



# TOWN CENTRE PSPO CONSULTATION

May 2023

## ABSTRACT

Results of the survey into the renewal of Maidstone Town Centre PSPO.

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[Course title]

# Contents

Introduction .....	2
Methodology.....	3
Summary Findings.....	4
Visiting Maidstone Town Centre .....	5
People being drunk or rowdy in public places.....	5
People (e.g. beggars) loitering in a public place .....	6
People using or smoking legal highs in public .....	8
People using illegal substances (drugs) in public.....	9
People lying in or sleeping in a public place .....	11
Behaviours Witnessed in Maidstone Town Centre .....	13
Visiting Maidstone Town Centre Comments .....	15
Measure 1 - Street drinking in an anti-social manner .....	17
Measure 1 Comments.....	18
Measure 2 - Deterring unauthorised collections of money on the street or loitering for such purpose (persistent begging) .....	20
Measure 2 Comments.....	21
Survey Demographics .....	23
Advocacy Group Letter .....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

## Introduction

Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs) specify an area where activities are taking place that are or may likely be detrimental to the local community's quality of life. PSPOs impose conditions or restrictions on people using that area.

In 2017 the Council introduced a PSPO (Public Spaces Protection Order) that allowed the Council to deal with measures to reduce anti-social behaviour in the town centre around alcohol and persistent begging. We know that anti-social behaviour can detrimentally affect people's quality of life and we want to ensure that everyone is able to enjoy public spaces in our town centre, which are safe and welcoming. In 2020, the PSPO was reviewed which led to it remaining in place. It has now been three years and is due for review.

A review undertaken with community safety partners has found that the existing PSPO remains an effective tool against specific forms of anti-social behaviour. The existence of the enforcement tool acts as an effective deterrent against the anti-social behaviour associated with drinking and against persistent begging. Kent Police use the PSPO to challenge those behaving inappropriately as a result of alcohol. Alongside other legislation, the PSPO provides the police with legislation to engage, explain and encourage appropriate behaviour, using enforcement as a last resort. The PSPO similarly provides an excellent deterrent against persistent begging and enables our proactive outreach team to support those in need instead by helping them to access funds and support appropriately.

The two measures that were consulted on for renewal in the Town centre were:

1. Street drinking in an anti-social manner; and
  2. Deterring unauthorised collections of money on the street or loitering for such purpose (persistent begging).
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## Methodology

The survey was open between 10 March and 8 May 2023. It was promoted online through the Council's website and social media channels. Residents on the Council's Consultation mailing list were notified and sent an invitation to participate in the consultation.

There was a total of 788 responses to the survey. There was also a letter received from a national advocacy group (this is shown in full at the end of the report).

As an online survey is a self-selection methodology, with residents free to choose whether to participate or not, it was anticipated that returned responses would not necessarily be fully representative of the wider adult population. This report discusses the weighted results to overall responses by demographic questions to ensure that it more accurately matches the known profile of Maidstone Borough's population by these characteristics.

The margin of error for the overall results has been calculated as  $\pm 3.48\%$  at the 95% confidence level. This indicates that if we repeated the same survey 100 times, 95 times out of 100 the results would be between  $\pm 3.48\%$  of the calculated response, so the 'true' response could be 3.48% above or below the figures reported (i.e. a 50% agreement rate could in reality lie within the range of 53.48% to 46.52%).

Where reference has been made in the report to a 'significant difference' in response between difference groups, the proportional data has been z-tested. The z-test is a statistical test which determines if the percentage difference between subgroups is large enough, taking into account the population size, to be statistically significant (meaning that if we were to run the same survey 100 times, 95 times out of 100 the same result would be seen) or whether the difference is likely to have occurred by chance.

Please note that not every respondent answered every question, therefore the total number of respondents refers to the number of respondents for the question being discussed, not to the survey overall.

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## Summary Findings

- People being drunk or rowdy in public places was the behaviour that had the greatest proportion stating this is worse than it was three years ago at 46%. However, proportion of people responding negatively regarding people loitering in public places had the greatest increase compared to the 2020 survey (an increase of 12.4 percent points).
  - People loitering in public places was the behaviour that had the greatest proportion stating this has 'stayed about the same', across the behaviours this also have the greatest proportion that answered this way in the 2020 survey.
  - When asked questions about behaviour change in the last three years, economically active respondents were consistently more likely than economically inactive respondents to state that the behaviour being asked about had gotten worse in the last three years.
  - The top themes arising from the comments about behaviours seen or experienced in the town centre were: young people, large groups/gangs and alcohol & drunken behaviour.
  - Support for both measures was strong with over nine in ten respondents supportive of continuing with measure 1- street drinking in an anti-social manner and more than four in five respondents in favour of continuing with measure 2 - Deterring unauthorised collections of money on the street or loitering for such purpose (persistent begging).
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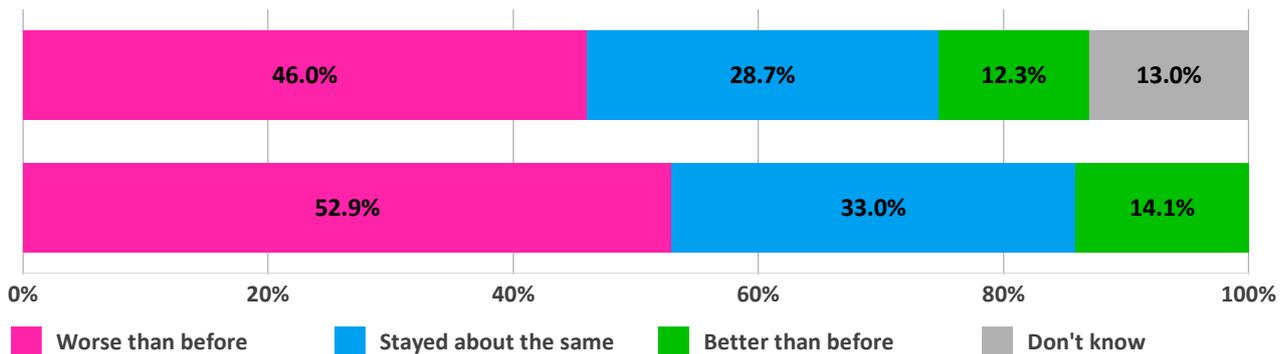
## Visiting Maidstone Town Centre

Survey respondents were asked how they felt Maidstone Town Centre had changed in the last three years in relation to specific behaviours. The available response options for these questions were 'worse than before', 'stayed about the same', 'better than before' and 'don't know'.

### People being drunk or rowdy in public places

Overall, there were 693 responses to this question. The most common response was 'worse than before' with 319 responding this way.

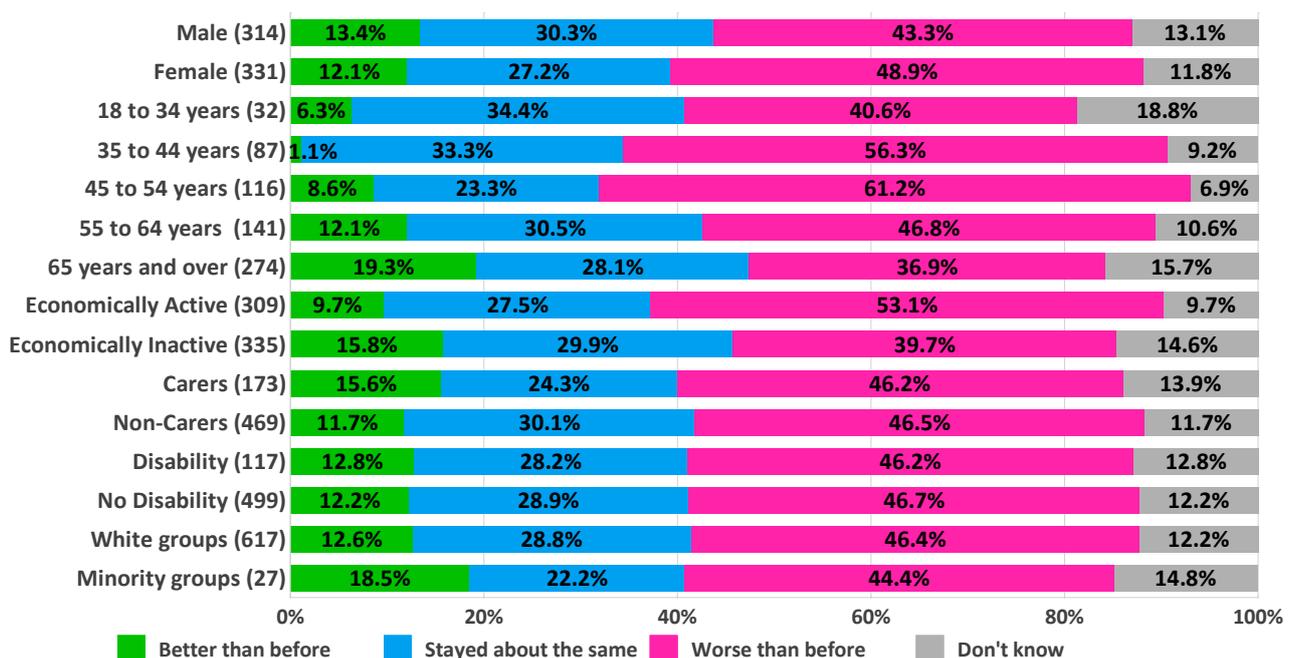
Overall, excluding respondents that answered 'don't know', more than half of all respondents said that people being drunk or rowdy in public places had gotten worse in the last three years.



When this survey was run in 2020, the most common response (including don't know responses) was 'Stayed about the same', with 35.0% answering this way. There has been an increase of 12.2% in the proportion of people responding that people being drunk or rowdy in public places has gotten worse over the last three years.

### Demographic Differences

The chart below shows how the response differs across the different demographic groups. Significant differences and changes in response from the 2020 consultation are shown in the table below.

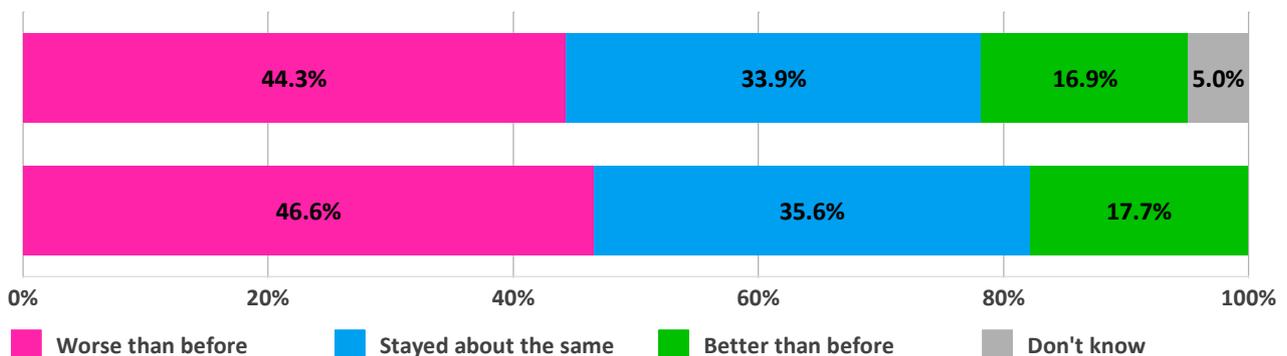


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2020 the most common response from males was that people being drunk or rowdy in the Town Centre had 'stayed about the same' while the most common response for female respondents in 2020 was that this behaviour was 'worse than before'.</li> <li>For 2023 the most common response for both genders was that people being drunk or rowdy in public places has gotten worse.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The 45 to 54 years had the greatest proportion across the age groups that said that people being drunk or rowdy in public places had gotten worse over the last three years at 61.2%.</li> <li>In 2020 the 18 to 34 years group had the greatest proportion that answered this way and the 65 years and over group had the lowest proportion that answered this way.</li> <li>The proportion of respondents aged 65 years and over stating that this behaviour had gotten worse increased since 2020 but remains the lowest across the age groups.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respondents that were economically active had a significantly greater proportion responding that this behaviour has gotten worse in the Town centre in the last three years with 53.1% responding this way compared to 39.7% of economically inactive respondents.</li> <li>Although the proportions answering this way have increased for both groups the profile of responses aligns with that from 2020.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2020 the most common response for people from white groups was that these type of behaviours had stayed about the same compared to three years prior. For 2023 the most common response for respondents from white groups and minority groups was that this behaviour has gotten worse.</li> </ul>

### People (e.g. beggars) loitering in a public place

Overall, there were 700 responses to this question. The most common response was 'worse than before' with 310 responding this way.

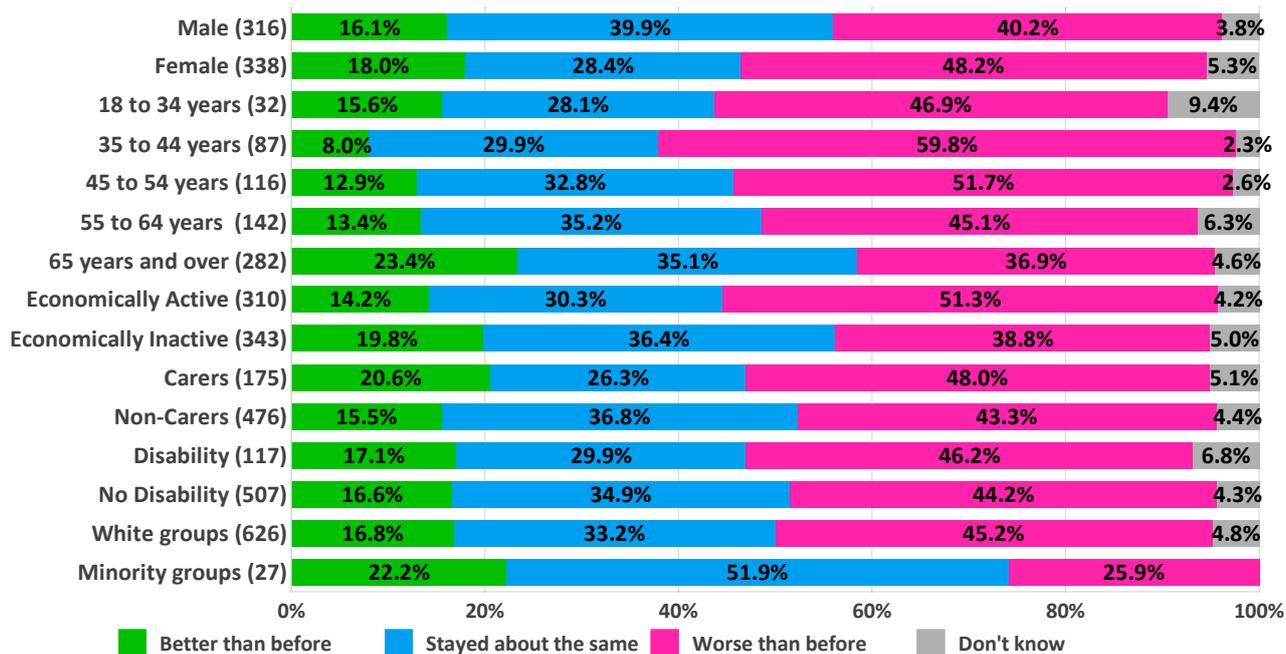
Overall, excluding respondents that answered 'don't know', just over four in nine respondents said that people loitering in public places has gotten worse in the last three years.



When this survey was run in 2020, the most common response (including 'don't know' responses) was 'stayed about the same', with 36.8% answering this way. There has been an increase of 12.4% in the proportion of people responding that people loitering in public places has gotten worse over the last three years.

### Demographic Differences

The chart shows how the response differs across the different demographic groups. Significant differences and changes in response from the 2020 consultation are outlined in the table below.

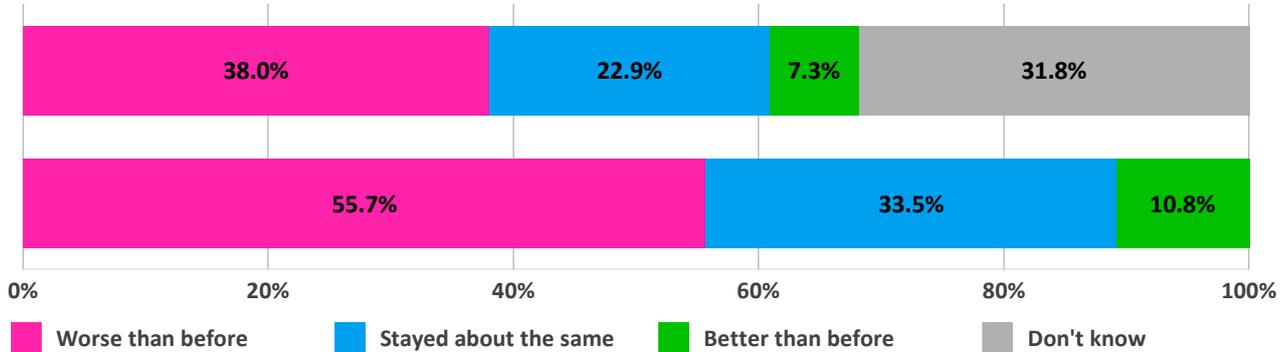


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Female respondents had a significantly greater proportion that responded 'worse than before' when asked about people loitering in public spaces at 48.2% compared to 40.2% of male respondents answering the same.</li> <li>This was the most common response for both groups. In 2020 the most common response for both groups was 'same as before'.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2020, the 45 to 54 years group had the greatest proportion that responded, 'worse than before' and 65 years and over group had the lowest proportion that answered this way. In 2020, the top response for all the age groups except the 45 to 54 years group was 'stay about the same'.</li> <li>For 2023, the top response across all age groups was 'worse than before' and the 35 to 44 years group had the greatest proportion that answered this way at 59.8%.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respondents that are economically active had a significantly greater proportion responding that this behaviour has gotten worse in the Town centre in the last three years with 53.1% responding this way compared to 38.8% of economically inactive respondents.</li> <li>Proportions answering this way have increased for both groups compared to 2020. In 2020 the most common response for both groups was 'stayed about the same' whereas for 2023 the most common response for these groups was 'worse than before'.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-carers had a significantly greater proportion that answered 'stayed about the same' when asked about people loitering in public places with 36.8% responding this way compared to 26.3% of carer respondents. In 2020.</li> <li>This was the most common response for non-carer, whereas for 2023 'worse than before' was the most common response for both groups.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The most common answer for respondents from white groups was 'worse than before', while 'better than before' was the most common response for people from white groups.</li> <li>In 2020, the most common response for white groups was 'same as before' and the most common response for minority groups was 'worse than before'.</li> </ul>

## People using or smoking legal highs in public

Overall, there were 695 responses to this question. The most common response was ‘worse than before’ with 264 responding this way.

Overall, excluding respondents that said ‘don’t know’, more than half of respondents said that people using or smoking legal highs in public has gotten worse in the last three years.



When this survey was run in 2020, the most common response (including ‘don’t know’ responses) was ‘don’t know’, with 33.6% answering this way. Since 2020, there has been an increase of 1.5 % in the proportion of people responding that people using or smoking legal highs in public places has gotten worse over the last three years.

### Demographic Differences

The chart shows how the response differs across the different demographic groups. Significant differences and changes in response from the 2020 consultation are outlined in the table below.



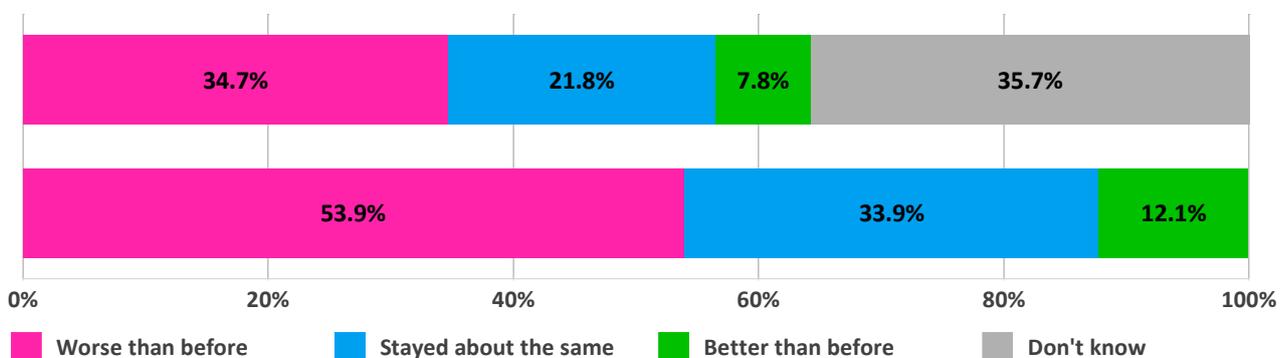
- In 2020, the 18 to 34 years group had the greatest proportion that responded, ‘worse than before’ and 65 years and over group had the lowest proportion that answered this way.
- In 2023, the 34 to 45 years group had the greatest proportion that answered ‘worse than before’ at 49.4%.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents aged 65 years and over still had the lowest proportion answering this way at 30%.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respondents that were economically active had a significantly greater proportion responding that this behaviour has gotten worse in the Town centre in the last three years with 43.7% responding this way compared to 33.1% of economically inactive respondents.</li> <li>• The top response for the economically inactive group remained unchanged from 2020 as 'don't know'.</li> </ul>

### People using illegal substances (drugs) in public

Overall, there were 692 responses to this question. The most common response was 'don't know' with 247 responding this way.

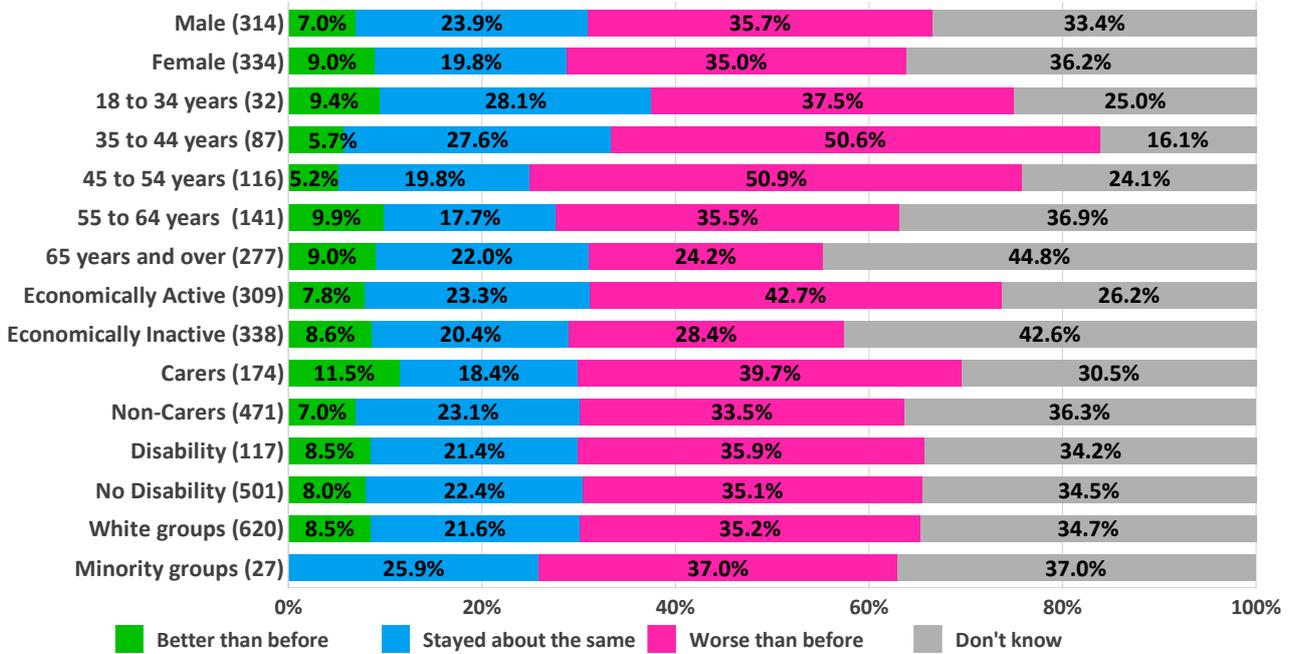
Overall, excluding respondents that said 'don't know' more than half of respondents said that people using illegal substances in public has gotten worse in the last three years.



When this survey was run in 2020, the most common response (including don't know responses) was 'don't know', with 34.1% answering this way. Since 2020, there has been an increase of 1.2% in the proportion of people responding that people using or smoking legal highs in public places was 'worse than before'.

### Demographic Differences

The chart shows how the response differs across the different demographic groups. Significant differences and changes in response from the 2020 consultation are outlined in the table below.

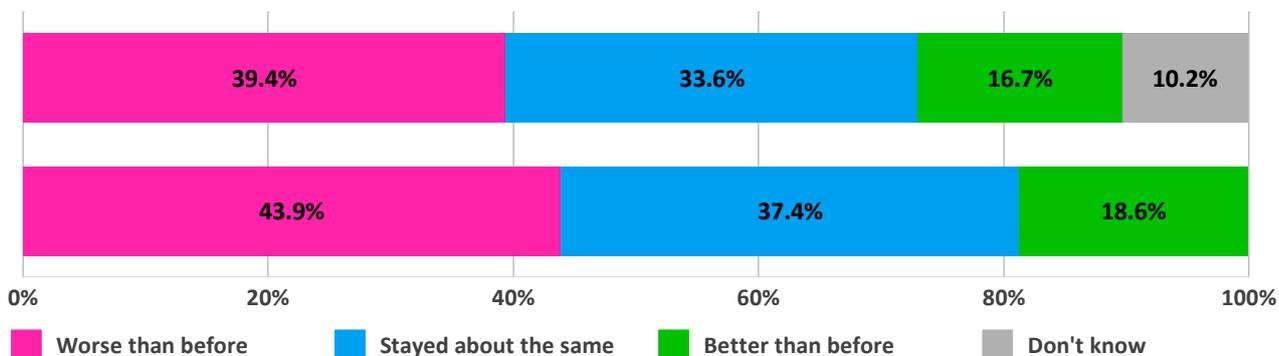


	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2020, the 18 to 34 years group had the greatest proportion that responded, 'worse than before' and 65 years and over group had the lowest proportion that answered this way.</li> <li>In 2023, the 45 to 54 years group had the greatest proportion that answered 'worse than before' at 50.9%, an increase of 10.1% in the proportion answering this way compared to 2021.</li> <li>Respondents aged 65 years and over still had the lowest proportion answering this way at 24.2%, an increase of 8.8 percent point compared to 2020.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respondents that were economically active had a significantly greater proportion responding that this behaviour had gotten worse in the Town centre in the last three years with 42.7% responding this way compared to 28.4% of economically inactive respondents.</li> <li>The top response for the economically inactive group remained unchanged from 2020 as 'don't know' with 42.6% responding this way.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unlike in 2020, respondents without a disability were not more positive than respondents with a disability, with no significant differences between the response patterns from these groups identified for 2023.</li> </ul>

## People lying in or sleeping in a public place

Overall, there were 687 responses to this question. The most common response was 'worse than before' with 271 responding this way.

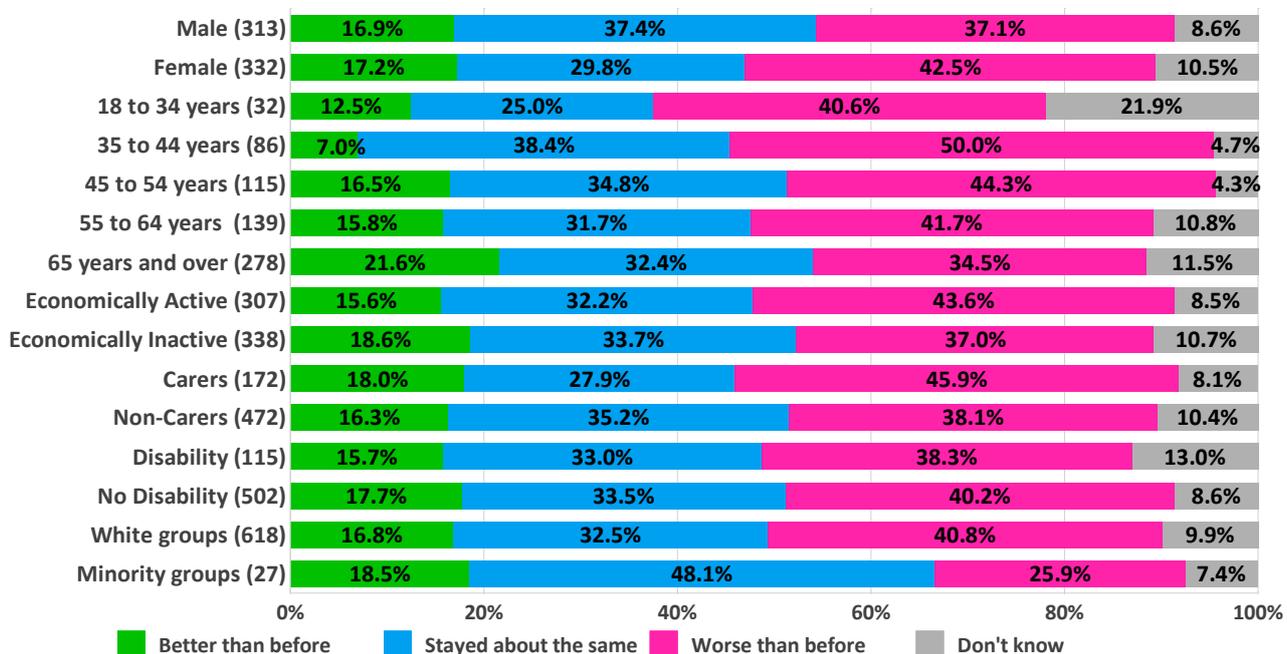
Overall, excluding respondents that said 'don't know', four in nine respondents said that people lying or sleeping in public place has gotten worse in the last three years.



When this survey was run in 2020, the most common response (including don't know responses) was 'stayed about the same', with 37.3% answering this way. Since 2020, there has been an increase of 10.1% in the proportion of people responding that people lying in or sleeping in public places has gotten worse over the last three years.

### Demographic Differences

The chart shows how the response differs across the different demographic groups. Significant differences and changes in response from the 2020 consultation are outlined in the table below.



- For 2023 the most common response across all age groups was 'worse than before'.
- In 2020, the most common response across all age groups was 'stayed about the same'.
- In 2020, the 18 to 34 years group had the greatest proportion that responded, 'worse than before',

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2023 the 35 to 44 years age group had the greatest proportion that answered, 'worse than before'.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There has been a decline in the proportion of disabled respondents answering, 'better than before', compared to the previous survey.</li> <li>In 2020, 29.9% respondents with a disability answered this way compared to 15.7% in 2023.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Since 2020 the proportion of respondents from minority groups answering 'worse than before' has dropped from 33.8% to 25.9%.</li> <li>The proportion of respondents from white groups answering this way has increased from 29.6% to 40.8%.</li> </ul>

## Behaviours Witnessed in Maidstone Town Centre

Survey respondents were provided with a free text box and asked what behaviours they had witnessed in Maidstone Town centre that concerned them.

There was a total of 469 comments submitted by respondents in relation to behaviours they have witnessed in Maidstone Town Centre, with many mentioning more than one type of behaviour that they have witnessed or that concerns them.

The top ten themes are shown in the table, alongside a sample of comments relating to that theme.

Theme	No.	Comments
Young people	118	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groups of youths hanging around.</li> <li>• Antisocial behaviour from the youngsters.</li> <li>• Teenagers in the town centre assaulting people or behaving inappropriately</li> </ul>
Gangs/Large groups	114	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gangs of males.</li> <li>• Groups of homeless, drunk or on drugs, feels threatening when walking past them.</li> <li>• Vandalism, public disturbance by groups.</li> </ul>
Alcohol & Drunken Behaviour	99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crowds of alcohol fuelled loud, foul language and intimidating people. Usually late evening to night time.</li> <li>• lunchtime 'binge drinking / bottomless brunch style.</li> <li>• Drunks being loud and intimidating, especially in Brenchley Gardens</li> </ul>
Violence & Intimidation	99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knife crime/ stabbings.</li> <li>• Fights, bad language, intimidation, people being aggressive.</li> <li>• The amount of young people who have knives in their possession and the behaviour of in particular teenage groups of girls fighting and attacking other females and security staff. This is being reported time and time again.</li> </ul>
ASB & Shouting	84	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very loud, irrational behaviour from mainly males.</li> <li>• People using foul and aggressive language.</li> <li>• I am aware of large groups of very rowdy teenagers are behaving with no concern for others, swearing constantly, throwing litter and generally making people feel uncomfortable.</li> </ul>
Begging	83	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have witnessed at least 3 different Eastern European looking people openly begging in Week Street.</li> <li>• There regularly seems to be a beggar on the paving outside Sainsburys towards the bus station.</li> <li>• Professional beggars acting like they are disabled and harassing people, shouting out shaking a tin.</li> </ul>
Drugs	72	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People are openly dealing drugs from car windows in and around Maidstone.</li> <li>• Nitrous oxide cannisters left in areas off of main roads, needles in car parks and physical assaults reported via media within town centre in the evening. Cannabis scent is regularly present along week Street.</li> </ul>
Rough Sleepers	64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel sad and frustrated that there are more homeless people in Maidstone. What is being done to support them. I believe that increased cost of living and reducing funding for support has let many people down.</li> <li>• There seems to be a lot more homeless, seems that the "displaced people" now congregate around the Kightrider Street car park entrance.</li> </ul>

Theme	No.	Comments
Bikes & E-Scooters	36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electric scooters being ridden illegally on footpaths, pedestrian streets, and town centre roads.</li> <li>• People on bicycles through the pedestrian areas and in paths making pedestrians have to get out of the way or worse go in the road.</li> </ul>
Avoid/Feel Unsafe	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I don't feel safe walking down the top end of Week Street, any time of day. I am also embarrassed about it.</li> <li>• The top end of week Street from Faith Street to Maidstone East feels very hostile at all times of day. I feel a little unsafe there and act wary I'll when there. I avoid when possible.</li> </ul>

## Visiting Maidstone Town Centre Comments

Survey respondents were provided with a free text box to provide comments they had about visiting Maidstone Town Centre.

There was a total of 455 comments submitted by respondents. Many of the comments covered more than one theme.

The top themes are shown in the table, alongside a sample of comments from that theme.

Theme	No.	Comments
Avoid	144	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to avoid now unless I need something.</li> <li>• No go areas for me do not shop in Maidstone now.</li> <li>• We rarely visit the town centre in the evening as there are too many undesirable people about, especially around the bars and clubs. During the day if I have to come into Maidstone I try to be as quick as possible, partly because of the cost of parking and partly because it is not a pleasant experience.</li> </ul>
Shops & Attractions	102	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not a particularly inspiring place to go any more. Shops boarded up. Shifty characters.</li> <li>• It is no longer a pleasure to walk around the town Centre as there are no longer good quality retail stores to attract the mid to older generation.</li> <li>• Not enough high-quality shops.</li> </ul>
Transport & Access	78	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I find the approaches to Maidstone town so off putting. Car parking is so expensive.</li> <li>• Public transport an issue - out of working hours rely on expensive taxis. Bus station already looking tired - refurb a waste of money and doesn't link easily to rail services.</li> <li>• Park and Ride close down has had a detrimental effect ie: congestion and parking, also an increase in traffic using the High Street.</li> <li>• The roads are a mess broken pavers replaced with wrong colour substitutes or tarmac.</li> </ul>
Unsafe/ Intimidating place	75	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feels unsafe after about 6pm in Week Street from Union Street to the station and often earlier.</li> <li>• I no longer feel safe visiting the town centre and wouldn't recommend people visit on their own.</li> <li>• Find it uncomfortable and not safe walking in the town after dark. This has got worse since lockdown</li> </ul>
Run Down	72	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Town becoming very dirty and tired.</li> <li>• I do visit town centre but apart from chequers centre and Fremlin walk, I find the town looks very run down and not inviting.</li> <li>• In past couple of years Maidstone has become run down. There is very little to attract people or even youngsters.</li> </ul>
ASB	49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The level of anti-social behaviour, drug users etc in Maidstone town centre actually makes me not want to come to the town for shopping or the night-time economy.</li> <li>• Antisocial and irresponsible behaviour are problems, but they're exacerbated by the lack of leisure options for the young.</li> <li>• I avoid the town where possible especially in the evenings. There are gangs of people acting threateningly and antisocially throughout the town centre.</li> </ul>
Cleanliness	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid it now as it is dirty, unwelcoming and no diversity in shops.</li> <li>• Generally noisy dirty &amp; needs renovating. The type &amp; nature of shops has deteriorated. The town is grubby &amp; not a nice place to visit any more.</li> </ul>

Theme	No.	Comments
Police	31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More police presents and use of CCTV to intervene when group of people are gathering and causing problems. No nonsense approach to people hanging around) gathering in large groups, drinking on streets if they have no place to be they should be moved on. This should be happening across the town centre.</li><li>• Try and avoid going to town centre due to increased lawlessness and lack of policing.</li><li>• Safe during the day but at night feels a bit creepy not enough police presence.</li></ul>

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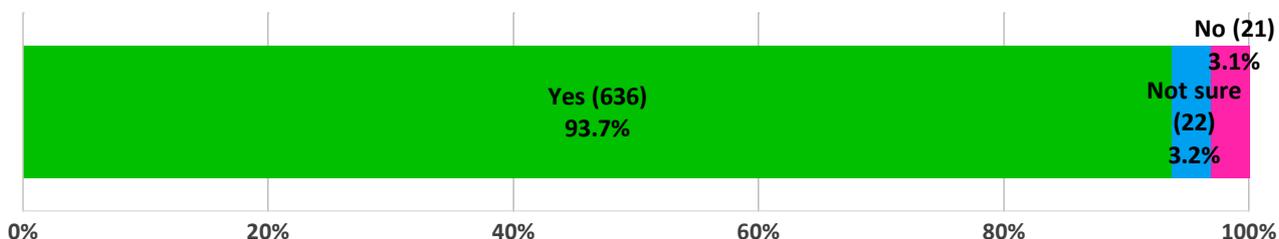
## Measure 1 - Street drinking in an anti-social manner

The current PSPO prohibits the drinking of alcohol within the specified area, where their behaviour as a result of consuming alcohol, affects the quality of life to those who live, work in or visit the area, other than within the curtilage of public houses or licensed premises. The area covered includes streets, green spaces and other public areas in the Town Centre PSPO area.

A person seen to be consuming alcohol in this area is in breach of the Order. An authorised officer will in the first instance explain to them that they are in a No Alcohol Zone and request them to stop drinking the alcohol and/or ask them to surrender alcohol in open containers. If the same person is seen consuming alcohol again within a reasonable time in a No Alcohol Zone after having already been advised and warned, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued to them.

Survey respondents were asked if they were in favour of renewing measure 1 as described above.

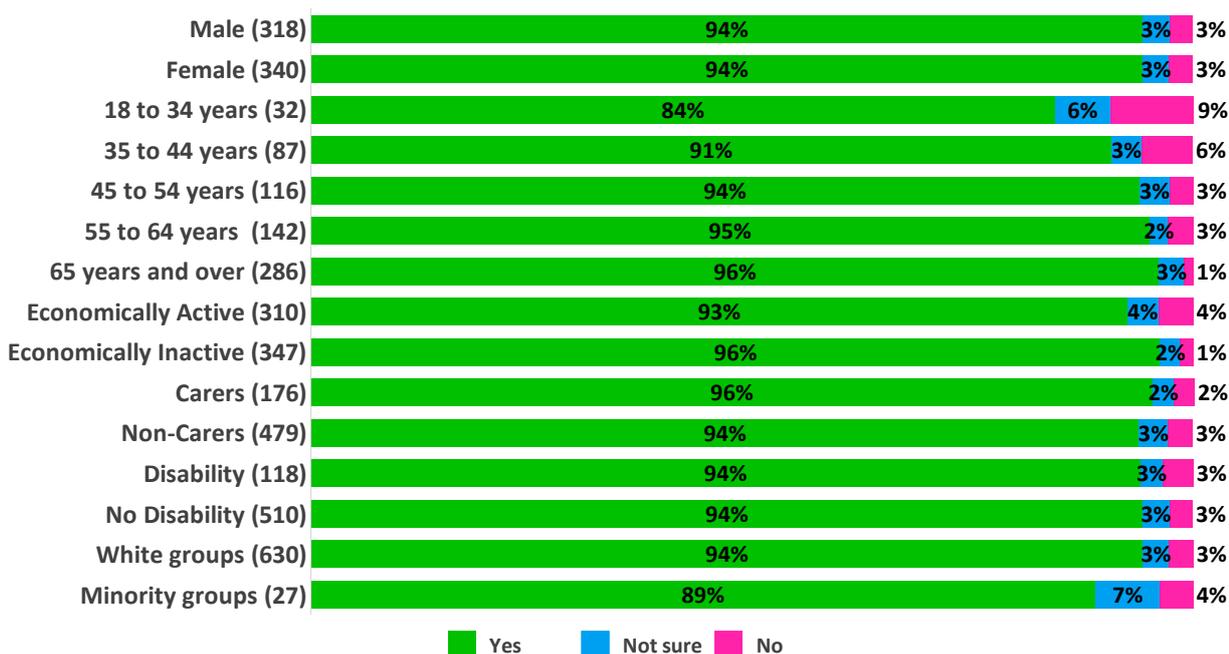
Overall, there were 679 responses to this question. The most common response was 'Yes' with 636 responding this way.



In 2020, 91% of respondents were in favour of measure 1, for 2023 the proportion responding in favour increased by 2.7% to 93.7%.

### Demographic Differences

The chart shows how the response differs across the different demographic groups. Significant differences and changes in response from the 2020 consultation are outlined in the table below.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proportion of male respondents that were not in favour of measure 1 has reduced from 9% in 2020 to 3% for 2023.</li> <li>• For 2023 there was also a lower proportion of female respondents that answered neutrally with 3% responding this way compared to 6% in 2020.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2020, the 18 to 34 years groups had the greatest proportion that were not in favour of measure 1.</li> <li>• The 65 years and over age group had the lowest proportion that answered this way – the profile of responses across the different age groups remains unchanged for 2023.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2020, economically inactive respondents had a greater proportion agreeing that measure 1 should be renewed compared to economically active respondents, this still true of the 2023 result.</li> </ul>

### Measure 1 Comments

Survey respondents were provided with a free text box to provide any additional comments they had about measure 1 – Street drinking in an anti-social manner.

There was a total of 203 comments were submitted by respondents. Many of the comments covered more than one theme.

The top themes are shown in the table, alongside a sample of comments from that theme.

Theme	No.	Sentiment
Enforcement	60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst this measure is in place it does not seem to be regularly enforced. It is quite commonplace to see people drinking from open cans of larger walking along Week Street for example.</li> <li>• No one takes any notice of any regulations anyway and no one enforces anything so struggling to see the point of renewing anything.</li> <li>• Enforcement is spasmodic. I see police very occasionally and then often turning a blind eye.</li> </ul>
Supportive of Measure 1	36	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It will bring the town back to more of a safe and friendly place.</li> <li>• This is a good idea because drinking in the street is not nice to see and it could cause an incident to happen with another person.</li> <li>• This is a sensible measure to reduce the risk of unruly behaviour and is in line with common practice in many European destinations I visit where the problem of unruly drunks is very rare.</li> </ul>
Scope of Measure 1	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should be a larger area of the town.</li> <li>• Increase number of zones.</li> <li>• The "reasonable time" seems open to personal interpretation. Also, the size of fixed penalty may cause unreasonable hardship.</li> <li>• Issuing a fixed penalty fine is not enough. People should be arrested by the Police if found to break the law.</li> </ul>
Query impact of Measure	24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FPNs are all very well but the offenders, particularly ones of no fixed abode, simply will not pay them, so they are not a deterrent.</li> <li>• Won't make any difference, and no officer in sight 99% of the time.</li> </ul>

Theme	No.	Sentiment
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It doesn't seem to have made any difference, has also pushed people to the side streets where people live!</li> </ul>
General Comments about behaviours	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are enough pubs and bars to drink at. You don't need to be drinking in the streets.</li> <li>No one should be allowed to buy alcohol in a supermarket etc and consume it on the streets. By implication those that do are a worry and a bad example to kids.</li> <li>A zero tolerance for alcohol and bad behaviour is the only way that the town will change.</li> </ul>
Outside Hospitality & Entertaining	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I think having a drink in moderation in public is acceptable. It should only be stopped when linked to antisocial behaviours.</li> <li>A picnic in a park where alcohol in sensible amounts is consumed is different than drunks in the street.</li> </ul>
Locations	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The alleyway [a public right of way] next to KFC on Week Street has been taken over and blocked by The Social Chill Bar. It's a loud, drunken, coke-headed mess</li> <li>Alcohol often being drank at bottom of Gabriel's Hill outside last shop on the left.</li> <li>There are often people drinking/drunken in the town centre square, or the top of Week Street towards the station, stronger enforcement would be good.</li> </ul>
Catalyst for poor behaviour	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drinking in public places leads to a minority behaving inappropriately which can lead onto a dangerous situation. It will never change.</li> <li>From my time as a Magistrate, drinking alcohol in public places often results in criminal offences.</li> </ul>
Other Themes	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seven comments said that anti-social street drinking is not an issue.</li> <li>Two comments said they did not support renewing this measure.</li> </ul>

## Measure 2 - Detering unauthorised collections of money on the street or loitering for such purpose (persistent begging)

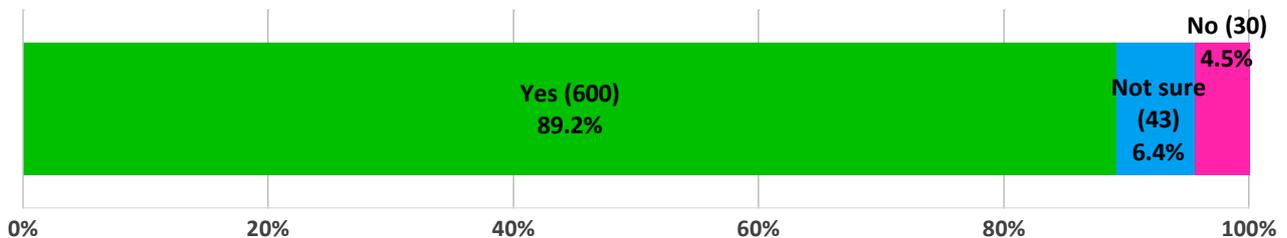
The current PSPO means that no one is able to make verbal, non-verbal or written requests for money or financial donations unless they are authorised e.g. authorised charity collections, within the Town Centre PSPO area.

We try to avoid giving fines for begging to those who are genuinely homeless and instead offer support.

Action will be taken against persons found begging who are in accommodation and in receipt of benefits and in breach of the Town Centre PSPO or where the measure is persistently breached. FPNs are only considered where they are appropriate, and most discharges will be through the Magistrate's Courts where further requirements will be requested to support the individual.

Survey respondents were asked if they were in favour of renewing measure 2 as described above.

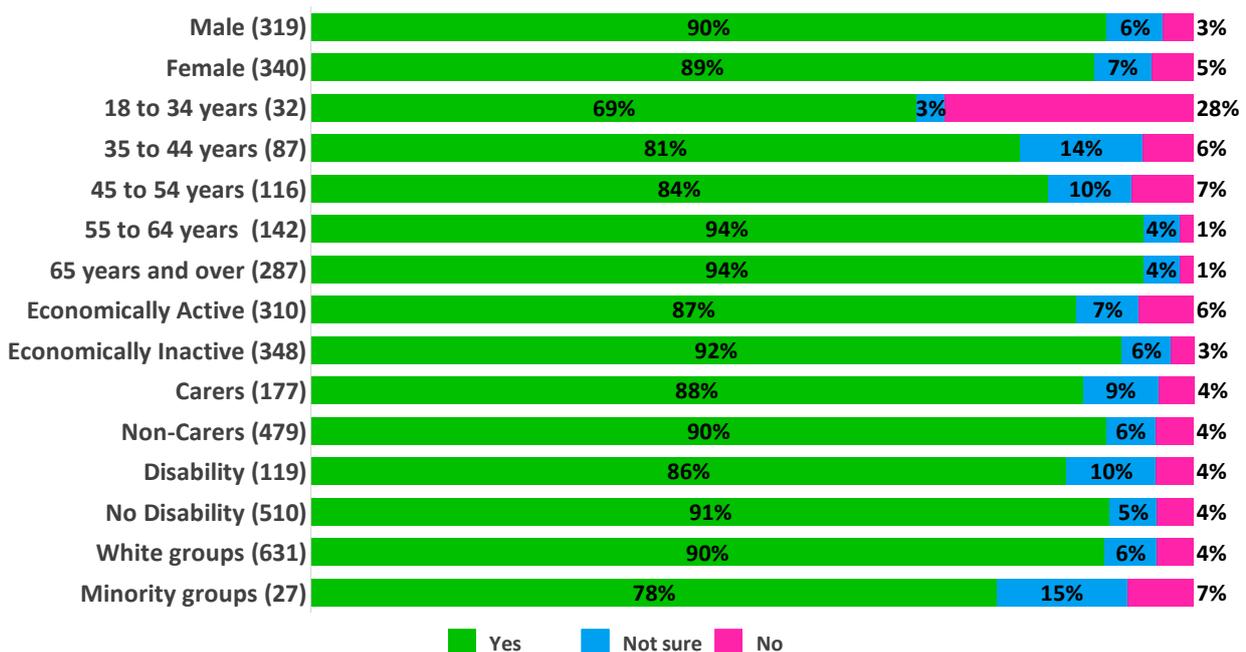
Overall, there were 673 responses to this question. The most common response was 'yes' with 600 responding this way.



In 2020, 85.1% of respondents were in favour of measure 2, the 2023 result represents an increase of 4.1% in the proportion of people in favour of measure 2.

### Demographic Differences

The chart shows how the response differs across the different demographic groups. Significant differences and changes in response from the 2020 consultation are outlined in the table below.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2020, the 18 to 34 years groups had the greatest proportion that were not in favour of measure 1 and the 65 years and over had the lowest proportion that answered this way – the profile of responses across the different age groups remains unchanged for 2023. The proportion that said they are not in favour of measure two has increased by 14% since 2020.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economically active respondents had a significantly greater proportion that were in favour of renewing measure 2 with 92% answering this way compared to 87% of economically inactive respondents.</li> <li>In 2020, the difference in response between these groups was not significant.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respondents from white groups had a significantly greater proportion that were in favour of renewing measure 2 with 90% responding this way compared to 78% of respondents from minority groups.</li> </ul>

## Measure 2 Comments

Survey respondents were provided with a free text box to provide any additional comments they had about measure 2 - Deterring unauthorised collections of money on the street or loitering for such purpose (persistent begging).

There was a total of 210 comments submitted by respondents. Many of the comments covered more than one theme.

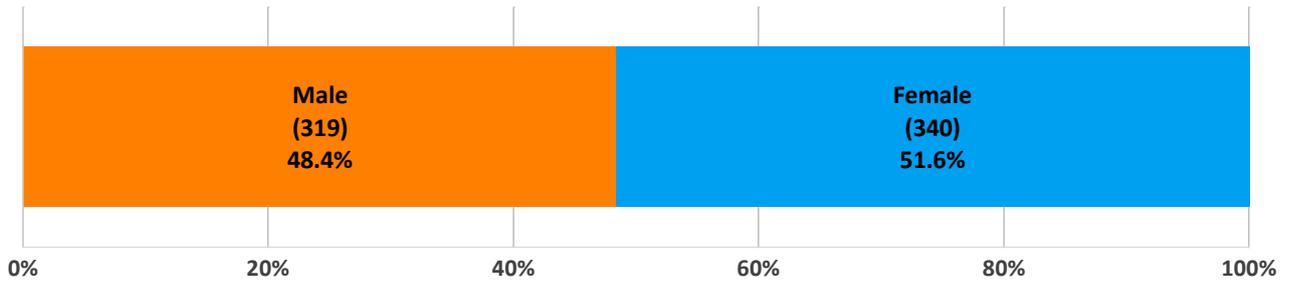
The top themes are shown in the table, alongside a sample of comments from that theme.

Theme	No.	Sentiment
Support for Vulnerable	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From my time as a Magistrate, drinking alcohol in public places often results in criminal offences.</li> <li>"persistent begging" is just because there's not enough welfare support. Punishing them for trying to get by is awful. I am not bothered by people begging at all.</li> <li>The homeless need help &amp; are desperate, so desperate that they need to ask strangers for a few quid to pay for their food &amp; drink. Stopping them from doing so is infringing their human rights. The Council would be better placed in finding these people a home instead of cracking down on something that is of no harm whatsoever.</li> </ul>
Charity Collections	34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There needs to be more checks on those that are encourage people to take out direct debits in the streets, for various charities. Chugging should be banned.</li> <li>I have never been harassed by any beggars nor homeless for money. I have however been harassed many times by the "authorised" collectors when I have clearly asked them to leave me alone numerous times.</li> </ul>
In favour of measure 2	28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please continue as its very intimidating with some! I love that you offer support where genuinely needed and take action against those who are not!!!</li> <li>In favour but have not seen any improvement so far.</li> <li>Although I agree to this, I imagine it's difficult to take appropriate action to deter these individuals.</li> </ul>

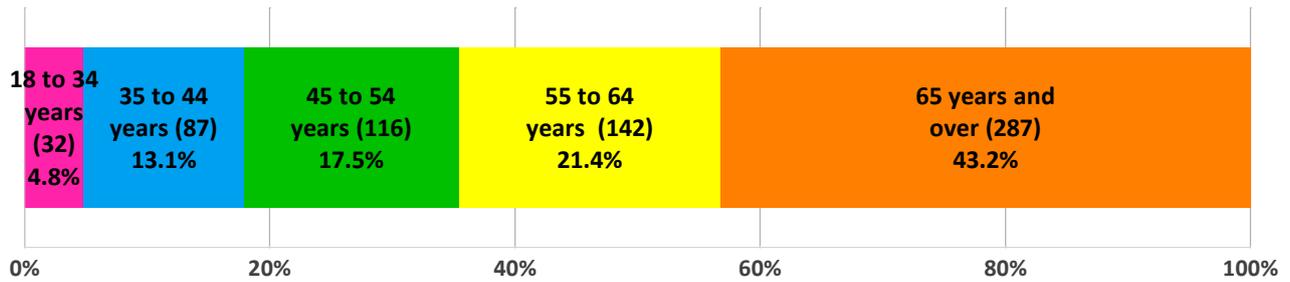
Theme	No.	Sentiment
Unsafe/Harassment/Intimidation	27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be frightening to be approached. I am sure there are some genuine cases, but the public are wary after reports of aggressive behaviour.</li> <li>• Begging is intimidating for passers-by.</li> <li>• Zero tolerance - they are intimidating and sometimes aggressive. Maidstone has an excellent homeless process; the town is being used by beggars who are not from the area.</li> </ul>
Enforcement	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I feel that this is not enforced at all. Going through Maidstone on a daily basis there are the same people every day consistently asking for money.</li> <li>• Only if enforced otherwise pointless.</li> <li>• Who wants to be accosted by these people? The order should be enforced.</li> </ul>
Organised begging/Disingenuous beggars	16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impossible to know if those who are begging are really homeless/destitute. They need to be checked and given information where they can get help from various charities that are in Maidstone</li> <li>• Lots of beggars are on a decent income from benefits so need stopping.</li> <li>• Whilst I have huge sympathy for those genuinely on hard times, I have concerns about how genuine these beggars are. I consider some are made to beg and it therefore encourages modern day slavery if we allow begging to continue unchecked.</li> </ul>
Buskers	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I do not consider busking to be classed as begging. Busking enhances the ambience of the town.</li> <li>• People who are busking should not be allowed to carry out this activity. I've seen women intimidated outside Primark - not nice.</li> <li>• Musicians possibly exempt providing not too loud.</li> </ul>
Impact	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This will not help. No one likes to beg. My belief is that they beg because they have no choice. It's not a career choice. Taking money from people who are already struggling is madness.</li> <li>• This measure doesn't seem to be working as I saw plenty sitting on the floor with signs or annoyingly singing whilst asking for money last week.</li> </ul>
Other Themes	21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eight mentioned locations in the town centre where they have witnessed begging including Week Street and outside Sainsburys.</li> <li>• Seven said that the amount of begging going on in the Town Centre was increasing.</li> <li>• Six said they think all unauthorised collections of money should be banned.</li> </ul>

## Survey Demographics

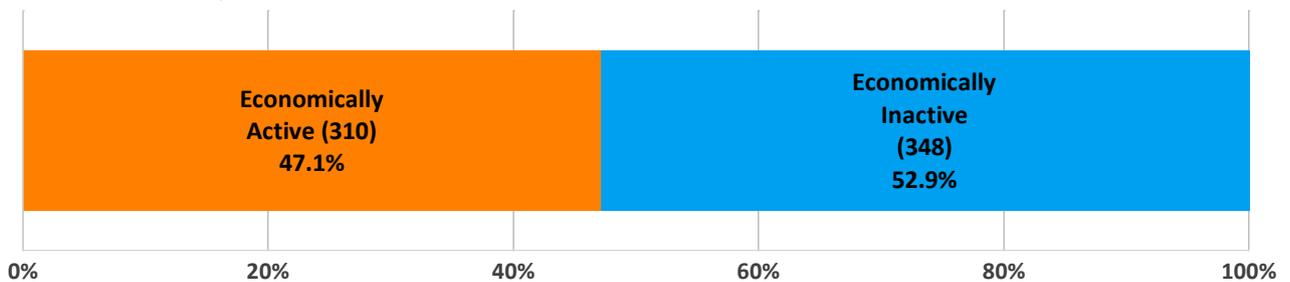
### Gender



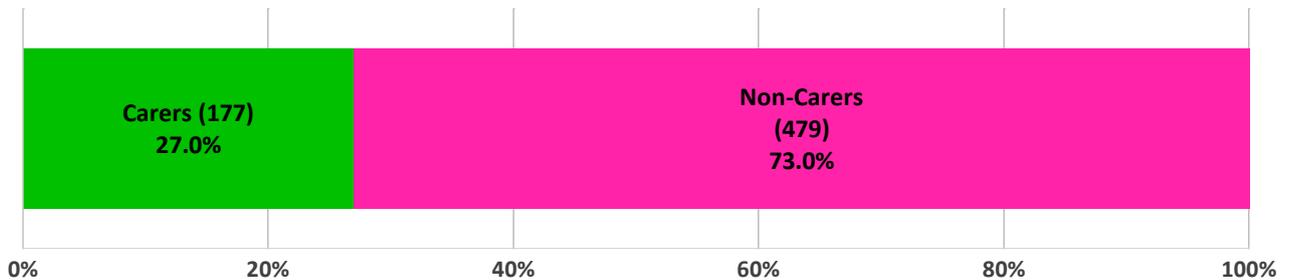
### Age



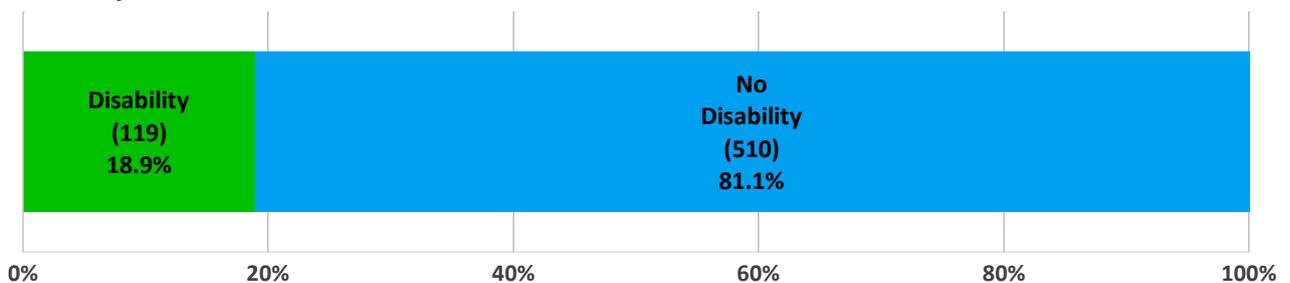
### Economic Activity



### Carers



### Disability



**Ethnicity**

