

How Clean Are Our Streets?

All Wales Local Environmental Audit and Management System Report

2023-24



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government



cadwch keep
gymru'n wales
dachus tidy

HOW CLEAN ARE OUR STREETS 2023-24?

95.1%

of streets
graded B and
above



Cans and bottles

are at their highest
figure since 2015-16



Plastic bottles

found on
13.6% of
streets



5%

of streets had no litter (A grades)



Disposable vapes

found on 10.2%
of streets



Fast food packaging

found on 26.4% of
streets



Smoking litter

found on 70.8% - the lowest since surveys
began



Dog fouling

decreased to 6.5% - the lowest since surveys began



Introduction

This report has been prepared by Keep Wales Tidy and outlines the findings from the Local Environmental Audit and Management System (LEAMS) surveys undertaken across Wales since 2007-08*. Here, we focus on the 2023-24 results and provide yearly comparisons against surveys undertaken since 2007-08**. The funding for LEAMS surveys has been provided by Welsh Government.

Each survey covers a 6% sample of streets in every local authority and the streets are selected at random from a full list of adopted highways provided by each authority. LEAMS assesses the quality of the environment through a visual survey, which involves walking a 50m length of the street (i.e. a transect) while inspecting the pavement and 2 ft of the gutter for litter and other indicators. The LEAMS methodology can be found [here](#). This year, **3,161 streets** were surveyed (Figure 1) between April 2023 – January 2024 and surveys were carried out on weekdays during daylight hours. The results cover **streets alone** and do not extend to parks, green spaces, beaches or busy roads.

Keep Wales Tidy calculate two independent national figures to monitor cleanliness of streets across Wales:

1. **The average percentage of streets graded B or above** – During each survey, every street is awarded an overall grade for cleanliness based on litter and dog fouling. Streets are graded A, B+, B, C and D as shown below. Streets that are graded B and above (A, B+ and B) are deemed to be at an acceptable standard of cleanliness as defined in the Code of Practice for Litter and Refuse (COPLAR) 2007.
2. **The Cleanliness Indicator (CI)** – This gives an indication of the cleanliness of an area, with higher figures signifying cleaner environments. The overall street grades are used to calculate the Cleanliness Indicator score, and each grade (A-D) bears a different weighting (3-0) to calculate a figure between 0 and 100 for each local authority and for Wales overall.



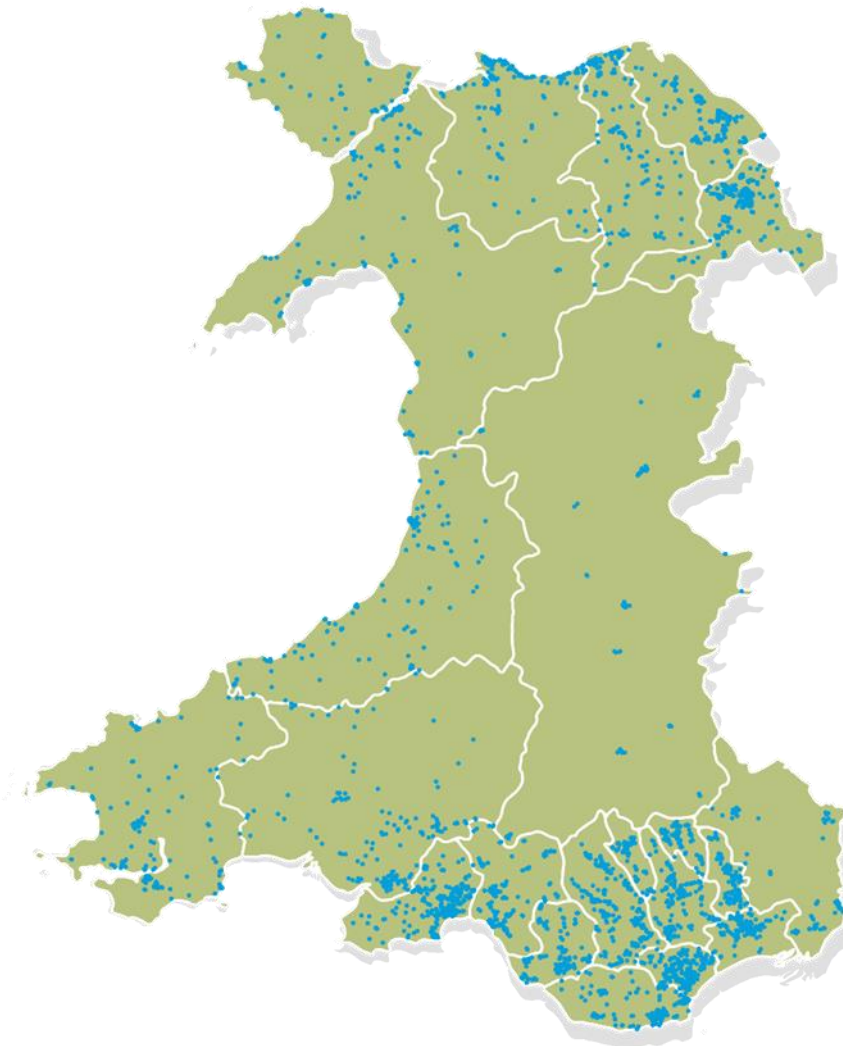
The results from our surveys are used to provide independent data for:

- Data Unit Wales for Public Accountability Measure for Clean Streets (PAM/010: Percentage of streets that are an acceptable level of cleanliness)

- Welsh Government for use by the Ministers and other policy makers in the Senedd
- The 22 Welsh local authorities on the local environmental quality (LEQ) issues within each of their areas
- Other organisations with an interest in LEQ

The data can track trends through time and provide an indication of the most problematic litter issues, allowing improved intervention design and prevention strategies, whilst informing local authorities and national policy development. Litter and poor environmental quality spoils the enjoyment of our towns, cities and countryside whilst directly impacting our fragile environment and wildlife. Individuals and community groups, third sector organisations, duty bodies and Government across Wales work hard to confront this issue and we hope this report can be utilised to help tackle the problem and track trends in the future.

Figure 1: LEAMS survey locations across Wales for 2023-24



*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, no LEAMS surveys took place in 2020-21, and the 2019-20 survey results outlined in this report are taken from the LEAMS surveys completed in 21 out of 22 local authorities in Wales.

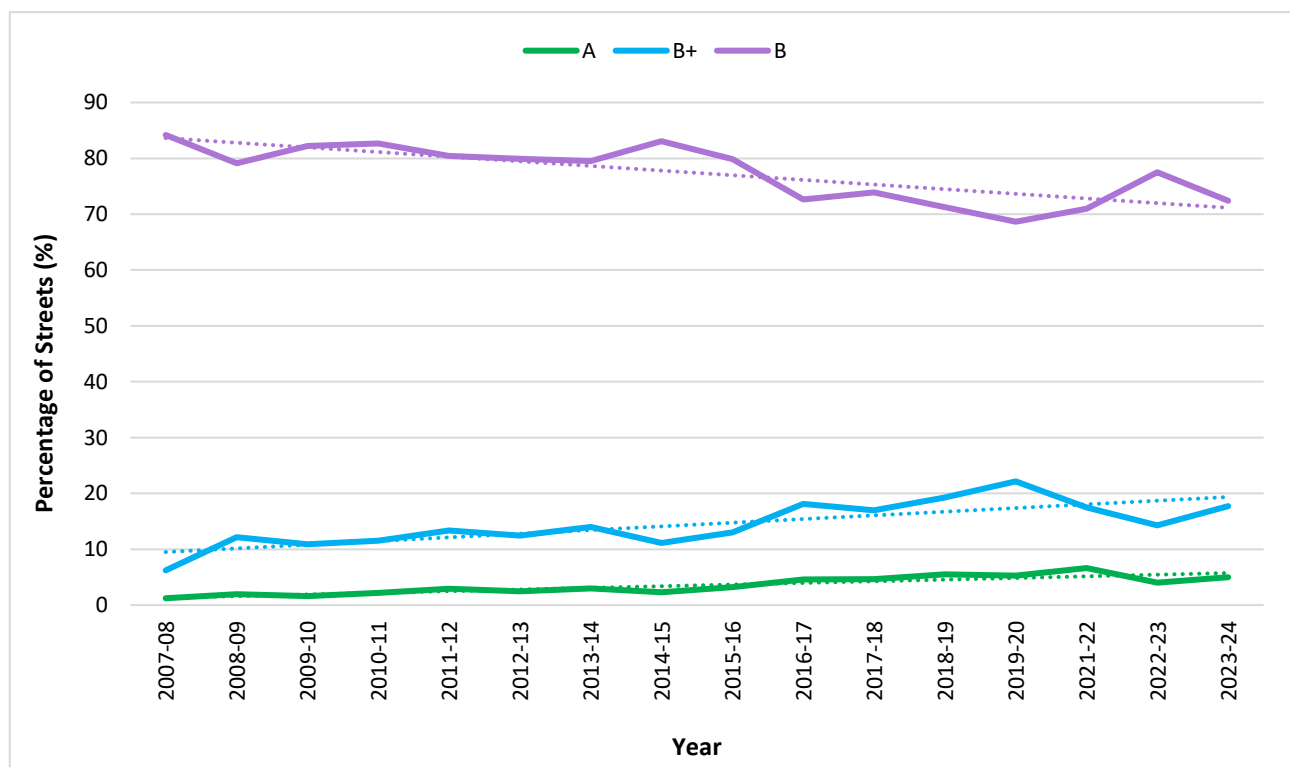
**Keep Wales Tidy have undertaken a data review where minor errors were picked up in the existing All Wales dataset. These errors have since been corrected and the changes will be reflected in this report.

All Wales Results

Acceptable Levels of Cleanliness (Streets Graded B or Above)

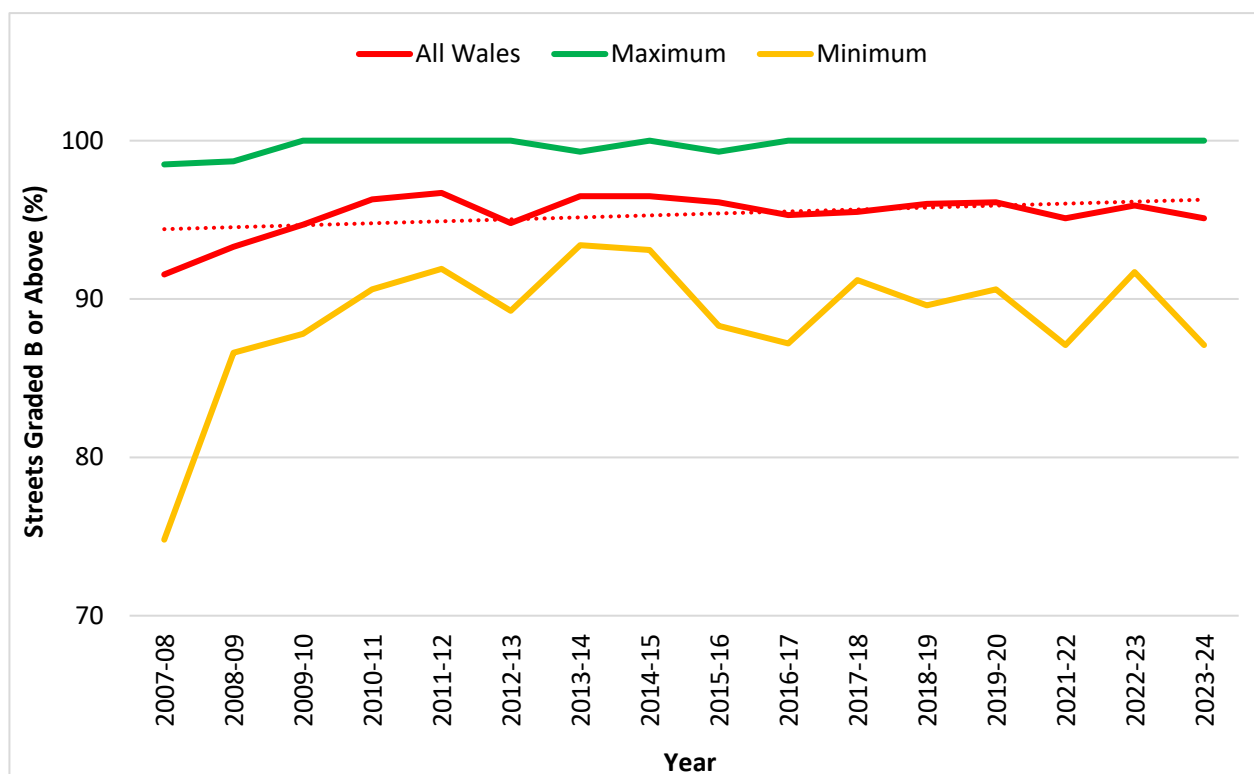
This year, the average percentage of streets across Wales **graded B or above was 95.1%**. This is similar to the last two years, but slightly lower than figures for 2018-19 and 2019-20. Over time, the percentage of streets graded B have decreased, whereas the percentage of streets graded A or B⁺ have increased (Figure 2). The percentage of C grade streets have also decreased overtime, but D grade streets have risen marginally.

Figure 2: The percentage of streets graded A, B⁺ and B across Wales since 2007-08



Overall, the average percentage of streets graded B or above across Wales is trending upward through time, with the minimum (lowest scoring local authority) and maximum (highest scoring local authority) figures varying each year (Figure 3) depending on the results in each authority. For the first time, four local authorities had 100% of their streets graded B or above where historically, there have only been one or two that achieve this status. In contrast, three local authorities had less than 90.0% of their streets graded B or above where since 2009-10, this has ranged from zero to two.

Figure 3: Maximum, Minimum and All Wales percentage of streets graded B or above by Year



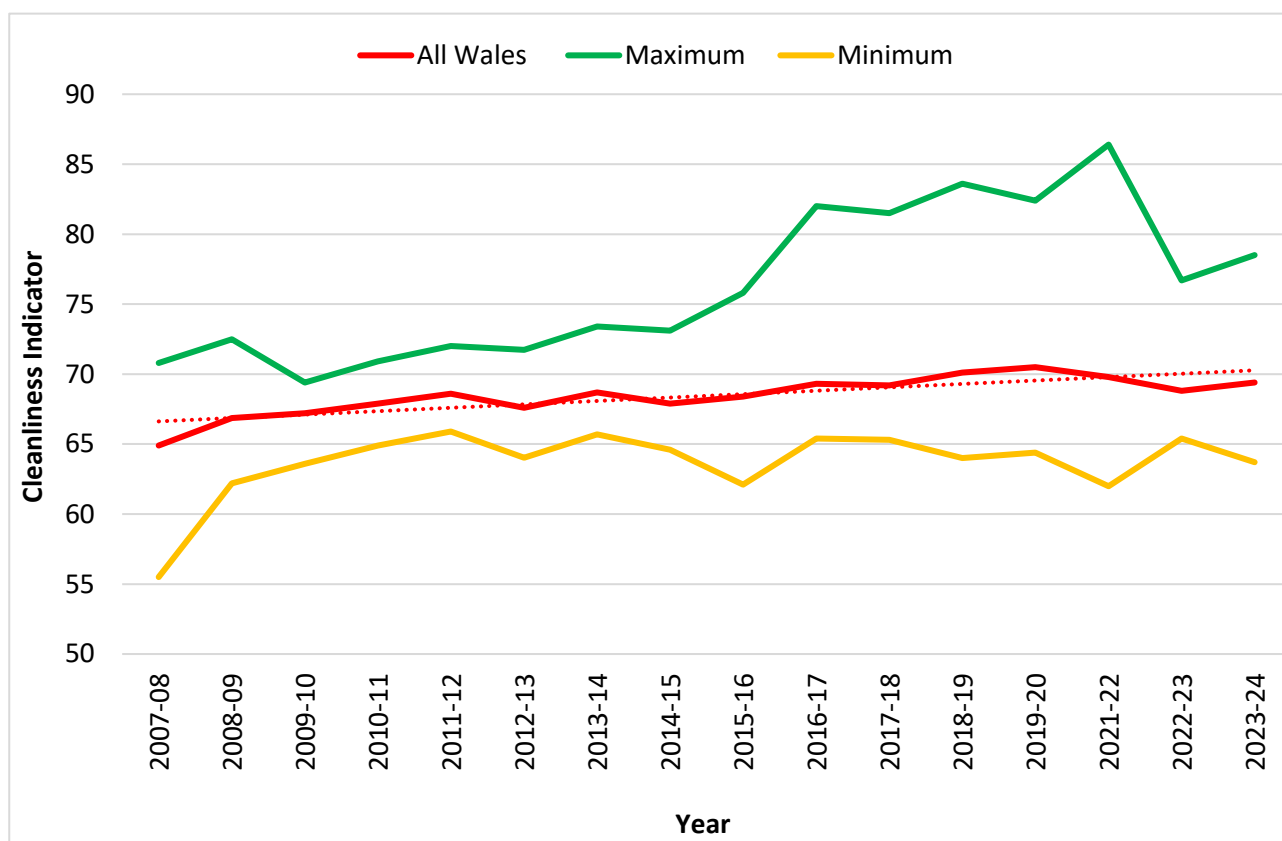
The figures for the maximum, minimum and All Wales percentage of streets graded B or above since 2007-08 can be viewed in [Appendix 1a](#).

Cleanliness Indicator

The All Wales Cleanliness Indicator (CI) for 2023-24 is 69.4. This is a slight increase on the cleanliness levels recorded last year, and the overall trend is increasing slowly over time.

Last year, we saw the gap between the highest scoring local authority (maximum) and lowest scoring local authority (minimum) close significantly for the first time since 2011-12 (Figure 4). This indicates a shift to greater consistency between areas of high and low deprivation areas in Wales, however, it also shows a decrease in the number of A and B⁺ grades achieved in the higher scoring authorities. This year, the gap has widened again due to fluctuations in the number of A and B⁺ graded streets across the higher scoring and lower scoring local authorities.

Figure 4: Maximum, Minimum and All Wales Cleanliness Indicator by Year

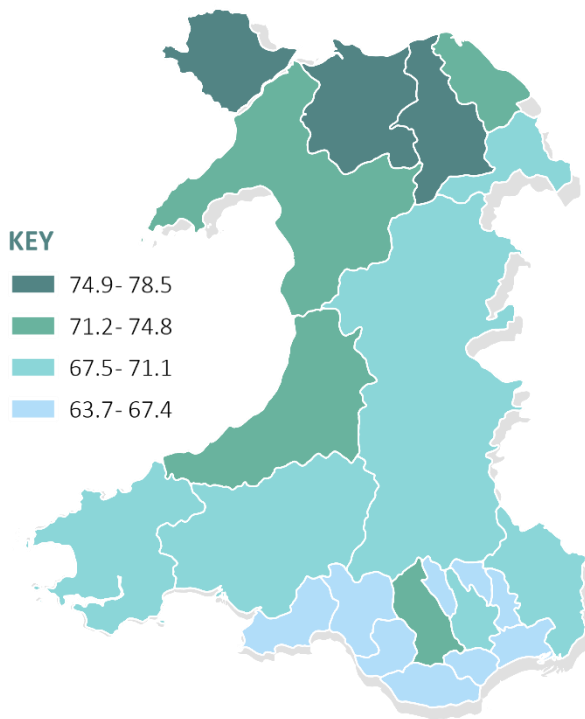


As four local authorities achieved 100% of streets graded B or above, the drop in the maximum CI relative to the 2016-2021 period can again be attributed to less streets achieving A and B⁺ grades. Nevertheless, A and B⁺ grades represent exceptionally clean streets which is challenging to achieve, and this is why the percentage of streets **graded B or above** figure is the more important measure of cleanliness for local authorities to direct their focus.

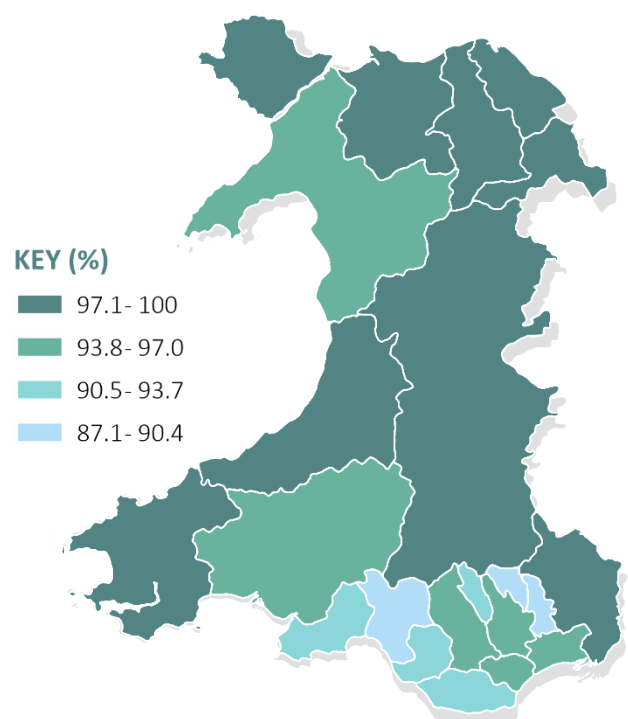
The maximum, minimum and All Wales Cleanliness Indicator figures since 2007-08 can be viewed in [Appendix 1b](#).

Figure 5: The Cleanliness Indicator (A) and the percentage of streets graded B or above (B) per local authority across Wales for 2023-24

A



B



This data has previously been shown in a table, but it is often used as a tool to draw comparisons between local authorities. **We do not encourage any comparisons between local authorities as each area is unique with contrasting geography, population demographics and resources.** As shown above, a lower CI does not always equate to a lower percentage of streets graded B or above, as the street grades carry different weighting during analysis.

Litter Types

All litter types are recorded and included in the overall grading of each street. Litter types include:

- Smoking Litter
- Drinks Litter
- Confectionery Litter
- Fast Food Litter

This year, smoking litter was found on 70.8% of streets across Wales. Despite being on a decreasing trend and being the lowest figure since surveys began in 2007-08, it has always been the most widespread type of litter seen on our streets. Smoking litter consists primarily of cigarette ends, but it also includes cigarette packaging, filter tips and other smoking related litter. Disposable vapes (and other vape associated litter e.g. packaging) were included in smoking litter levels across all local authorities for 2023-24 and following a trial in a small number of local authorities last year, [disposable vapes](#) have been counted under single use items.

Drinks litter is at its lowest figure since 2014-15 but it is still present on 43.6% of streets, with the levels in individual counties ranging considerably from 19.4% of streets to 86.1% (Figure 6). Of the streets with drinks litter, 36.5% were observed to have alcoholic drinks litter present. Confectionery litter (sweets, wrappers, lollipop sticks and crisp packets) was found on 43.8% of streets. This is a slight increase from last year but is still a historical low compared to the years prior to 2022-23.

Fast food litter has increased to its highest figure ever recorded, now being found on 26.4% of streets across Wales. Fast food litter includes the stereotypical fast-food packaging, as well as on-the-go food litter such as single use cutlery, drinks stirrers, straws and coffee cups. Often seen on the roadside, fast food litter creates a negative impression of our environment, and we have explored fast food litter in more detail with our [drinks receptacle](#) and [EPR](#) data. The trends of all litter types through time can be viewed in Figure 7.

Figure 6: Maximum, Minimum and All Wales figures for Litter Types in 2023-24

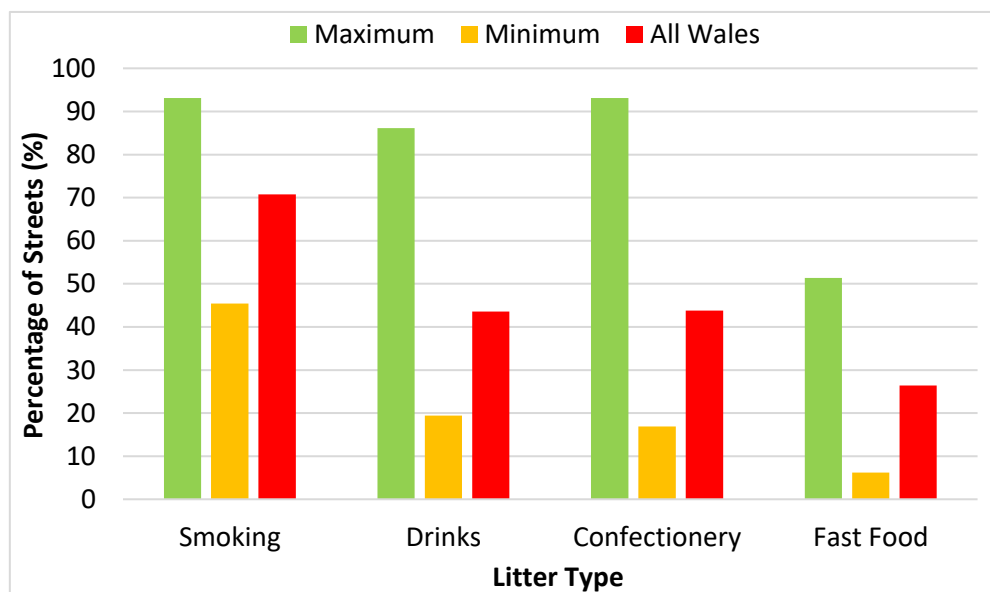
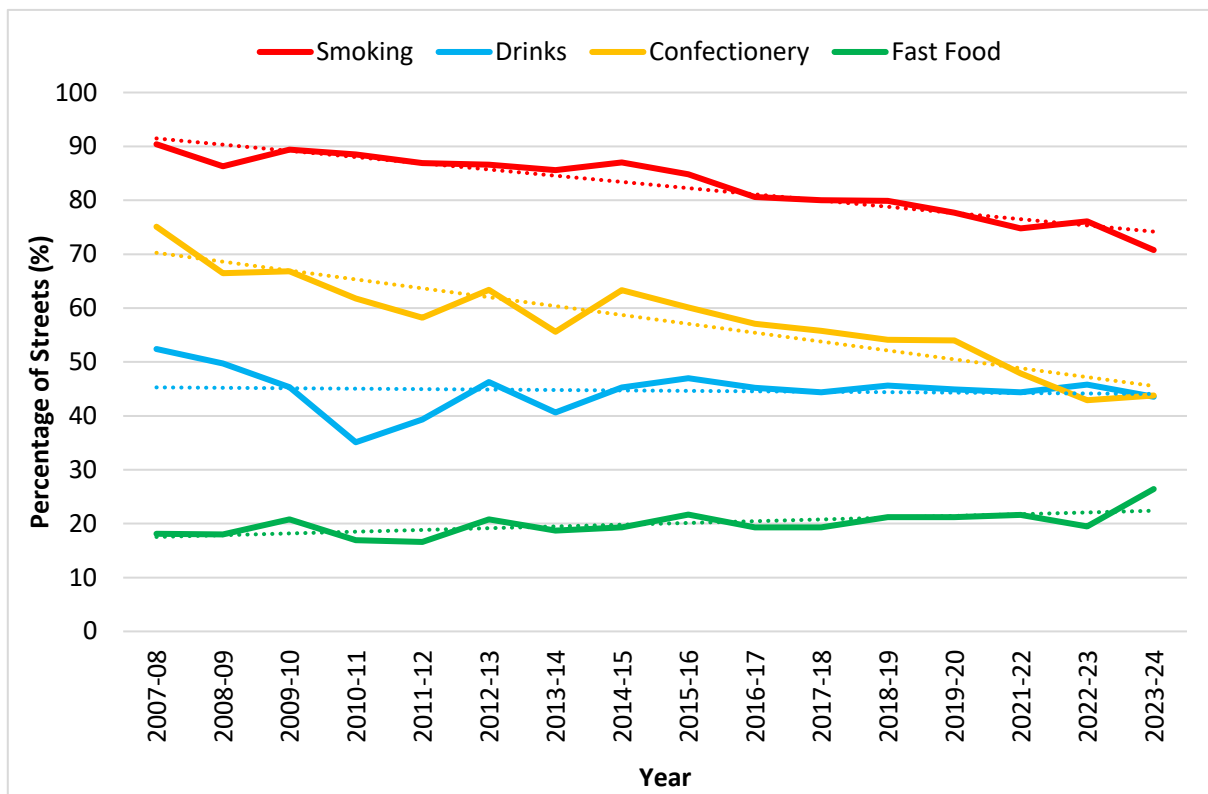


Figure 7: Types of Litter by Year with Trendlines



Litter Types

The source of litter is also recorded during surveys and used to grade each street. Litter sources include:

- Pedestrian
- Business
- Domestic
- Construction
- Animal Faeces
- Other
- Glass (since 2011-12)

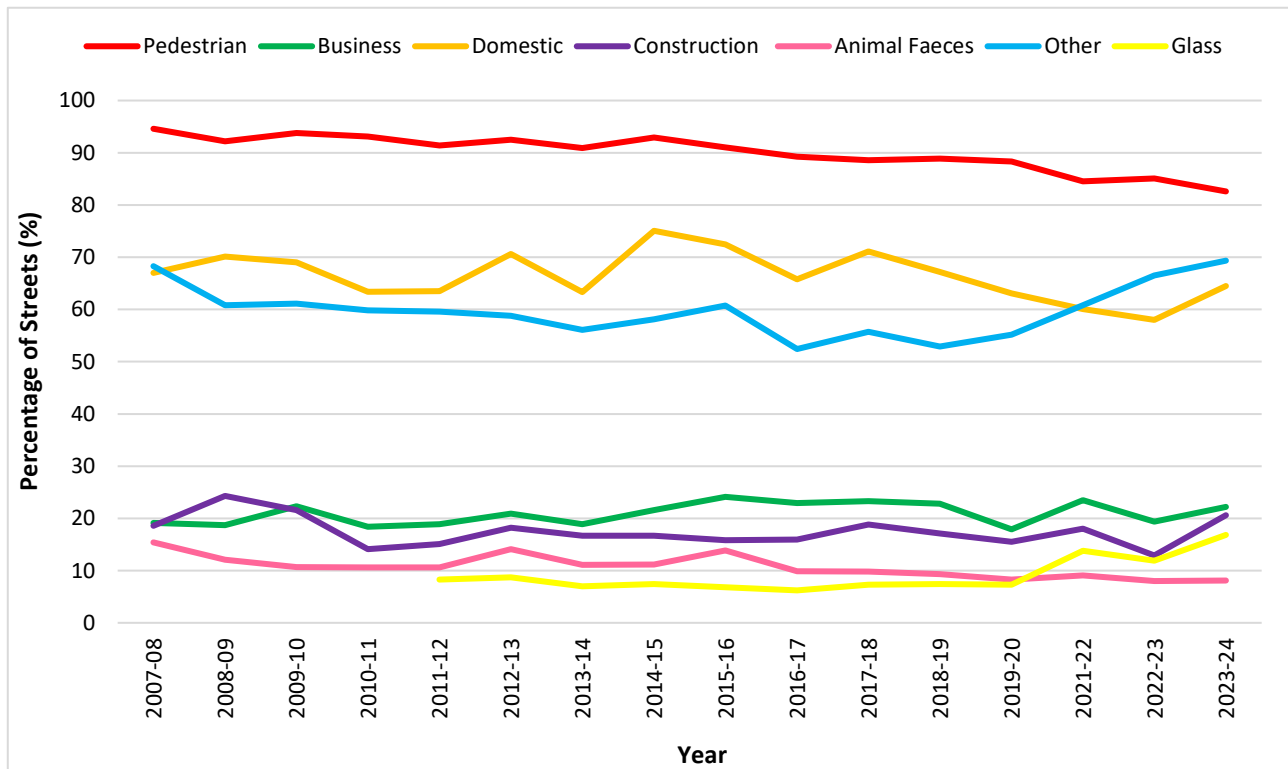
Despite a steady decrease in litter dropped by pedestrians, it remains the most common source of litter encountered during surveys. This year, pedestrian dropped litter was found on 82.6% of streets, which is the lowest figure since surveys began. Other unidentifiable litter and domestic litter are also common and remain high, on 69.3% and 64.5% of streets respectively.

Business and construction litter have both seen their presence increase this year, but they were both observed on fewer than 1 in 4 streets (22.2% and 20.6%, respectively). Glass was

found on 16.8% of streets across Wales, which is the highest figure since 2011-12. Animal faeces (dog and other fouling) has remained steady and fluctuated between 9.3% and 8.0% since 2018-19, and this year, it was found on 8.1% of streets.

Since 2012-22, Keep Wales Tidy has noted whether the types and sources of litter recorded include any food or drink packaging items. Food and drinks packaging was recorded on 64.8% of streets across Wales, an increase on the last two years.

Figure 8: Litter Sources by Year



Putting a Price on Litter

Most of the litter found on Welsh streets has a recyclable or reuse value. To reach our goals of becoming a zero-waste nation and transitioning to a circular economy, all litter types and sources need to be considered when deliberating on future policy. Much of our data has been collected in anticipation of the introduction of a Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) and an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) litter payments scheme, which are now proposed to come into effect in 2025. With these initiatives, and the introduction of the [single use plastics ban](#), Wales is working towards building a sustainable future through conserving resources and protecting the environment.

Drinks Receptacles

Since 2015-16, Keep Wales Tidy has been collecting detailed information on drinks containers including (but not limited to) plastic bottles, cans and glass bottles. We have analysed and used this data to monitor and inform policy changes and advocate for the introduction of initiatives such as a DRS, which involves paying a small deposit when buying a single use drinks container and receiving a refund when the item is returned.

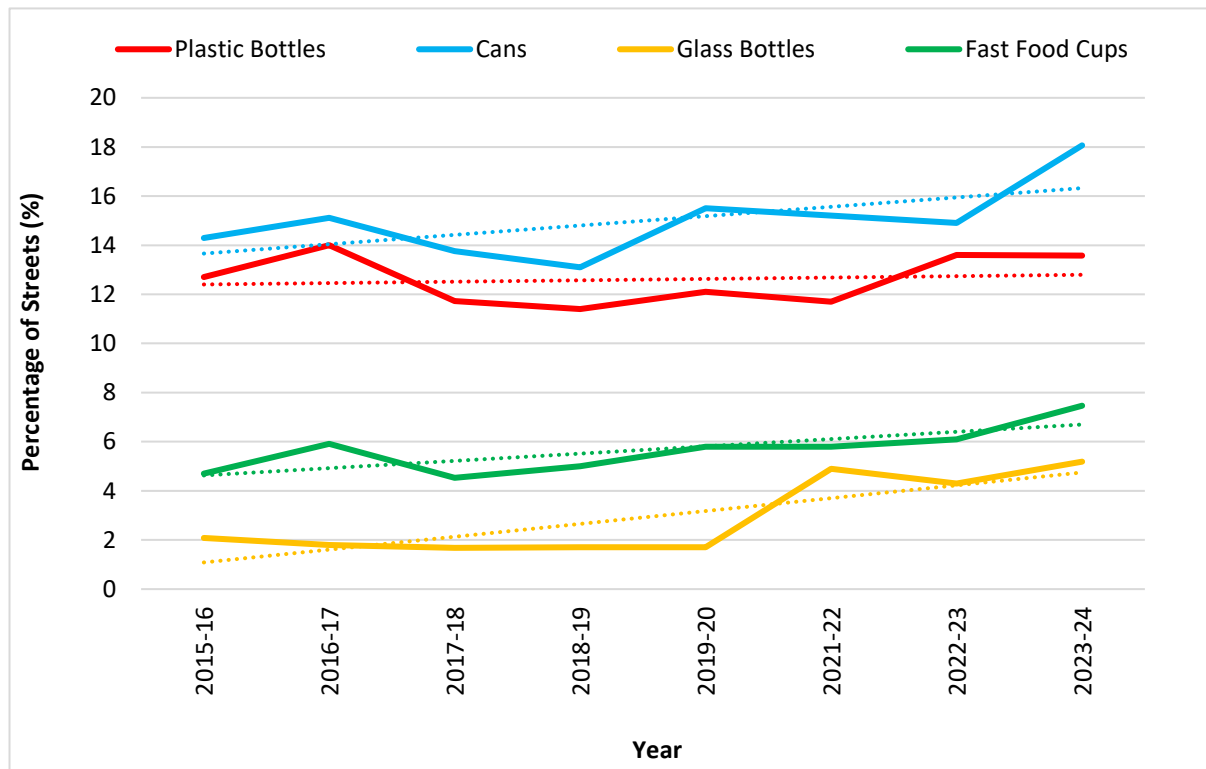
Aluminium cans are following an upward trend and are consistently the most common drinks receptacle observed. This year, they were found on 18.1% of streets which is approximately 3 percentage points higher than last year. Plastic bottles are also frequently observed, being found on 13.6% of streets. Fast food cups are the third most common drink receptacle which includes hot and cold drink cups (paper, plastic, polystyrene). Similar to fast food litter, these cups have increased steadily since 2017-18 and have now reached their highest figure, present on 7.5% streets across Wales.

Glass bottles have more than doubled in occurrence over the last 4 years, increasing to 5.2% of streets in 2023-24. Pieces of glass items can often be found in high quantities, with their presence visually impacting the look and feel of an area. Cartons and foil pouches were found on fewer than 2.0% of streets combined.

The upward trends for cans, glass and plastic bottles (Figure 9) demonstrates the need for an effective DRS to capture good quality materials for reuse and recycling, while providing incentive to dispose of litter responsibly and reduce litter scattered across our streets and natural environments. If we had a DRS with a minimum 10p deposit per item this year, the littered cans, glass and plastic bottles across Wales would represent almost £6,000 of unclaimed deposits at any given time for street litter alone, which could be applied to litter prevention or cleansing strategies.



Figure 9: Drinks Receptacles by Year with Trendlines



Single Use Items

Single-use items are designed to be used once and then discarded. Driving down the number of single-use items is vital to demonstrate and prioritise a circular economy in Wales, and to reduce the amount of litter that ends up on our streets and in the environment.

Due to their sharp rise in use and presence in our environment, we have collected data on disposable vapes for the first time across all local authorities. **Disposable vapes** were found on 10.2% of streets across Wales, and our data shows that 6700 vapes are littered on our streets at any one time. Keep Wales Tidy support a ban on disposable vapes due to their environmental impact, and our data has been used to support new policy, and we are pleased with the recent announcement to [ban disposable vapes](#) across the UK.

Wet wipes were recorded on 10.7% of streets across Wales, which is an increase from last year. Their presence is far reaching, and our data indicates that 8,100 wet wipes are littered on our streets at any given time. This year, Keep Wales Tidy responded to a [UK wide consultation](#) to support a ban on plastic wet wipes and we are eagerly awaiting the outcome. A restriction on plastic wet wipes would align to our recent [single use plastics ban](#) in Wales, helping us work towards a circular economy.

Additionally, we have recorded **polystyrene** presence since 2015-16, focussing on fast-food polystyrene (e.g. food boxes) and domestic polystyrene (e.g. packaging). Polystyrene is also made from plastic and can be eaten by small animals before breaking down and entering our soils and waterways.

This year, domestic polystyrene was found on 3.6% of streets, while fast food polystyrene was found on 1.2% of streets. Over time, domestic polystyrene packaging is on an upward trend, while fast food polystyrene is declining.

This year, **elastic bands** were also highlighted as an issue as they are seen littered in high volumes in some areas. Even though they can be re-used, elastic bands are often discarded by postal services and this year, they were present on 9.0% of streets across Wales. These bands are small and seemingly harmless, but they can have detrimental effects on wildlife and take 50 years to degrade due to being made from rubber latex.

Batteries were recorded on 1.4% of streets, which is slightly lower than last year. This refers to domestic batteries, and it does not include batteries from disposable vapes. It is important to ensure batteries are disposed of correctly as they are made using a range of metals (lead, mercury, zinc, lithium) that can be toxic and cause considerable damage if left to degrade in the environment. Currently, the Waste Batteries and Accumulators Regulations 2009 obligate battery producers to provide takeback schemes for consumers and through this, batteries can often be returned to supermarkets and other retailers. In line with the [consultation](#) on reforming the producer responsibility system for waste electrical and electronic equipment, the UK Government has also proposed to extend portable battery producer responsibility to household collections, a service that some local authorities in Wales already provide as part of kerbside collections.

Textiles were found on 4.3% of streets and these can accumulate from lost or discarded clothing. There has been an increased focus over the last few years on textiles waste and the negative impact of the fast-fashion industry, and the throwaway culture that it creates on the environment. Textiles can break down into small microplastic fibres that contaminate our soils and waterways, and consequently leads to consumption by both people and wildlife as part of the food chain. [The Separate Collection of Waste Materials for Recycling Code of Practice](#) for businesses, coming into force in April 2024, aims to encourage the reuse and recycling of textiles to prevent them from going to landfill and incineration.

EPR Packaging

In preparation for an EPR for litter payments scheme, we have collected data on specific food packaging categories including takeaway, sandwich or wrap, sweets or chocolate, crisps and single portion. A breakdown of these categories can be seen in Appendix 2. We have also counted any smoking or vape packaging observed during surveys. A new EPR scheme would ensure that producers of packaging are held accountable for the litter they generate by paying towards cleansing and waste infrastructure for more effective litter management. The scheme also hopes to incentivise packaging design toward recyclability and help us move toward a circular economy.

EPR packaging was seen on 47.7% of streets across Wales this year. The most common packaging observed was sweets and chocolate (37.9%), followed by takeaway (21.6%).

Adverse Environmental Quality Indicators (AEQIs)

Litter is not the only LEQ issue to have an impact on street quality. There are several other issues that influence how people perceive an area and this year, data has been collected on the following LEQ issues:

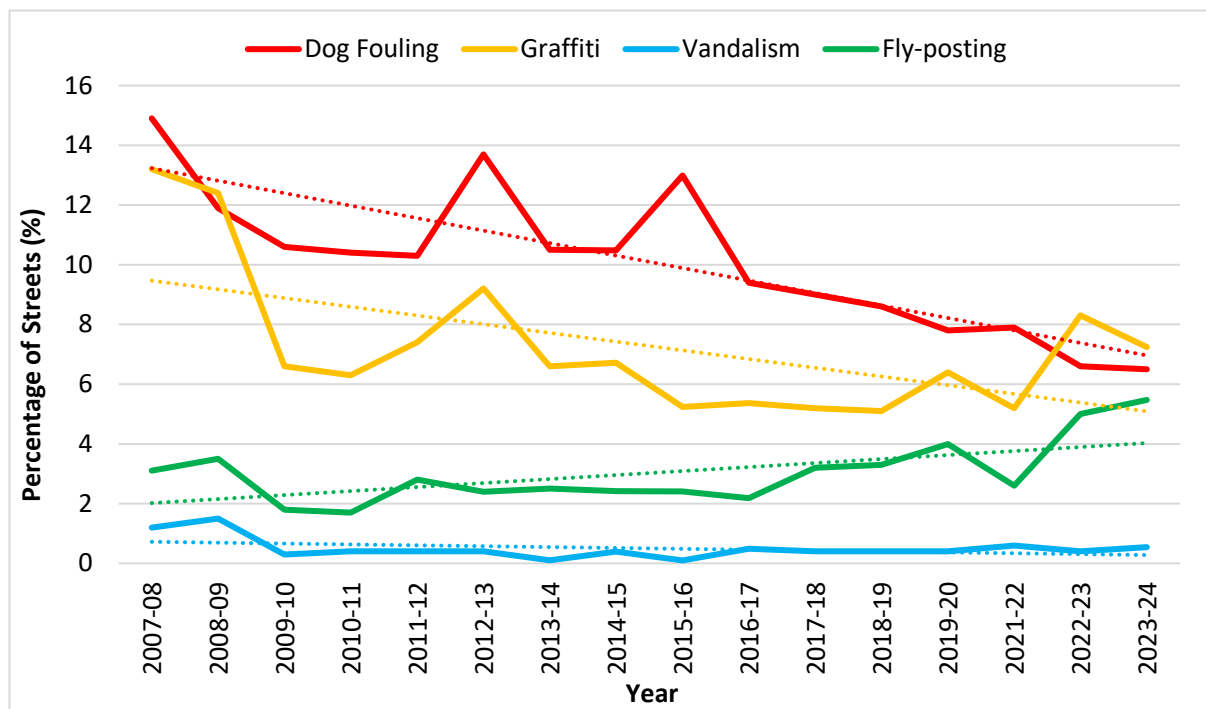
- Dog fouling
- Graffiti
- Fly-posting
- Vandalism
- Weeds
- Detritus

Dog fouling has fluctuated over the years but overall, its presence has significantly reduced since surveys began in 2007-08. This year, dog fouling was recorded on just 6.4% of streets, the lowest ever figure. This represents a great improvement but due to its hazardous and unsightly nature, interventions to maintain low to no presence should continue.

Despite graffiti and fly-posting being recorded on 7.2% and 5.5% of streets this year, vandalism was found on less than 1.0% of streets. Whilst graffiti has been trending downward since surveys began, there has been an increase in fly-posting observed (Figure 10).

Weeds and detritus have always been the most common AEQIs on the streets of Wales. With changes in resources and cleansing practices, weeds and detritus are now present on more streets than ever before, found on 90.0% and 88.5% this year respectively. Our guidance paper on weeds and detritus can be found [here](#).

Figure 10: AEQIs by Year with Trendlines



Appendices

Appendix 1a: Maximum, Minimum and All Wales percentage of streets graded B or above by Year

Percentage Graded B or Above (%)			
	All Wales	Maximum	Minimum
2007-08	91.6	98.5	74.8
2008-09	93.3	98.7	86.6
2009-10	94.7	100.0	87.8
2010-11	96.3	100.0	90.6
2011-12	96.7	100.0	91.9
2012-13	94.8	100.0	89.3
2013-14	96.5	99.3	93.4
2014-15	96.5	100.0	93.1
2015-16	96.1	99.3	88.3
2016-17	95.3	100.0	87.2
2017-18	95.5	100.0	91.2
2018-19	96.0	100.0	89.6
2019-20*	96.1	100.0	90.6
2021-22	95.1	100.0	87.1
2022-23	95.9	100.0	91.7
2023-24	95.1	100.0	87.1

Appendix 1b: Maximum, Minimum and All Wales Cleanliness Indicator figures by Year

Cleanliness Indicator			
	All Wales	Maximum	Minimum
2007-08	64.9	70.8	55.5
2008-09	66.9	72.5	62.2
2009-10	67.2	69.4	63.6
2010-11	67.9	70.9	64.9
2011-12	68.6	72.0	65.9
2012-13	67.6	71.7	64.0
2013-14	68.7	73.4	65.7
2014-15	67.9	73.1	64.6
2015-16	68.4	75.8	62.1
2016-17	69.3	82.0	65.4
2017-18	69.2	81.5	65.3
2018-19	70.1	83.6	64.0
2019-20*	70.5	82.4	64.4
2021-22	69.8	86.4	62.0
2022-23	68.8	76.7	65.4
2023-24	69.4	78.5	63.7

Appendix 2: EPR Packaging Categories with Definitions

	Items include:	Definition
Takeaway	Wraps, boxes, cups, cup holders, bags, paper, straws, cutlery, sauce pots or condiment sachets and stirrers	Fast-food litter from fast food restaurants and takeaways (i.e. in unsealed packaging or made-to-order)
Sandwich/ Wrap	Sandwich or sandwich wrap packaging	On-the-go sandwiches or sandwich wraps (i.e. bought from a shop as part of a meal deal or in sealed packaging on shelf)
Sweets/ Chocolate	Sweets wrappers, chocolate wrappers, chewing gum packaging or lollipop sticks <230g	Include multipack items but exclude multipack outer wrap
Single Portion	Single portion sushi, sausage roll, pie, pasty, cake/muffin, biscuit packets	Typically sold in small shops or stocked under 'food-to-go'. Exclude multipacks and packs of chilled foods designed for sharing
Crisps	Crisp packets <60g	Include multipacks but exclude multipack outer wrap



Gofalu am ein gwlad
Caring for Wales