	27.4%	1	Neighbours & Local People	30%
2	Busy Street / Overlooked	16.1%	2	Busy Street / Overlooked	22%
3	Good Lighting	15.3%	3	Community Spirit/ Integration	19%
4	Quiet Area	14.5%	4	Good Lighting	19%
5	Community Spirit/ Integration	12.9%	5	Quiet Area	11%
6	Rural Area or Village	9.3%	6	Local Knowledge	9%
7	Visible Authority	8.5%	7	Visible Authority	8%
8	Good Design Infrastructure	6.9%	8	Low Crime Levels	8%
9	Local Knowledge	5.6%	9	CCTV	7%
10	Low Crime Levels	4%	10	Rural Area or Village	6%

There is a consistent message that indicates that the people within the local community make others feel safe; their immediate neighbours and those that live in the area. The presence of organisations who have a role in addressing community safety issues are also key. Physical assets such as CCTV and lighting increase people perception as does the design of the local area. The physical makeup of the local area also affects perceptions of safety; some reference the benefits of a 'busy area' whilst others talk about a 'quiet area' or a 'rural village'.

‘What makes your local area an unsafe place?’

254 respondents completed this question listing one or more reasons, the graph below shows the percentage of respondents that mentioned each of theme.



The top 10 themes are listed below, alongside those themes that were identified in the 2022 report.

	2026 – Top Ten	% Total		2022 – Top Ten	% Total
1	Nuisance Vehicles	28%	1	Drugs Issues	24%
2	Drugs Issues	20.5%	2	Groups Hanging Around	22%
3	Groups of People Congregating	18.1%	3	Rowdy Behaviour & Noise	20%
4	ASB - Threatening & Rowdy Behaviour	16.9%	4	Poor / Insufficient Lighting	17%
5	Poor/ Insufficient Lighting	12.6%	5	Speeding Vehicles	11%
6	Poor Road Safety	11.8%	6	Lack of Police	10%
7	Lack of Police	9.1%	7	Street Drinking	9%
8	Alcohol ASB	8.3%	8	Fear of Crime	9%
9	Acquisitive Crime & Theft	5.1%	9	Alcohol ASB	8%
10	Litter/Fly Tipping & Graffiti	4.3%	10	Acquisitive Crimes & Thefts	7%

The overall list of concerns is broadly consistent with previous surveys, a new significant area of concern in this year's survey is the impact of Nuisance Vehicles which is the top theme raised by residents.

Levels of Crime & ASB in the local Area

Respondents were asked if they felt levels of Crime and ASB in their local area had 'increased', 'stayed the same' or 'decreased' in the last 12 months.

- 46.5% felt that levels of ASB had increased over the last 12 months which compares to 36% in 2022, whilst just 5.1% felt they had reduced compared to 7% in 2022
- 40.1% felt that levels of Crime had increased over the last 12 months which compares to 38% in 2022, whilst just 5% felt they had reduced compared to 5% in 2022

Recommendation: These perceptions should be compared to recorded Crime & ASB in the Borough. It may provide evidence of under reporting or lack of awareness in some communities

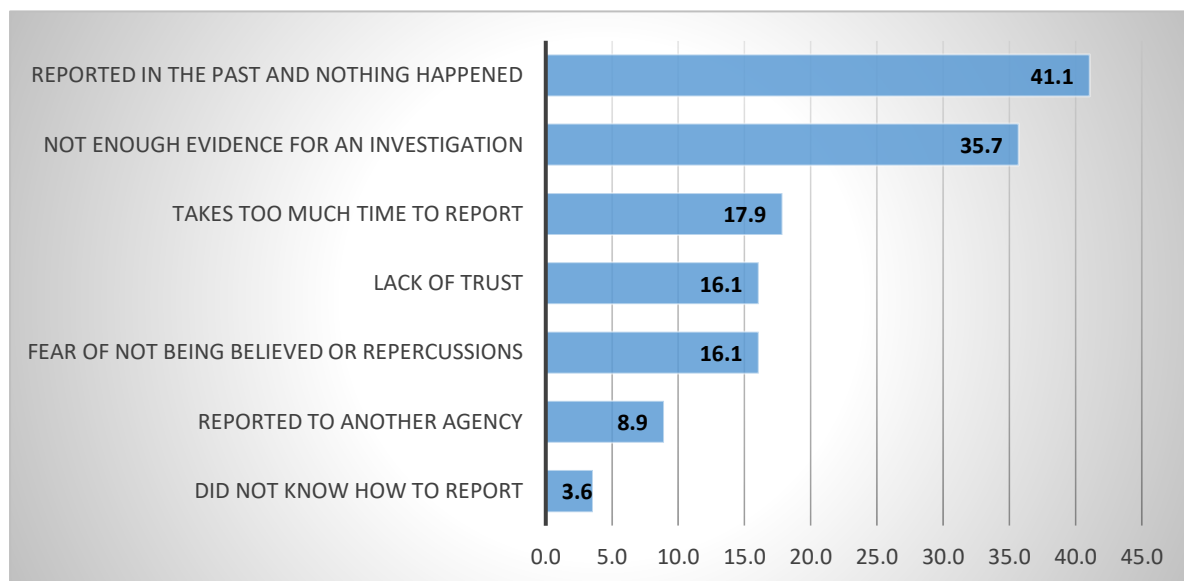
Victims of Crime & ASB

Respondents were asked if they have been 'a victim of crime or ASB in the last 12 months' they were also asked if they had 'reported to the Police'

- 30.9% of those that completed the survey said that they had been a 'victim of crime or ASB in the last 12 months', which is broadly consistent with 2022 (28%)
- 48.3% of those victims stated that they 'Did not report it to the Police', an increase from 2022 (44%)

Where respondents had not reported to the Police they were asked why.

56 people answered the question giving one or more reason which are summarised below, showing the percentage of respondents that mentioned each.

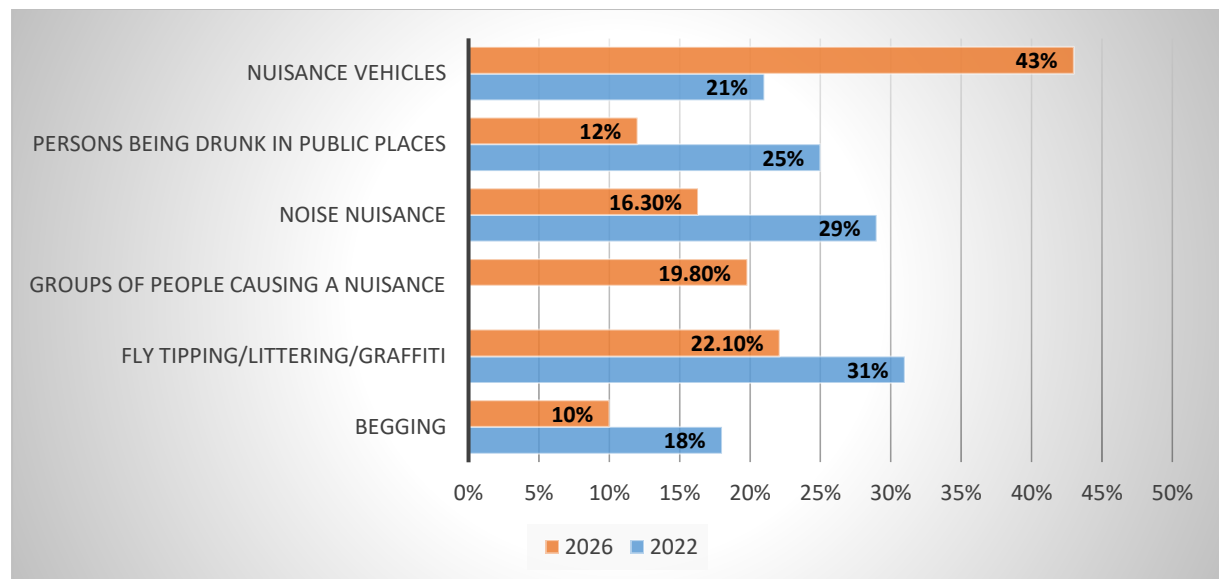


All of these barriers to reporting will inhibit the Partnerships ability to both fully understand levels of Crime and ASB within our communities and take meaningful action to address the issues.

Recommendation: The Partnership needs to continue to improve confidence in services and encourage victims to report and access support

ASB Concerns in the Local Area

Respondents were given a number of categories of ASB and asked to indicate the level of problem in their local area. The graph below shows the proportions of respondents that suggested the issue is a 'Serious Problem' with the comparator to the survey in 2022. Note one new theme added for 2026 'Groups of people causing a nuisance' which has no comparative data.



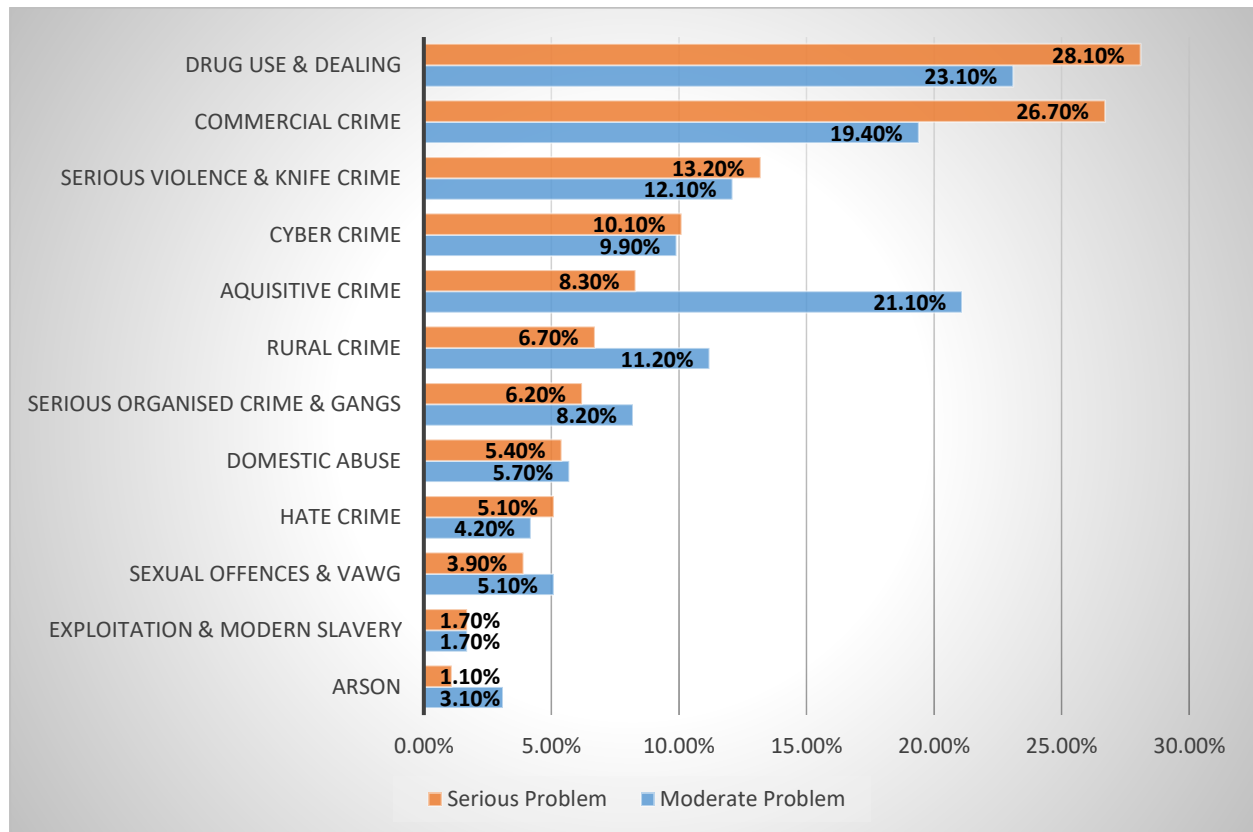
Four themes show a reduction in concern; 'Persons being drunk in public places', 'Noise nuisance', 'Fly tipping/littering/graffiti' and 'Begging'.

There is a significant increase in concerns around 'Nuisance vehicles', which mirrors the responses given to the early question 'What makes your local area an unsafe place'

Recommendation: More work is needed to understand the nature of Vehicle Nuisance and any specific locations, so this can be compared to Police and Council recorded data.

Crime Concerns in the Local Area

Respondents were given a number of categories of Crime and asked to indicate the level of problem in their local area; the graph below shows the results.



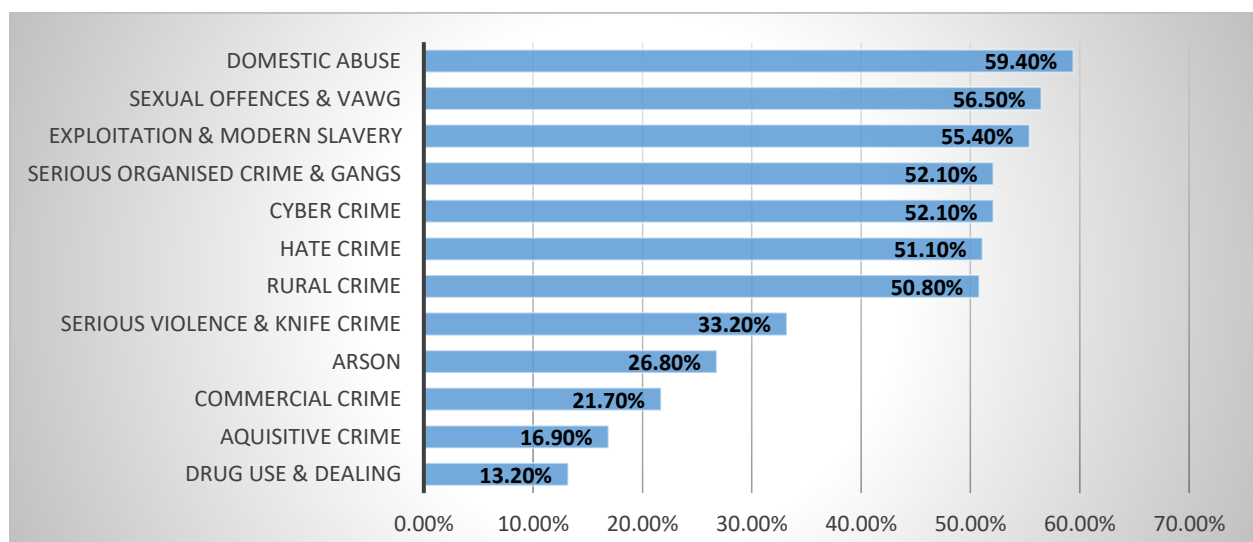
The list of Crime types has changed over the years to reflect emerging issue, but some keys areas are consistent with previous surveys.

Drug Dealing remains the top category concern for this year, as it has been in previous surveys.

Concerns around Acquisitive Crimes like Burglary, Robbery and Vehicle have reduced, but a new emerging area of concern is Commercial Crime which includes shoplifting.

Concerns around Serious Violence and Knife Crime remain high within local communities.

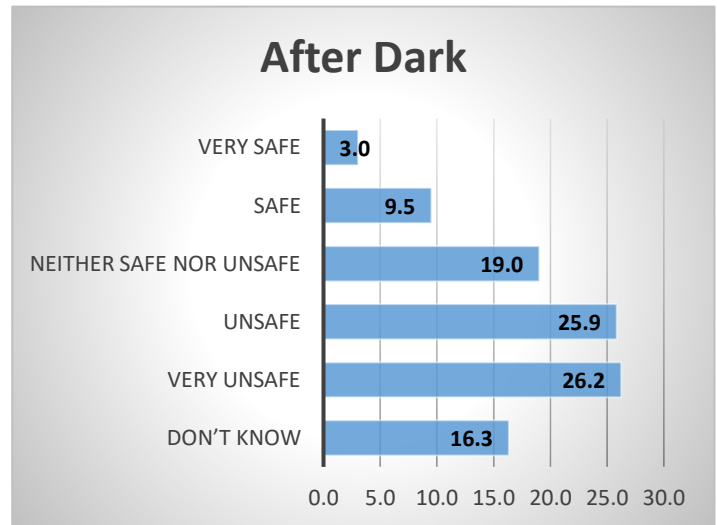
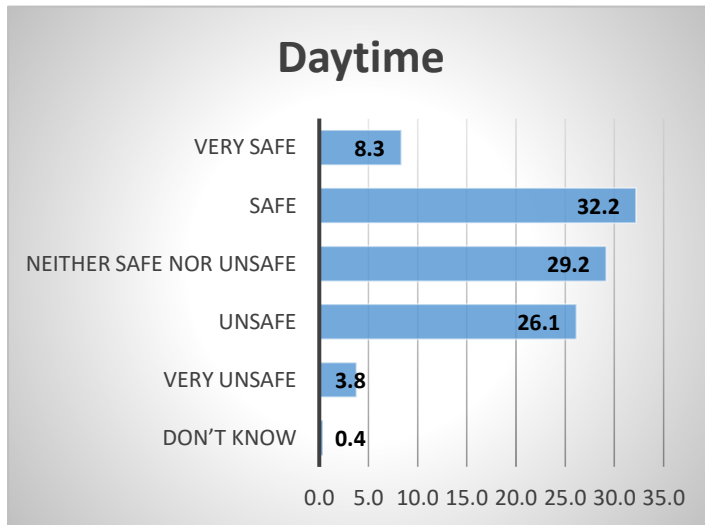
For seven of the Crime based themes more that 50% of respondents stated that they didn't know if the issue was a problem in their local area, with the exception of 'Rural Crime' these are often considered to be 'Hidden or Under-reported Crimes'.



Bedford Town Centre

A number of questions in the survey relate to people's perceptions of Bedford Town Centre.

How safe or unsafe do you feel when in Bedford Town Centre?



- 40.5% felt 'Very Safe' or 'Safe' in the day time, compared to 59% in 2022
- 12.5% felt 'Very Safe' or 'Safe' after dark, compared to 14% in 2022
- 3.8% felt 'Very Unsafe' in the day time, compared to 4% in 2022
- 26.2% felt 'Very Unsafe' after dark, compared to 28% in 2022

It is clear that perceptions of safety are greatly influenced by darkness with the majority of respondents (52%) stating they feel 'unsafe' or 'very unsafe' after dark. This is consistent with previous survey data.

- 30.5% of females stated that they feel 'very unsafe' in the Town Centre after dark, compared to 21% of males. These figures are consistent with the 2022 survey.

What makes Bedford Town Centre a safe place?

176 respondents completed the free text question; many gave more than one reason in their answer.

Each answer has been reviewed, and a list of key themes have been identified.

The top five themes are listed below;

- 41% stated that busy streets and lots of other people make them feel safe, (48% in 2022)
- 25% stated that visible authority in the area was positive (23% in 2022)
- 8% listed good lighting as a factor of safety (21% in 2022)
- 8% recognised the importance of CCTV (11% in 2022)
- 6.3% reference good local facilities (8% in 2022)

All of these themes are consistent with the previous surveys and are similar to the protective factors identified in residents' local areas.

What makes Bedford Town Centre an unsafe place?

195 respondents completed the free text question; many gave more than one reason in their answer. Each answer has been reviewed, and a list of the top ten themes are below

- 32.8% mentioned drug use and dealing in the Town Centre (24% in 2022)
- 28.2% referenced the negative impacts of groups hanging around (26.4% in 2022)
- 28.2% talked about Street Drinking and alcohol related ASB (39.7% in 2022)
- 27.2% raised concerns about begging on their perception of safety (23.6% in 2022)
- 18.5% referenced nuisance vehicles, particularly E Scooters which is a new area of concern
- 13.3% suggested that a lack of police resource in the town was a factor (13.6% in 2022)
- 10.8% felt that the presence of people claiming to be homeless made them feel less safe
- 10.3% said rowdy inconsiderate & noisy behaviour made them feel unsafe (14% in 2022)
- 6.2% referenced isolated areas of the Town Centre at night felt less safe
- 6.2% mentioned high levels of acquisitive crime and theft as a concern

Many of these areas are broadly consistent with previous surveys and are similar to the issues raised by residents in their local areas.

However, there are greater levels of concern around drugs and the negative impacts of alcohol, begging and the presence of people claiming to be homeless the Town Centre than in local areas.

In general, the factors that affect levels of safety in the Town Centre are not greatly dissimilar to those recorded in the local areas of the Borough.

- Feelings of safety are generally increased by the presence of other people, and further so by the visible presence of Authority
- Investment in the physical infrastructure is also important in terms of good quality CCTV and lighting
- Factors that negatively impact on safety are predominantly driven by the behaviour of other people in the area; this may be in relation to their misuse of drugs or alcohol or in the way that they congregate in large numbers being rowdy or intimidating
- Concerns around the lack of police resources are consistent with other previous surveys and are reflected in both the Town Centre and local areas
- Some feelings of being 'unsafe' appear to be about the perception of an issue and are more complicated to understand; the presence of people begging, or the way that groups of people are interpreted as threatening; these issues are more prevalent within the Town Centre data

How will the Survey Data be used?

The information gathered within the consultation will be shared with local Partners to be used to inform both strategic and local level work.

Data captured in this survey has been incorporated into the CSP Strategic assessment for 2026 and will be used to develop the new CSP plan for 2027-30.

More in depth evaluation will take place to understand how people's opinions, concerns and comments change from one place to another. This will support the development of action plans within a specific place or to address specific issues.

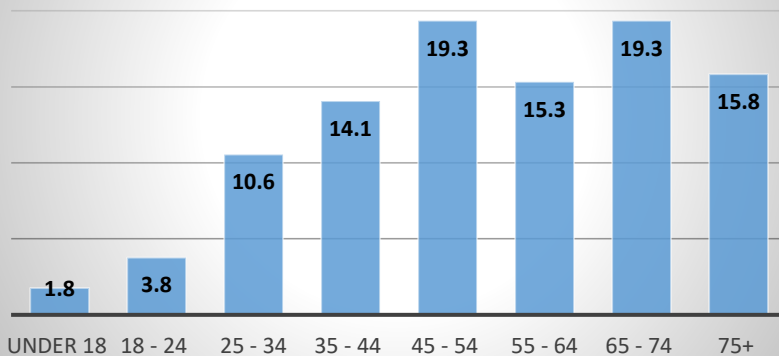
The survey will remain open to allow for continuous monitoring over the period of the new strategy to understand how options and awareness change through seasons and to identify any emerging issues.

Appendix 1 – Equality and Diversity Monitoring data

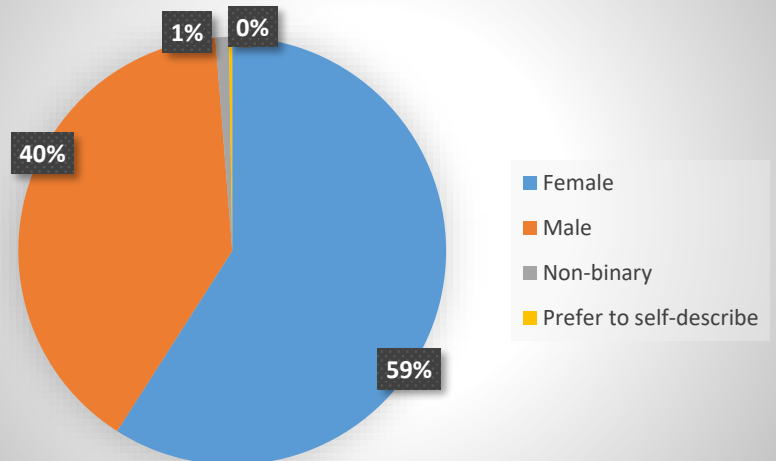
By collecting equality and diversity data the CSP can understand the opinions of different communities.

It is also important to ensure that the CSP Survey is reflective of the Borough diverse population. Demographic questions in the survey were optional, below is a summary of those that were willing to share their details.

Age



Gender

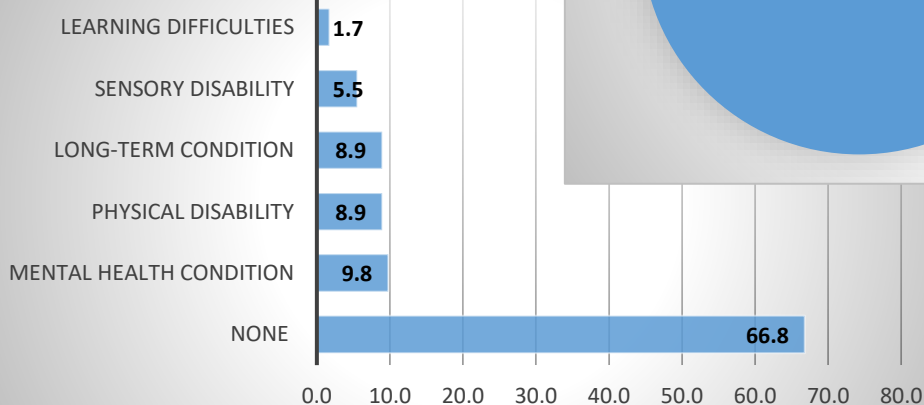


Sexual Orientation

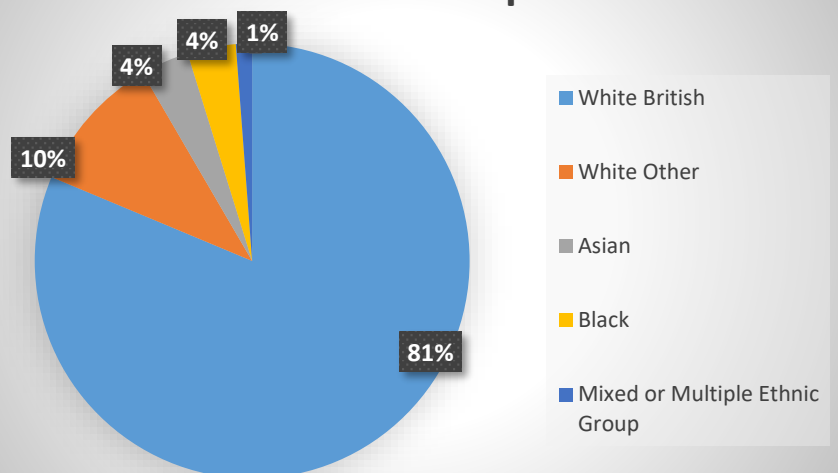
7.4% of respondents that answered the question were from the LGBTQ+ Community

Health Inequalities

33.2 % of those that answered the question said they were affected by one or more health condition



Ethnic Group



Map showing distribution of respondents that provided a Bedford Borough Post Code

