Association for Public Service Excellence

Local authority public conveniences provision 2026

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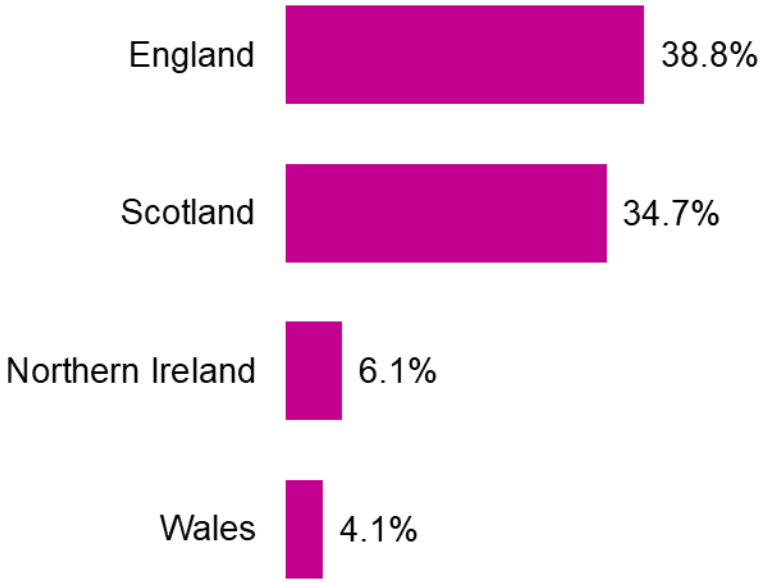
What we asked, and who answered

An online survey, July to October 2026.

It covered how much provision there is, who runs it, charging, accessibility, strategy, vandalism and green measures.

Where questions match, we show change on 2025.



Share of responses by nation (%)

Provision holds up, but the pressure is building

95.9%

provide permanent toilets (up 4.2 points on 2025)

24.5%

maintain 30 or more facilities

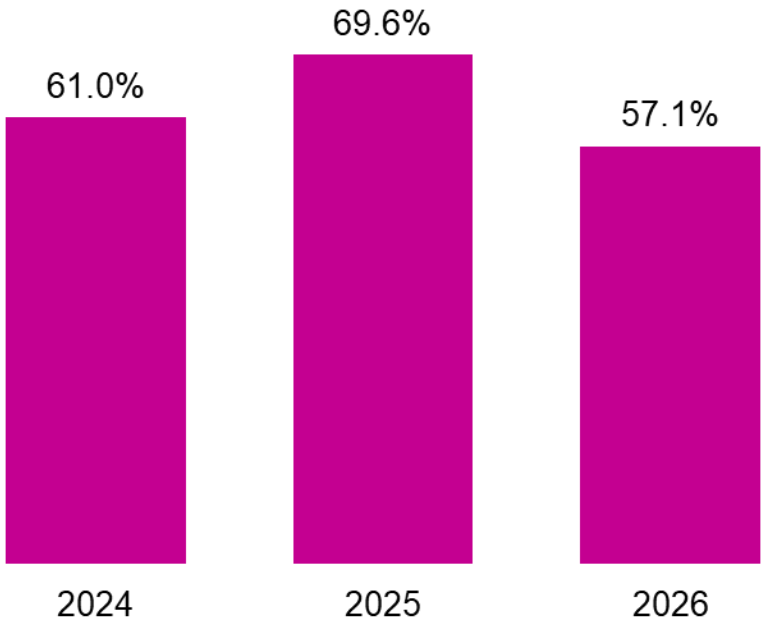
64.6%

provide Changing Places toilets

25.6%

have a formally agreed strategy

Who cleans and maintains them



Cleaning and maintenance wholly in-house (%)

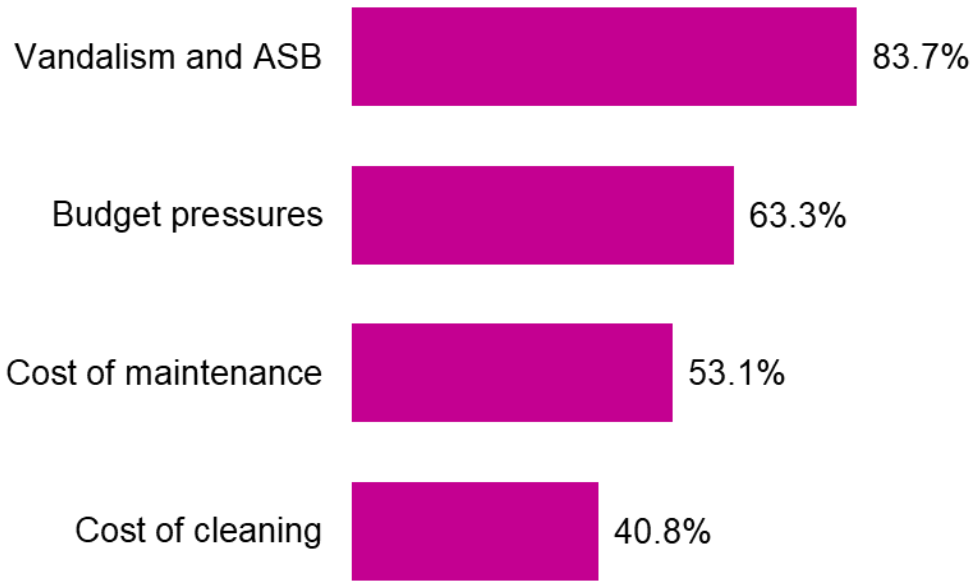
No clear drift to insourcing or outsourcing.

14% contract out both cleaning and maintenance. Mixed models use councils, contractors, parishes and community groups.

20.4% use temporary toilets and 26.5% occasionally, for events, peak seasons and refurbishments.

Alternatives: town and parish councils and local food or retail outlets (34.4% each).

Vandalism is the biggest challenge



Greatest challenges cited by councils (%)

Vandalism is up 9.8 points on 2025.

Budget pressure is up 2.4 points.

Together they are an operational and a financial risk.

Councils also told us: facilities in the wrong place, short bursts of rural tourist demand, and rising cleanliness expectations.

What councils do about it

65.9%

close facilities in higher-risk periods

50%

work with the police

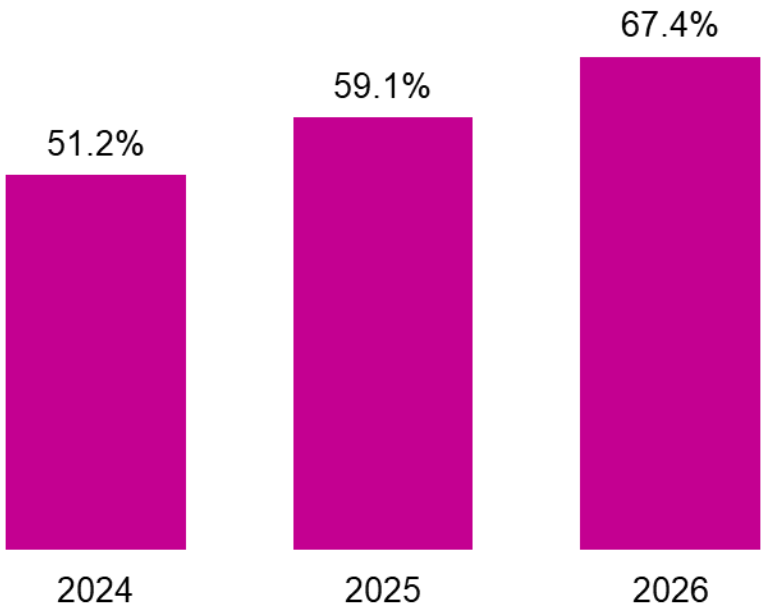
29.5%

use CCTV or other security

Some also work with ASB teams, youth services, schools and community groups.

APSE's point: repeated repairs eat capital that should fund refurbishment and retrofit. Resilient specification and quick repair belong in improvement programmes, not after them.

More councils are keeping toilets free



Authorities that do not charge (%)

23.9% charge at some sites; 8.7% at all or most.

Covering operating costs is the main reason (40.6%). No one charges for profit.

97.8% get no income from advertising or sponsorship.

68.8% use a key or access system for disabled toilets, down from 76.2%.

Inclusive provision: progress, with gaps

51.3%

have no sanitary bins in male toilets

54.8%

have no shelves for colostomy bags

65.1%

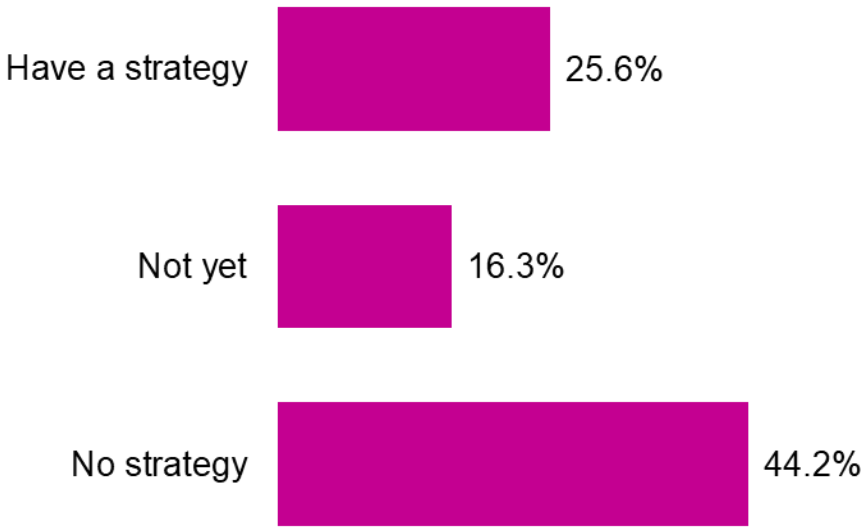
have no safe needle disposal

43.8%

are taking no gender-neutral measures

Changing Places toilets: 51.2% (2024), 61.9% (2025), 64.6% (2026)

Reviews are under way, strategies are not



Formally agreed strategy for public conveniences (%)

38.8% are reviewing now and 16.3% plan to within 12 to 24 months.

User safety (72.7%) and public safety (65.6%) matter most in strategy.

Only 20% have assessed the wider economic benefit. Almost half say that evidence would help.

What councils should do next

Get the basics right

An up-to-date asset register

Clear service standards

Evidence on use and condition

A planned response to recurring damage

Review direct provision alongside parish delivery, community schemes, council buildings and proportionate charging

Plan it as town-centre infrastructure

Link toilets to regeneration, place-making and the visitor economy.

Pride in Place offers selected areas up to £20 million over ten years and names public toilets. Scotland has a £10 million Changing Places fund. Subject to eligibility.

How APSE can help

APSE Solutions

Service reviews and options appraisals

Demand, asset and condition reviews

Service standards and strategy development

Critical-friend challenge and member workshops

Performance Networks

Compare your performance with peers

Share good practice

Strengthen the business case for investment

CLAMs App

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