

# Public Space Protection Order (PSPO)

## Epsom and Ewell

Report on the findings of the PSPO Public Consultation  
February 2025

*The Consultation ran from 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024 – 5<sup>th</sup> January 2025*

The data was analysed and the report was written by the Community Safety and Enforcement Officer

## Summary

The survey findings reveal a broad public awareness and support for the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in Epsom and Ewell, although enforcement remains a key concern. While 42% of respondents are aware of the PSPO, only 25% have seen its signage, indicating a potential gap in communication. Support for the PSPO's goals is evident, with a significant portion of respondents believing that it helps reduce anti-social behaviour and enhances community safety. However, there is a notable lack of consensus on its actual impact, with many unsure or perceiving no change.

Anti-social behaviour remains a significant issue for many, with reports of group-related nuisance, drug use, and youth disturbances prevalent across various areas. While support for the proposed PSPO behaviours is strong, particularly for measures targeting harassment, threatening behaviour, and anti-social actions, concerns about the enforcement and perceived overreach of the PSPO were frequently raised. A considerable number of respondents expressed the need for a stronger police presence and better enforcement of the current regulations, highlighting the importance of ensuring these measures are not merely symbolic.

Furthermore, while a majority supports the renewal and expansion of the PSPO to cover the entire borough, some critics question the proportionality of the measures and argue for broader community-based solutions that address the root causes of anti-social behaviour.

In conclusion, the PSPO remains a valued tool for many residents in fostering a safer community, but its success hinges on clear communication, strong enforcement, and addressing the underlying issues driving anti-social behaviour.

## About the Consultation

The Council is currently reviewing the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) in Epsom and Ewell. Previously, two PSPOs were in place: one addressing alcohol consumption in certain public spaces, and the other targeting the use of psychoactive substances. The alcohol-related order was in effect from 23rd December 2021 until 22nd December 2024, while the psychoactive substances order ran from 1st October 2022 to 30th September 2024.

Police have requested the consideration of a wider range of restrictions, taking into account the evolution of crime and antisocial behaviour patterns in the 2 decades since the precursor to the alcohol related PSPO came into effect.

This survey gathered feedback from residents, visitors, and businesses in Epsom and Ewell, capturing their concerns, views, and suggestions. The insights gained will help inform decisions regarding the implementation of a new PSPO, which aims to extend coverage across the entire Borough of Epsom and Ewell and include restrictions on the additional behaviours requested by police

## Methodology

The consultation on the 2024-5 Epsom and Ewell PSPO renewal was conducted through an online structured survey which ran from 4 November 2024 to 5 January 2025.

The survey comprised of 8 sections, designed to capture responses on the following topics:

- I. Demographic information
- II. Awareness of existing PSPOs in Epsom
- III. Experiences of existing PSPOs in Epsom
- IV. Observations and/or experiences of anti-social behaviour
- V. Opinions suggested new behaviours for the proposed PSPO
- VI. Support for the renewal of the existing Epsom PSPO
- VII. Support for proposals to extend the Epsom PSPO borough wide
- VIII. Any other comments

The survey included closed questions related to each behaviour proposal within Epsom and Ewell. These questions asked respondents whether they would 'include' or 'exclude' the listed behaviours within the PSPO, with an option to select 'not sure' and provide further comments in a free-text box.

These closed questions allow for a decisive clear snapshot of respondent sentiment regarding each proposed policy.

In addition, each section featured free-text comment boxes, allowing respondents to share any concerns, suggestions, or observations related to the 2025 PSPO renewal proposals and behaviours. These free-text responses were analysed using either a deductive or inductive thematic analysis approach, ensuring that the large volume of comments was organised into clear, consistent, and meaningful findings.

The deductive thematic analysis involved counting the frequency of words used in free-text responses to create a list of initial codes. A 'code' is a label assigned to segments of text, and these codes helped identify and summarise the main themes expressed within the comments. To ensure validity and reduce bias, several checks were built into this process. The free-text comments were reanalysed at least three times, with the initial codes adjusted and expanded as the analysis progressed.

The deductive analysis was applied to responses addressing:

- Experiences of alcohol-related anti-social behaviour in Epsom and Ewell (Question 16)
- Opinions on the proposed PSPO behaviours (Question 19)
- Opinions on the proposed PSPO renewal (Question 21)
- Opinions on the Borough-wide PSPO proposal extension (Question 23)

An inductive thematic analysis was applied to overcome any limitations of the question-specific deductive approach. This method involved reviewing all free-text responses to identify any emerging themes, sentiments, or suggestions that were not directly addressed in the structured questions.

The survey was designed with no mandatory questions, allowing respondents to skip questions and only answer those most relevant to them. This approach aimed to reduce survey fatigue (where respondents might feel overwhelmed by too many questions).

The consultation was promoted through various channels, social media, the Council website and E-Borough Insight, and posters and leaflets available at council sites and public libraries. Promotion was also sent to local businesses via the Business Crime Reduction Partnership and the Business Improvement District. To encourage youth participation, outreach was made to University College Epsom, NESOT, the User Voice and Participation Team (Surrey County Council), and the Community Link Officer for Epsom and Ewell (Surrey County Council). A press release was also sent to: Surrey Live, Epsom & Ewell Times, Radio Jackie, BBC Radio Surrey, What's On In Epsom, Go Epsom and Best of Epsom and Ewell.

Respondents were invited to provide demographic information and specify the capacity in which they were responding. These demographic responses were then compared with the 2021 Census data for Epsom and Ewell Borough (EEBC) to assess the representation of various social segments (age, gender, ethnicity, and respondents with long-term health conditions or disabilities).

It is important to note that the survey did not collect identifiable personal data, ensuring that respondents could participate anonymously.

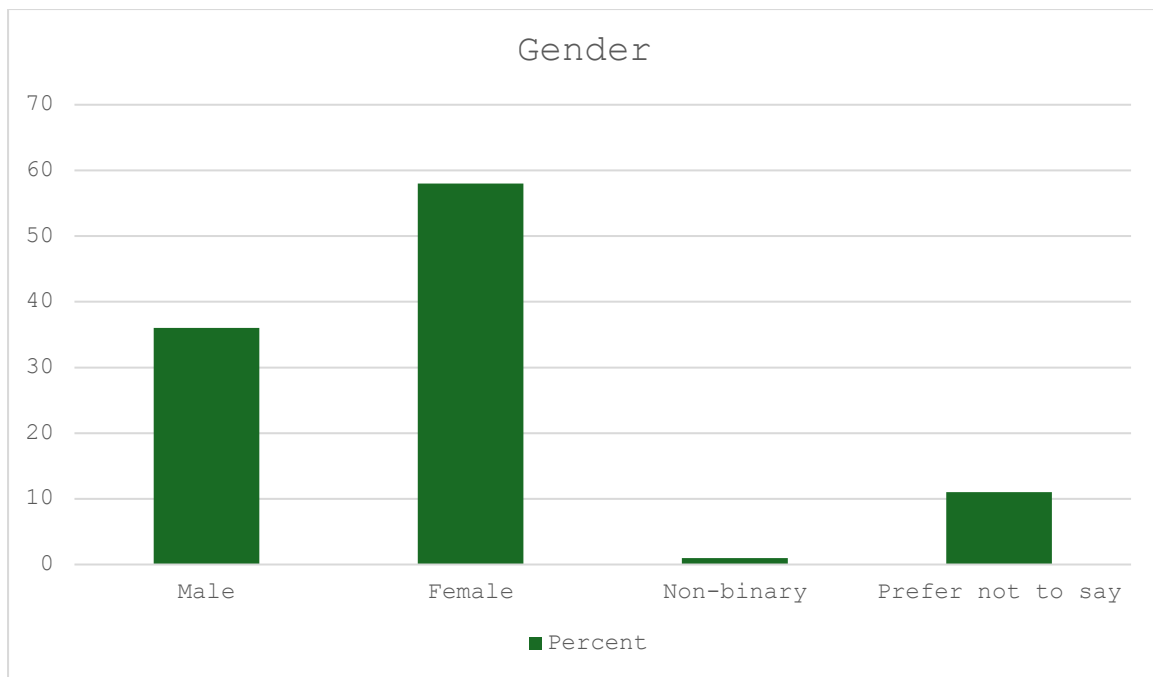
The consultation ran from 4th November 2024 to 5th January 2025 and received 209 responses.

## Participation

209 respondents took part in the survey.

### Gender

'What is your gender? (N = 203)



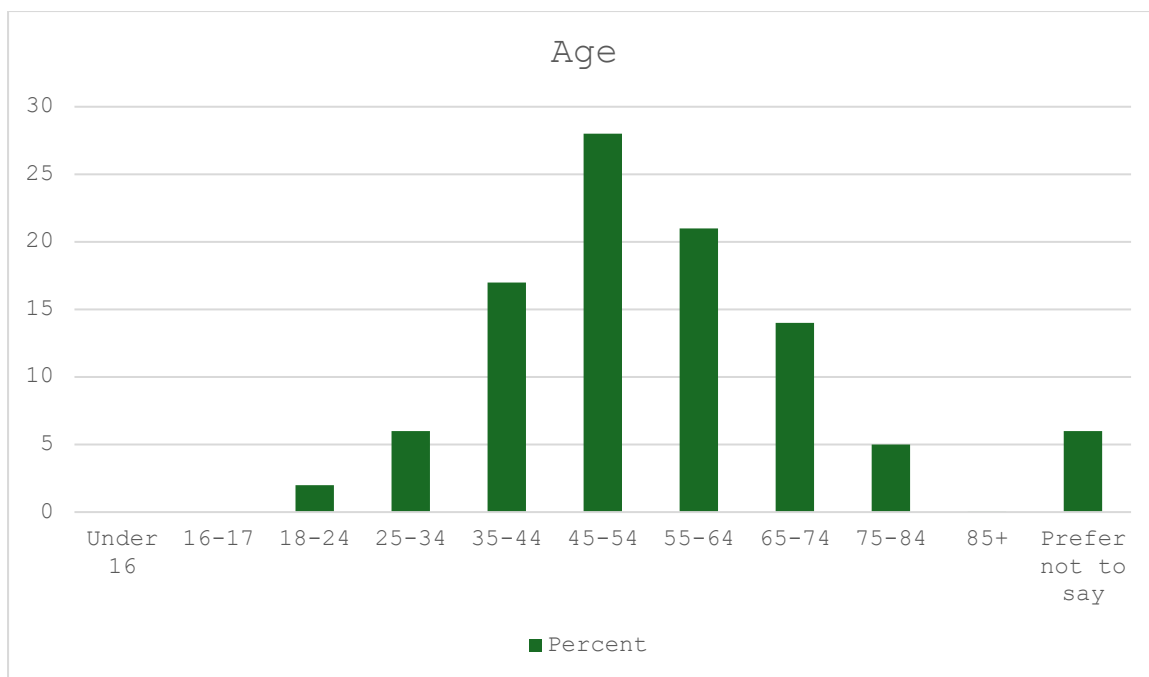
The majority of participants in the sample were female (56%), followed by male participants (34.9%). According to the 2021 Census, the gender distribution for the EEBC borough is as follows:

- Female: 51.6%
- Male: 48.4%

When comparing the sample's gender distribution to the 2021 Census data, the sample is approximately 90.9% representative of the borough's population. Females are slightly overrepresented in the sample, comprising 56% compared to 51.6% in the census, while males are underrepresented at 34.9% in the sample versus 48.4% in the census.

## Age

'How old are you?' (N = 205)



The most prominent groups of respondents were:

- 45–54 (28%)
- 55–64 (21%)

In contrast, the least represented age groups included:

- Under 16 (0%)
- 16–17 (0%)
- 85+ (0%)
- 18–24 (2%)

Additionally, 6% of respondents chose the option 'prefer not to say'.

When compared to the 2021 Census data for the EEBC borough population, notable disparities in age group representation emerge:

- Younger age groups are notably underrepresented. For example, those under 18, who form nearly a quarter (22.8%) of the borough's population, were not represented in the sample. Similarly, the 18–24 age group, which makes up 6.8% of the population, had minimal representation, with only a small number participating in the consultation.
- Middle-aged and older adults, particularly those aged 45–54 and 55–64, were overrepresented. These groups make up 14.8% and 12.2% of the borough's population, respectively, but had much higher proportions in the sample, accounting for 28% and 21%.
- The oldest age group (85+), which represents 2.6% of the population was also underrepresented, with only one participant from this demographic.

This highlights an uneven distribution of responses, with younger residents engaging far less than middle-aged and older adults.

## Ethnicity

‘What is your ethnic group?’ (N = 195)

Answer Choices	Response percentage
White: Welsh/English/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	81%
White: Irish	2%
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	0%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African	0%
White and Asian	1%
Any other mixed/Multiple ethnic background. Please describe below.	0%
Asian/Asian British	2%
Asian/Asian British: Indian	2.5%
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	0%
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	0%
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	1%
Any other Asian background. Please describe below.	0%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	1%
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	0.5%
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background.	0%
Other	8.7%

To align the ethnicity survey data with the 2021 Census, the results were recoded into broader ethnic categories. As a result, the analysis presented above is limited, as it does not capture the representation within specific ethnic subgroups.

‘What is your ethnic group?’ (N = 195)

Answer Choices	Response percentage
White	83%
Asian, Asian British, Asian Indian, Asian Chinese	5.5%
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	1.5%
Mixed /multiple ethnic groups	1%
Other ethnic group	8.7%

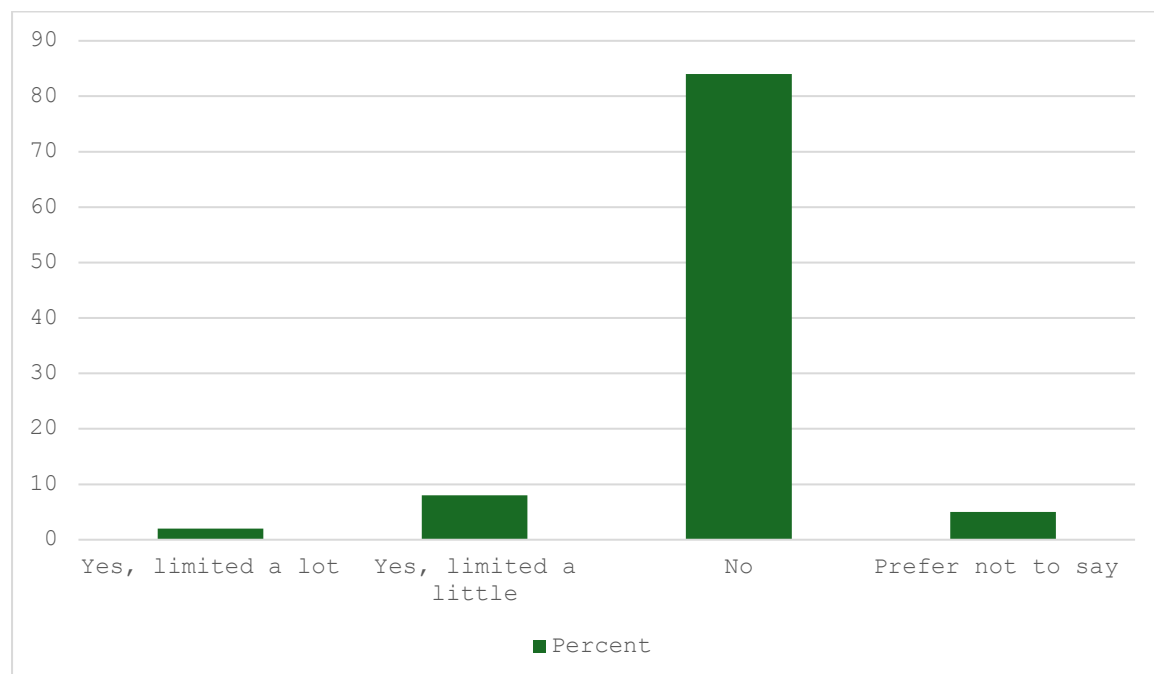
The majority of respondents identified as White (83%), followed by those in the 'Other' ethnic group (8.7%) and Asian, Asian British, Asian Indian, or Asian Chinese (5.5%). When comparing the higher-level ethnicity data from the survey with the 2021 Census data for the

borough, the analysis reveals a slight overrepresentation of the White ethnic group (+3.5%), while Asian, Asian British, Asian Indian, or Asian Chinese groups are underrepresented (-5.9%). Black, Black British, Caribbean, or African groups show a minor underrepresentation (-0.4%), and Mixed ethnic groups are also underrepresented (-3.4%).

The 'Other' ethnic group is significantly overrepresented in the survey (+5.9%), with this category contributing notably to the discrepancy (+6.6%). This overrepresentation can be partly explained by respondents who selected an option outside the listed categories, such as 'White: Other,' or chose not to answer the ethnicity question, deeming it irrelevant to the survey.

## Disability

‘Are your day to day activities limited because of a long term health problem or disability?’  
(N = 206)



The majority of participants (84%) reported no limitations in their day-to-day activities due to a long-term health problem or disability. The 2021 Census data measures disability according to the official classifications under the Equality Act 2010, which includes limitations on day-to-day activities, rather than solely focusing on limitations themselves.

According to the 2021 Census:

- 86.9% of residents are not disabled under the Equality Act 2010.
- 8.3% of residents are disabled, with their condition limiting day-to-day activities a little.
- 4.8% of residents are disabled, with their condition significantly limiting day-to-day activities.



The survey results indicate that respondents with significant limitations in day-to-day activities are slightly underrepresented (-3.2%)

## Key Findings

### Awareness of the Current PSPO

Almost half of the respondents (42%) were aware of the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO), though fewer had seen the signage (25%).

### Support for the Current PSPO

There is broad support for the existing PSPO, with 23% of respondents stating that 'it helps reduce anti-social behaviour' and 38% agreeing that 'it is a good thing, making me feel safer.'

### Impact of the Current PSPO

Respondents generally do not perceive the PSPO as having a significant positive impact on community safety in Epsom. While 30% felt it has not changed, 45% were unsure of its impact. However, 89% of respondents reported that they did not feel the PSPO had a negative effect on their use of the town.

### Anti-Social Behaviour

Over the past year, 11% of respondents reported being victims of anti-social behaviour in Epsom and Ewell. Additionally, 46% indicated that they have witnessed such behaviour, while 7% have experienced both witnessing and being a victim of anti-social behaviour. A common theme emerging from their feedback was group-related nuisance, including issues such as drug use, youth disturbances, e-bike activity, and general intimidation.

### PSPO Behaviours

Support for the proposed PSPO behaviours is high for all categories. The strongest backing is for:

- Threatening or verbally abusing others (91.8%)
- Harassing or intimidating residents, businesses, or the public (91.7%)
- Acting or inciting others to act in an anti-social manner likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress (89.8%)
- Wearing clothing intended to obscure or hide one's identity for the purpose of committing a crime or anti-social behaviour (86.8%)

There is relatively less support for the behaviour of joining or remaining in a group of two or more people acting in a manner likely to cause harassment, alarm, or distress (69.5%).

Additional behaviours of concern raised by respondents in open survey responses include moped driving, e-bike driving, and delivery drivers.

### Support for PSPO Renewal

92% of respondents support renewing the PSPO for another three years, and 83% are in favour of extending it to cover the entire borough.

### Wider Comments

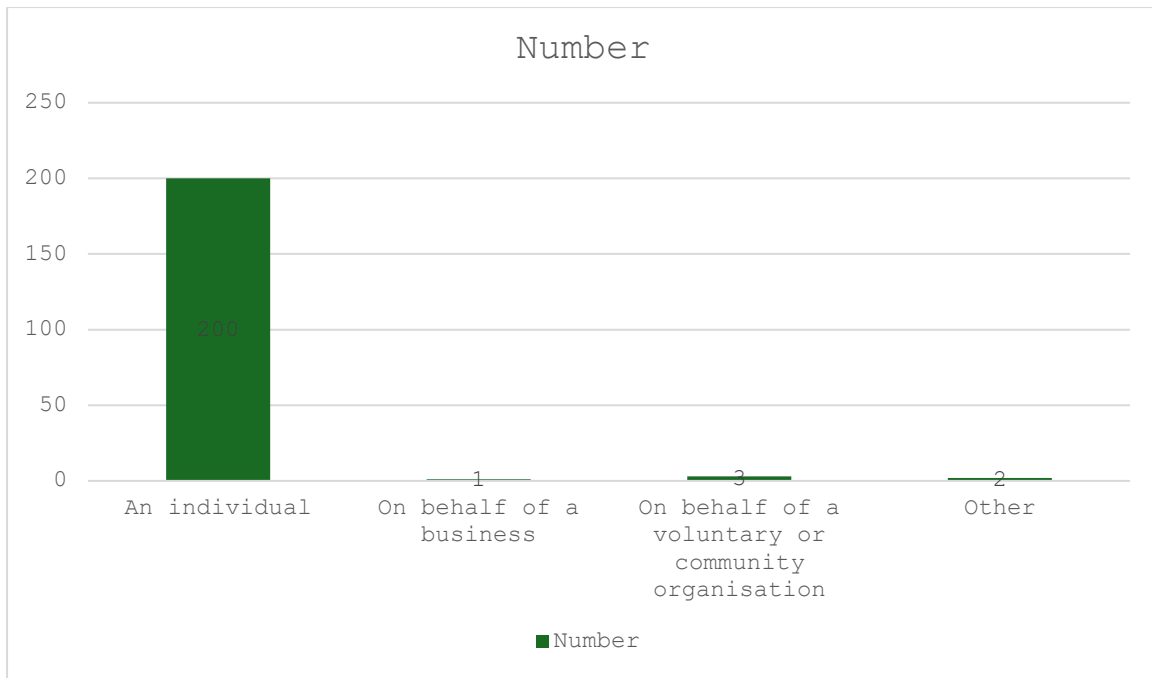
- There is strong support for the PSPO in the open questions but a frequent message that it needs to be enforced
- Respondents have particularly used the open questions to request or suggest the need for a greater police presence in Epsom and Ewell
- There are a smaller number of comments questioning the proportionality of the PSPO
- Some questions are raised about whether a PSPO really addresses the needs of residents, particularly young people and whether broader work to support communication, engagement and root causes would be more helpful. In addition to this, there is mention of there being a lack of spaces for young people to socialise in a safe space.

### Results Breakdown

Please note that answer percentages were rounded. Several questions allow respondents to select multiple answers. As a result, not all percentage will add up to 100%.

### Respondent Type

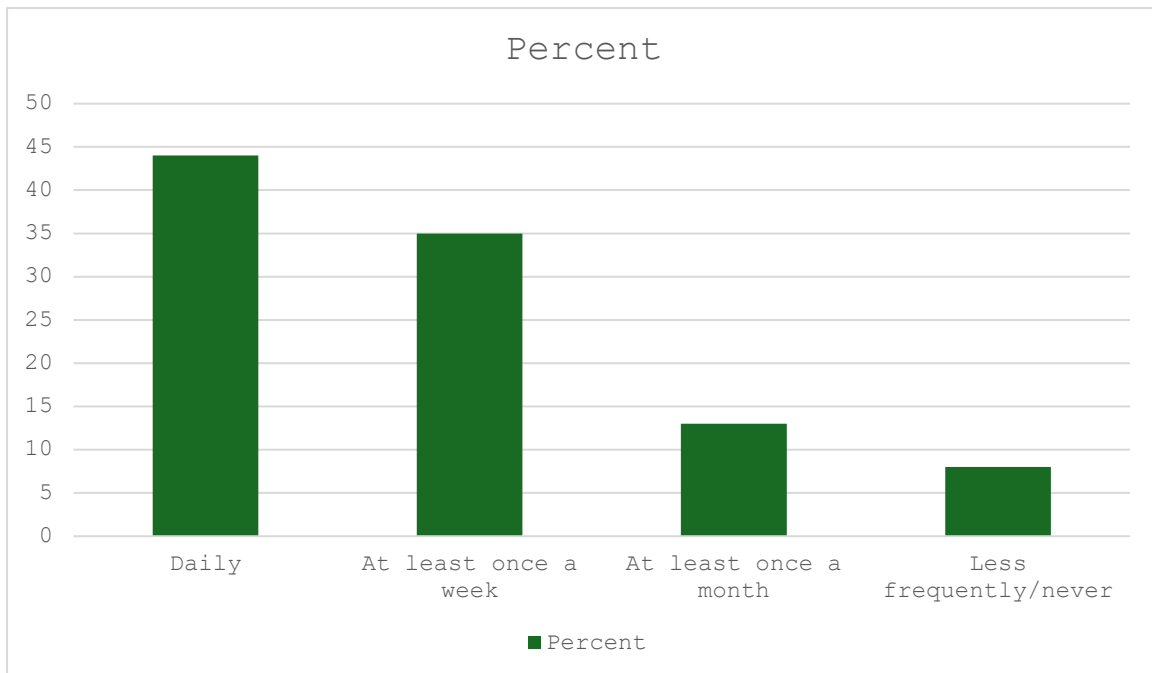
‘Are you completing this survey as...?’ (N = 206)



The organisation details provided were:

- Epsom and Ewell Neighbourhood Watch
- Buddy Up (mentoring charity for young people)
- Surrey Police

How often do you use the areas in Epsom and Ewell where the PSPO is currently in place? (N = 204)



## About the PSPO

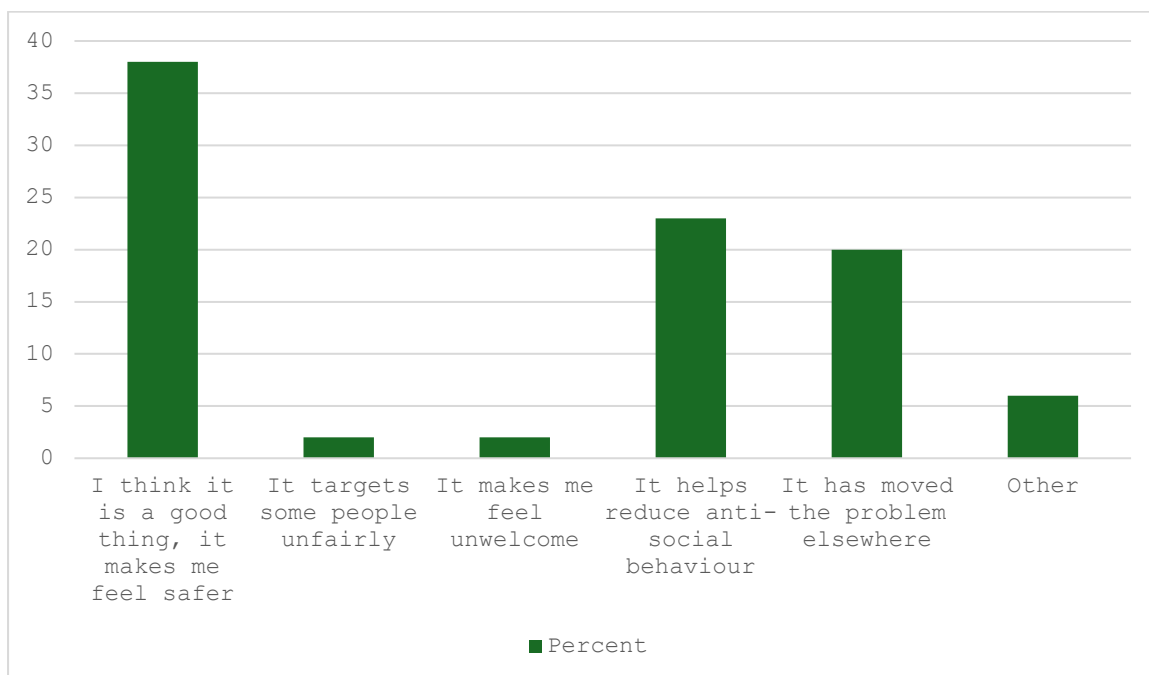
Knowledge: 'Are you aware of the current alcohol PSPO in place in Epsom and Ewell' (N = 206)

Answer Choices	Response percentage
Yes	42%
No	58%

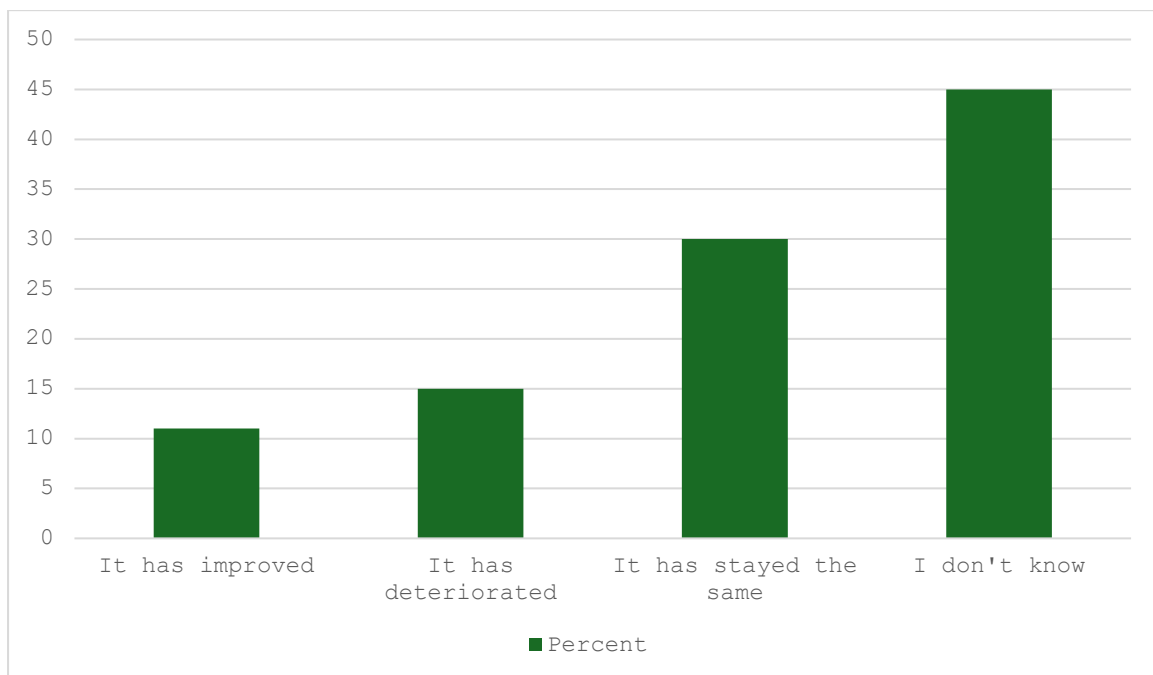
Signs: 'Have you seen any of the alcohol PSPO signs in Epsom and Ewell?' (N = 205)

Answer Choices	Response percentage
Yes	25%
No	75%

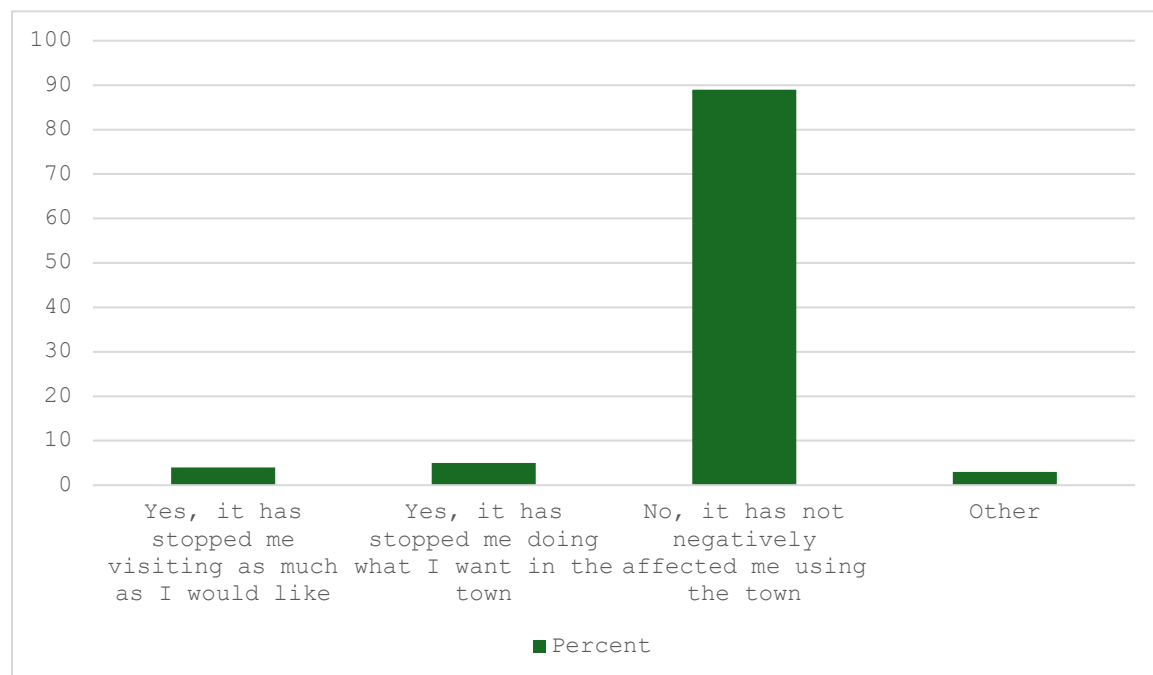
Experiences: 'Tell us what you think about the alcohol PSPO in Epsom and Ewell (select all that apply)' (N = 202).



Impact of PSPO: 'From your experience, what impact, if any, do you think the PSPO has had a community safety in Epsom and Ewell in the last 3 years?' (N = 206)



# Impact on enjoyment: 'Has the alcohol PSPO stopped your enjoyment of the Borough in the last 3 years?' (N = 200)



# Comments on PSPO: 'Please share any comments that you have on your experience of the alcohol PSPO' (N = 51)

The word cloud below reflects the common words in the responses. The more frequent the word is mentioned, the larger it will appear below.



Comments included:

- Avoiding the town centre at night due to fear
- Deliveroo bikes causing issues on the high street
- Youths hanging around in large groups intimidating people
- Drug use
- Suggesting there needs to be greater enforcement of the PSPO
- Poorly signposted
- Not being aware of the PSPO
- Disappointment that the PSPO is currently only in place in this area and not across the borough

## Anti-social behaviour

Experience of ASB: 'Have you been directly affected by alcohol related anti-social behaviour in Epsom and Ewell in the last year?' (N = 205)

Answer Choices	Response percentage
Yes, I have been a victim of anti-social behaviour	5%
Yes, I have witnessed anti-social behaviour	38%
Yes, I have been a victim and witnessed anti-social behaviour	4%
No	52%

Effects of ASB: 'Please share any comments on your experience of the alcohol PSPO? (N = 51) and 'If you have been affected by alcohol related anti-social behaviour, please explain how (N = 51)

A thematic analysis was undertaken of the responses to this question. The analysis looked at the key activities, groups and areas of the town centre that people mentioned in their comments.

The table below sets out the activities/behaviours that had affected those who chose to respond to this question. Some comments included more than one activity that the respondent had been affected by. For ease of review these have been grouped in relation to activities that are currently within the PSPO and those that are not.

Activities experienced	
<b>Addressed in current PSPO</b>	
Alcohol consumption in current parameters of PSPO (if specified location)	3

<b>Not addressed in current PSPO but in proposed renewal</b>	
Group nuisance inc. group noise	15
Drinking (unspecified location)	18
Litter/littering	5
Urinating in a public place	3
Harassment/threats/feeling threatened	10
Face coverings	7
Dangerous cycling or riding of scooters	9
<b>Other</b>	
Drug use/drug paraphernalia	17
Fighting	3

The majority of comments did not pinpoint a specific group of concern. However, 19 respondents mentioned young people or youths in relation to the behaviour that had affected them.

The areas of Epsom and Ewell identified within the comments are set out below, with the majority not identifying a specific area.

<b>Areas of Epsom and Ewell in comments</b>	
No specific area	28
M&S	1
Ewell Store	1
Epsom Town Centre	8
Chessington Road	3
Richard Fields	1
Long Grove Park	2
Fairview Road	5
Bakers Field	3
Church Street	1
Parks	11
Ruxley Lane	1
Train/Bus Station	1



## PSPO behaviours

Behaviours: 'Here is the list of behaviours covered by the order. For each one, please tell us whether it should still be included or be removed. Remember: - by including a behaviour in the PSPO, local councils and the police have additional powers to regulate that activity. - removing a behaviour from the order does not necessarily mean it is permitted (for example, it may still be regulated by other legislation) (N = 197)

Answer Choices	Include	Exclude	Not sure
Harassing or intimidating residents, businesses or members of the public	91.7%	5.2%	3.1%
Threatening any person with violence and / or being verbally abusive towards any person	91.8%	5.6%	2.6%
Urinating in an open public place	81%	9.2%	9.7%
Littering or spitting with the intent to cause harassment, alarm or distress to any person	81.6%	10.2%	8.2%
Wearing a piece of clothing with the intent to obscure or hide his/her identity for the purposes of committing crime and/or anti-social behaviour	86.8%	7.1%	6.1%
Acting, or inciting others to act, in an anti-social manner, that is to say a manner that is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to any person	89.8%	5.6%	4.6%
Joining or remaining in a group of 2 or more people which is acting in a manner that is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to any person	69.5%	12.2%	18.3%
Consumption of alcohol from an open vessel following a verbal warning by an authorised person to stop	83.1%	8.7%	8.2%

Comments: 'Would you like to make any further comments?' (N = 81)

A thematic analysis of this question has allowed key points to be organised into overarching themes, providing a clear summary of the concerns raised by respondents.

### 1. Youth-Related Anti-Social Behaviour

- **Intimidation by Groups of Youths:**
  - Mentioned repeatedly were groups of youths wearing balaclavas intimidating residents by shouting, swearing, or threatening behaviour.
  - Reports groups intimidating others, particularly in public parks and residential areas.
- **Misuse of Bikes, E-Bikes, and Scooters:**
  - Many respondents cited reckless riding on pavements, roads, and parks, endangering pedestrians and motorists.
  - Stunts such as wheelies, high-speed riding, and intimidation tactics like staring down pedestrians were reported.
- **Perceived Anonymity Due to Face Coverings:**
  - Balaclavas and other face coverings were repeatedly noted as a factor that emboldens anti-social behaviour and fosters a sense of impunity.

## **2. Drug-Related Concerns**

- **Public Drug Use and Dealing:**
  - Drug dealing in parks, residential estates, and public spaces was widely cited. Specific mentions included cannabis use in public areas and dealing near schools or housing.
- **Passive Effects of Drug Use:**
  - Respondents highlighted the smell of cannabis and concerns about exposure, particularly for children.
- **Locations Identified for Drug Activity:**
  - Areas such as Long Grove Park, the Hogsmill, and residential estates like Watersedge were mentioned as hotspots for drug-related issues.

## **3. Property Damage and Vandalism**

- **Damage to Public and Private Property:**
  - Reports included damage to park equipment, broken bus stops, vandalised bins, and graffiti.
  - Property destruction, such as throwing stones, eggs, or damaging windows and doors, was also highlighted.

## **4. Personal Safety and Intimidation**

- **Fear of Violence:**
  - Several respondents expressed fear of being attacked or harmed due to the intimidating presence of groups.
  - Specific mentions of weapons like knives and the sense of vulnerability for women and children were prominent.
- **Impact on Daily Life:**
  - Residents avoiding public spaces, using taxis for safety, and contemplating moving out of the borough due to safety concerns.

## **5. Policing and Enforcement**

- **Perceived Lack of Police Presence:**
  - Calls for better enforcement, more visible police patrols, and proactive action against anti-social behaviour were common.
  - Criticism of current police efforts and doubts about the enforcement of new rules.
- **Suggestions for Better Regulation:**
  - Requests for targeted measures, such as stop-and-search powers and PSPO enforcement, with the caveat that these actions must be carried out effectively.

## **6. Community and Social Issues**

- **Need for Youth Engagement:**
  - Suggestions to create safe spaces and activities for young people to reduce boredom and prevent anti-social behaviour.
- **Community Standards:**
  - Long-term residents lamented a perceived decline in the quality of life and social behaviour in the borough.

## **7. Specific Behaviour and Locations**

- **Street Lighting and Safety:**
  - Concerns about poorly lit areas, particularly Fairview Road and Snakey Alley, making them hubs for anti-social behaviour.
- **ASB by Delivery Drivers:**
  - Complaints about dangerous driving and intimidating behaviour by moped riders, particularly near McDonald's and other busy areas.
- **Alcohol vs. Drug Focus:**
  - Several respondents felt that drug-related issues outweigh alcohol-related ones in the borough.

## **8. Criticism of PSPO**

- **Scepticism About PSPO Effectiveness:**
  - Concerns that new regulations might duplicate existing laws and that enforcement might target vulnerable groups disproportionately.
  - Some respondents felt more community-oriented solutions would be preferable to increased restrictions (such as youth centres and outdoor activities).
- **Proportionality of PSPO:**
  - Querying whether behaviours were proportionate and some may cause more distress than others.
  - There was specific mention this PSPO would unfairly target the homeless and protests.
  - Striking the balance between enforcement and allowing people to enjoy public space was mentioned.

## Comments on the proposed PSPO

Negative comments include:

- 'Stop wasting our time and money with pointless regulations that will be used to punish normal people and do nothing to address anti-social behaviour'.
- 'We do not need more rules, surveillance, and monitoring of people. Time and money would be better spent improving other elements of local life so that people can afford to live happily and freely'.
- 'This seems a significant expansion into areas already covered by relevant legislation. An unwelcome overreach likely to lack the safeguards of existing laws in this area'.

Positive comments include:

- 'So grateful that Epsom & Ewell Council are considering enforcing a PSPO'.
- 'I find it hard to believe that any resident would not think expanding PSPOs to all of the above would not be a good initiative. However, if they are not enforced, they are a hollow gesture'.
- 'I find it hard to believe that anyone would disagree with measures to tackle the anti-social behaviour we are experiencing. It's clear something must be done'
- 'There are groups of teenagers that can be intimidating in Epsom. Having clear rules under a PSPO would help deter this behaviour and make the area safer'.
- 'I think the PSPO is a valuable initiative that will help address the issues affecting public safety in Epsom and its surrounding areas'.
- 'I support the PSPO as it will help define what behaviour is unacceptable and ensure a safer environment for everyone, especially in areas where anti-social behaviour is rampant'.

Support for extension: 'Do you support the extension of the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) in Epsom and Ewell for a further 3 years to help control anti-social behaviour that may have detrimental effect on the local community?' (N = 203)

Answer Choices	Response percentage
Yes	92%
No	5%
Other	3%

Many respondents agree with renewing the PSPO, particularly with improvements to its enforcement. They feel it is important for making people feel safer and curbing anti-social behaviour.

Comments in support include:

- 'I think it's a good thing. I just think we also need more police walking around or driving around. Just police presence stops the stuff from happening.'
- 'It should be indefinite, imagine what Epsom would be like without it!'

Comments against include:

- 'It is a complete waste of time and will do nothing to improve the area',
- 'This should be about real expectations rather than how can the council make money out of people - I don't agree with that'.

Support for extension: 'Would you support this PSPO to cover the entire Borough of Epsom and Ewell to help control anti-social behaviour that may have a detrimental effect on the local community?' – (N = 200)

Answer Choices	Response percentage
Yes	83%
No	13%
Other	4%

Comments in support include:

- 'I think anti-social, threatening, or criminal behaviour should not be tolerated anywhere, therefore should be Borough wide'
- 'Needs to be wider in Ewell to cover parks and Hogsmill. Should also cover smoking drugs as well as alcohol'.
- 'Thank you for doing this. Please please please either cover the whole borough - this should be the case - who would not want to be covered'

Comments against include:

- 'It shouldn't be just a piece of paper issued to appease the public... action must be taken'.
- 'This will be open to abuse. This seems like control'.
- 'I disagree with ever increasing rules, surveillance and penalising people'.
- 'Freedom to the majority is more important than such measures'.

