



Staffordshire County Council – Bus Service Improvement Plan Survey Results

September 2021



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Context of the report

Context of the report

Following the announcement of the Government's National Bus Strategy, £3 billion has been earmarked for improving bus services throughout England.

Staffordshire County Council is working closely with bus operators to develop a **Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) for Staffordshire** aimed at **encouraging more people to travel by bus**.

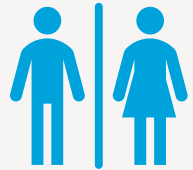
As part of this, Staffordshire County Council ran a **passenger engagement survey** between 19 Aug 2021 and 17 September 2021, to gather views from its Staffordshire residents. The survey aimed to **understand feelings towards local bus services** and highlight **priorities for the future**.

Respondents were asked different questions based on whether they were a current bus user or non-user.



Who responded to the consultation?

A total of 1,900 responses were received during the consultation period. Most filled in the questionnaire online, but a small number (24) completed a paper copy.



31% Males
69% Females



13% have a mobility impairment due to disability
8% have a mobility impairment due to age



8% aged
21 and under

14% aged
22 to 34

37% aged
35 to 54

18% aged
55 to 64

20% aged
65 to 79

3% aged
80+



24% have a
concessionary
bus pass



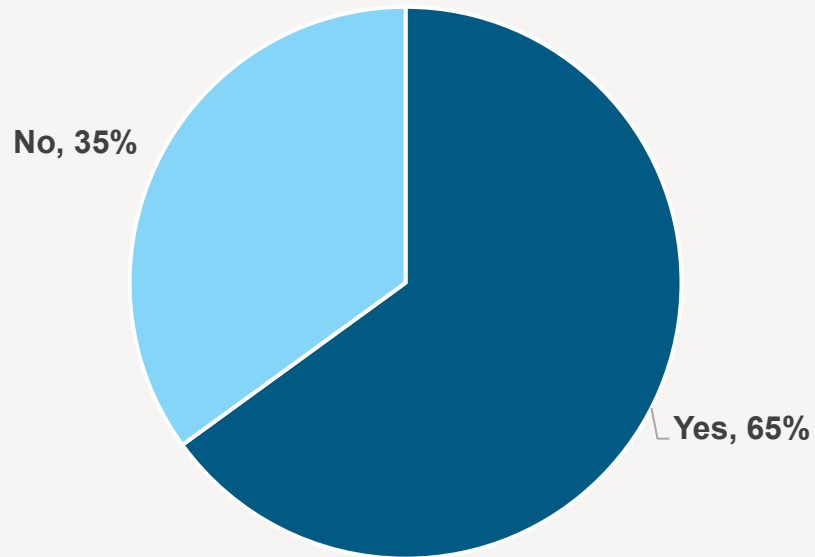
54% have regular access to a car
14% have occasional access to a car
33% have no access to a car



Bus usage

Bus usage

Nearly two-thirds of respondents were current bus users, with usage higher amongst concessionary bus pass holders, those without a car and younger respondents.



Q1. Do you use the bus?
Base = 1,900 respondents



OVERALL SUMMARY

1,235 respondents (65%) said they currently travel by bus, compared to 665 respondents that do not (35%).

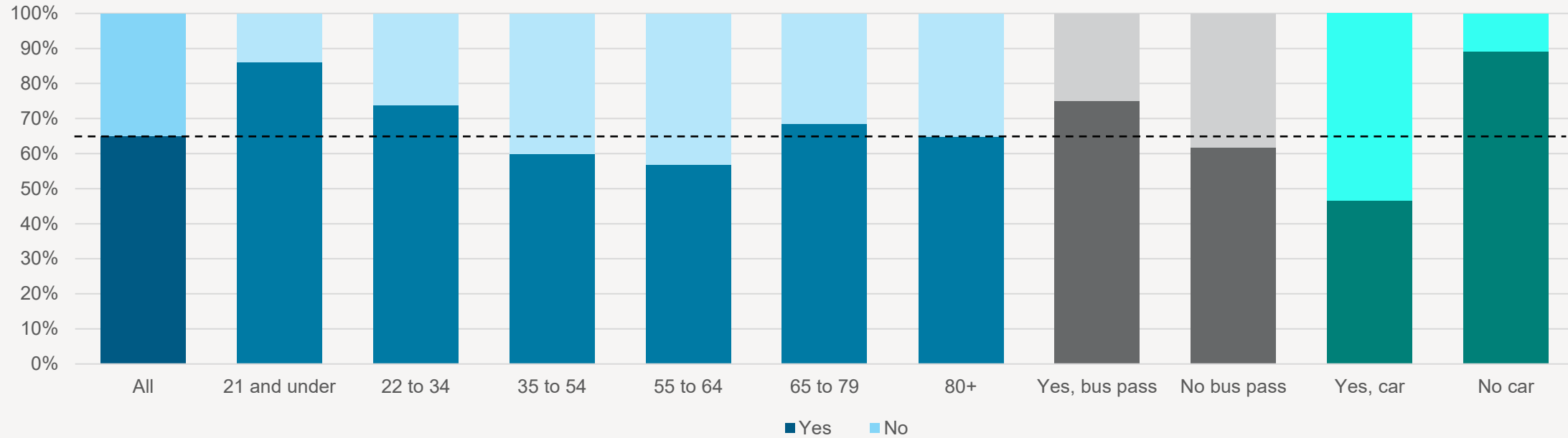


TRENDS BY LOCATION

Analysis by location found that Burton on Trent had the highest proportion of respondents that travel by bus, along with Lichfield and Cannock. Areas to the south and east of Stoke on Trent (Blythe Bridge, Eccleshall, Alton, Stone, Kidsgrove) had the lowest proportion of respondents that use the bus.



Bus usage – trends by respondent profile



TRENDS BY RESPONDENT PROFILE

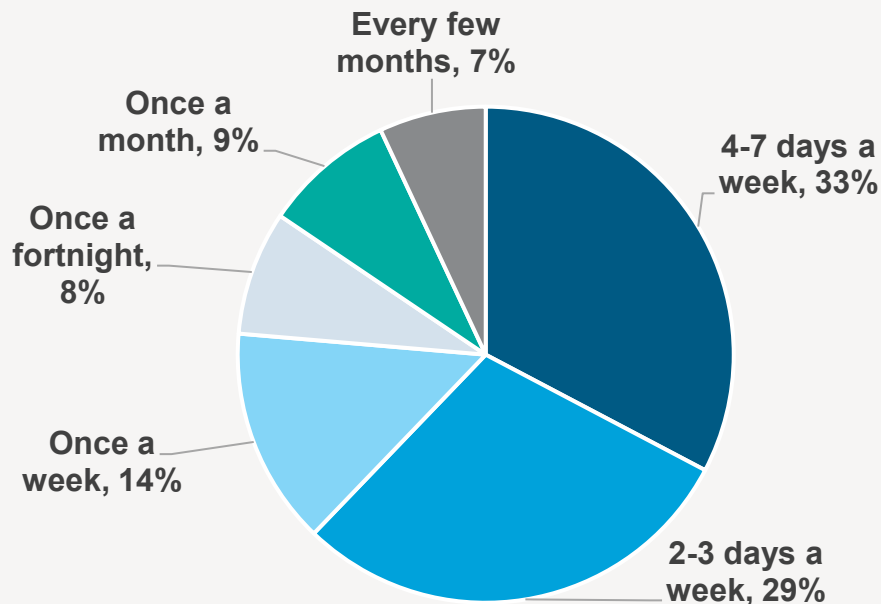
Bus usage was higher amongst younger respondents; 86% of respondents aged 21 and under use the bus, compared to 57% of the 55 to 64 age group, and 65% of respondents aged 80+.

Bus usage was higher amongst respondents who have a concessionary bus pass (75% vs 62%). A higher proportion of respondents without regular access to a car use the bus (89%) compared to those without a car (47%).



Bus usage – frequency [Current users]

Most respondents that use the bus are frequent users; 76% travel at least once a week.



Y1. How often do you take the bus?
Base = 1,235 respondents



OVERALL SUMMARY

404 respondents (33%) travel on the bus 4-7 times a week, whilst a further 364 (29%) travel 2-3 days a week. 16% are less frequent users (travelling once a month or less frequently).



TRENDS BY RESPONDENT PROFILE

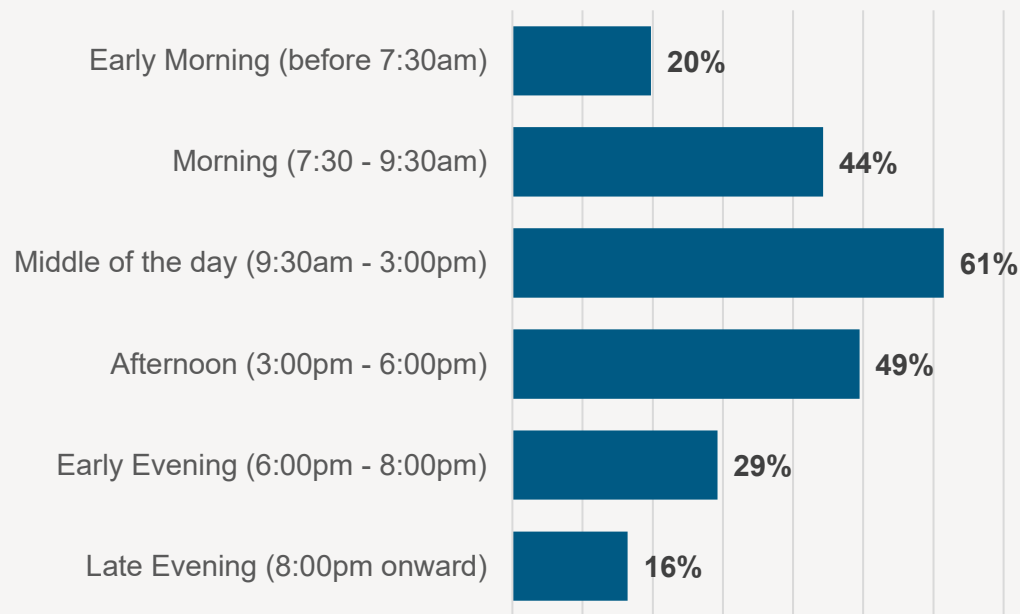
55% of respondents aged 21 and under use the bus 4-7 days a week (the highest proportion of all age groups), while 92% of this age group travel at least once a week.

The proportion travelling frequently decreases slightly with age, however 70% of 65+ respondents still travel at least once a week by bus.

A slightly higher proportion of respondents without a bus pass travelled 4-7 days a week compared to those with a bus pass (36% vs. 23%)

Bus usage – time of day [Current users]

Respondents said they travel on the bus throughout the day, with the middle of the day being the most common time to travel.



Y2. When do you normally take the bus? (select all that apply)
Base = 1,235 respondents



OVERALL SUMMARY

61% of respondents travel in the middle of the day (between 09:30 and 15:00). Although making up a lower proportion of respondents, a fifth travel early morning (before 07:30) and 16% travel late evening.



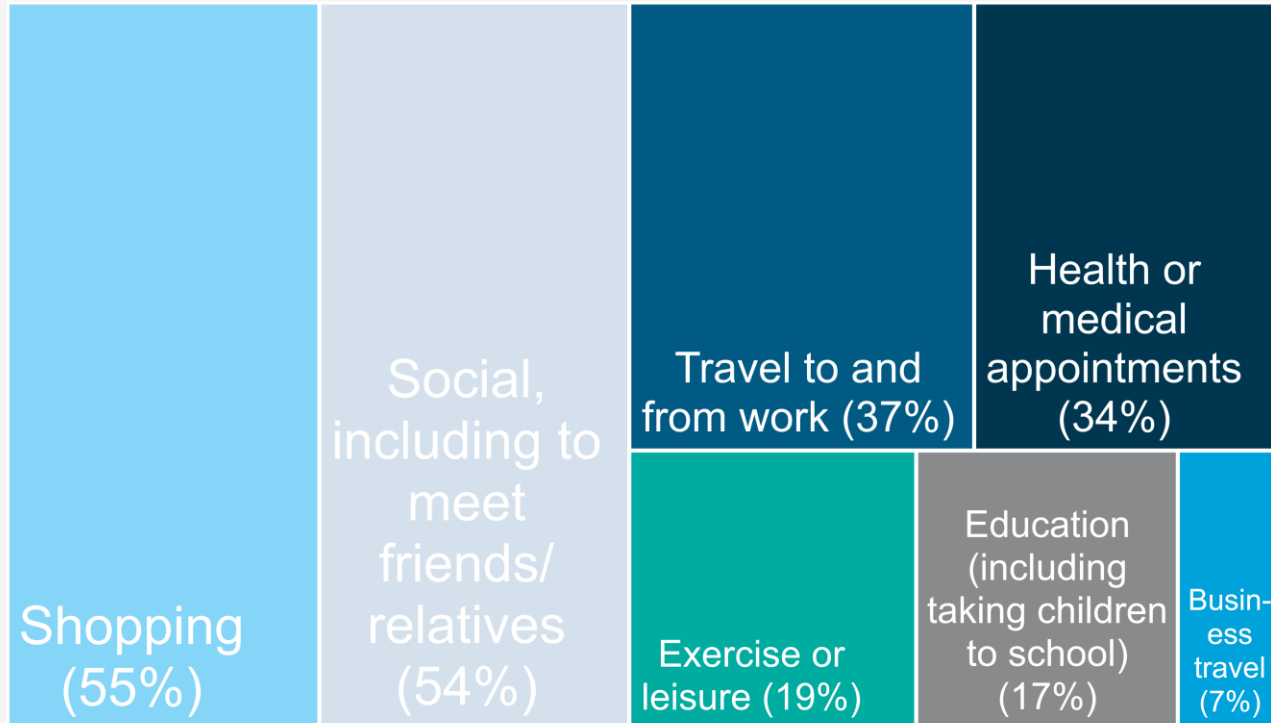
TRENDS BY RESPONDENT PROFILE

There were varied responses by age. Respondents aged 65+ were most likely to use the bus in the middle of the day. Whilst younger respondents (21 and under / 22 to 34) were more likely to travel in the morning and afternoon.



Bus usage – journey purpose

The most frequent reasons for travelling by local bus are to go shopping and/or for social reasons (meetings friends/relatives).



Y3. What are your usual/most frequent reason(s) for travelling by local bus? (select all that apply)
Base = 1,235 respondents



OVERALL SUMMARY

Shopping and social visits were the most frequent reasons for travelling by bus (55% and 54% respectively). However, 37% respondents also frequently travel by bus to and from work and for health/medical appointments (34%).



TRENDS BY RESPONDENT PROFILE

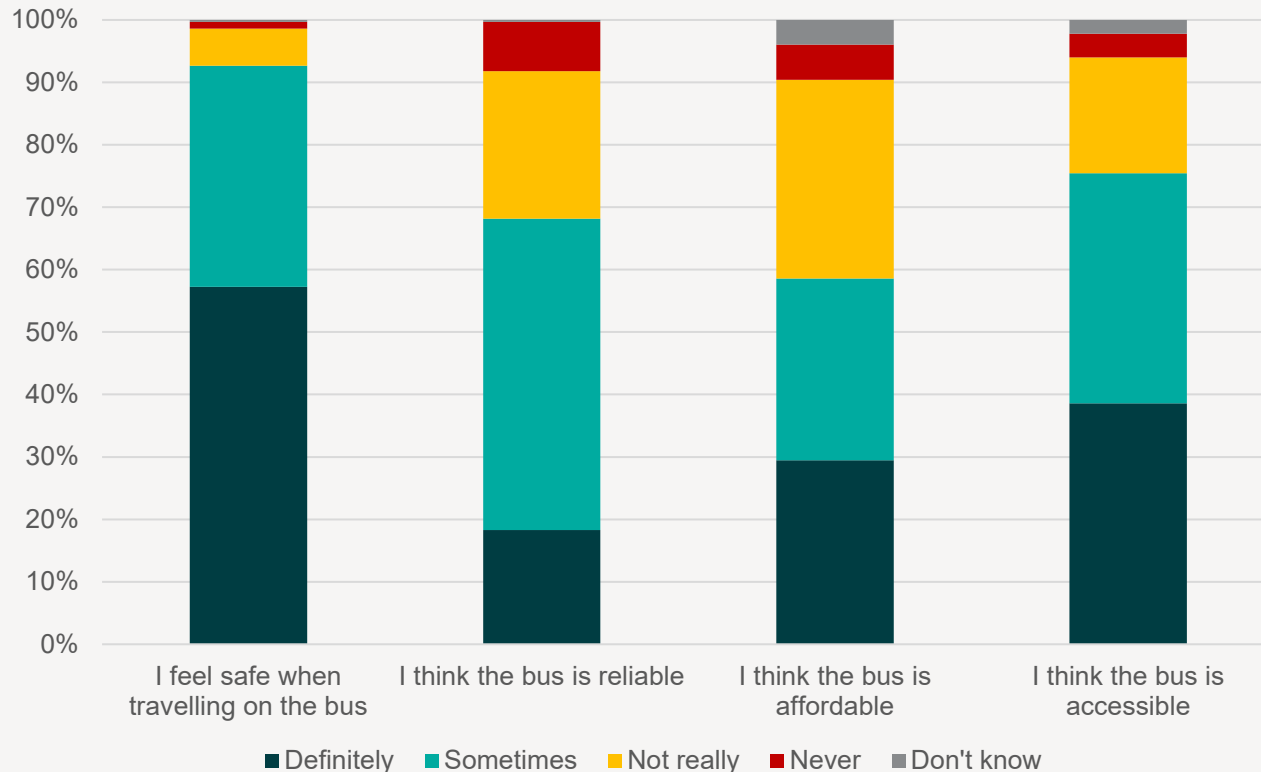
Responses also varied by age of respondent. For those aged 21 and under, education was the most frequent reason for travel. For 22-54 year old respondents, it was travel to work and social reasons. For respondents aged 55+, shopping was the most frequent reason for travelling by local bus.

Current bus users

The following questions were only asked to respondents who answered 'yes' to Q1 (Do you currently use the bus?)

Feelings towards the bus service [Current users]

Feelings towards the bus are generally positive; feelings of safety score higher than affordability/reliability and accessibility.



Y4. How do you currently feel about the bus service?
Base = 1,235 respondents



OVERALL SUMMARY

57% respondents said they 'definitely' feel safe when travelling on the bus, whilst a further 35% 'sometimes' felt safe.

'I think the bus is affordable' had the highest proportion of respondents that answered 'not really' or 'never' (37%).

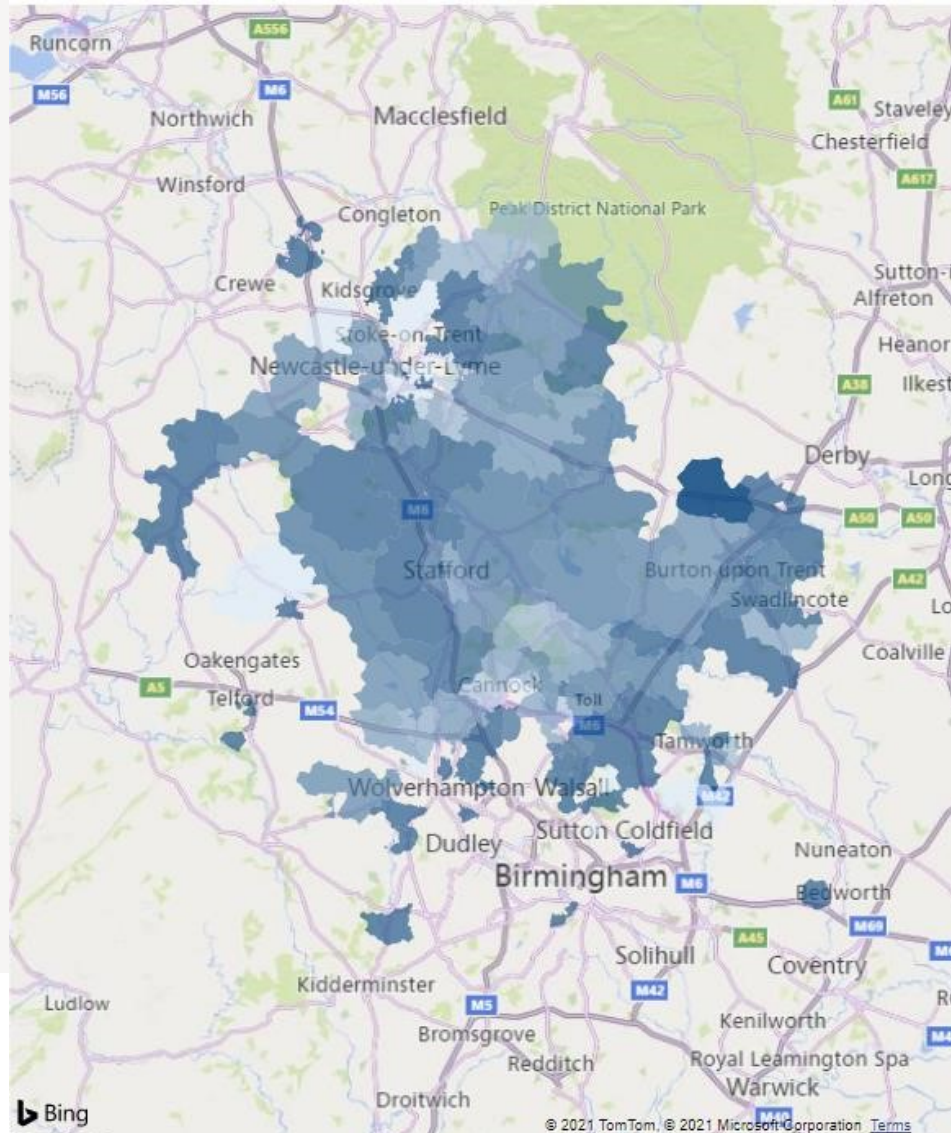


TRENDS BY RESPONDENT PROFILE

Older respondents scored more positively than younger respondents, with a greater proportion scoring these aspects as 'definitely'. The most notable difference was the *affordability of the bus*.

A higher proportion of male respondents 'definitely' felt safe on the bus compared to females (64% compared to 53%). Bus pass holders also scored more positively for all aspects. 49% of respondents with a bus pass 'definitely' think the bus is affordable compared to 21% of those without a bus pass.

Feelings towards the bus service – trends by location



TRENDS BY LOCATION

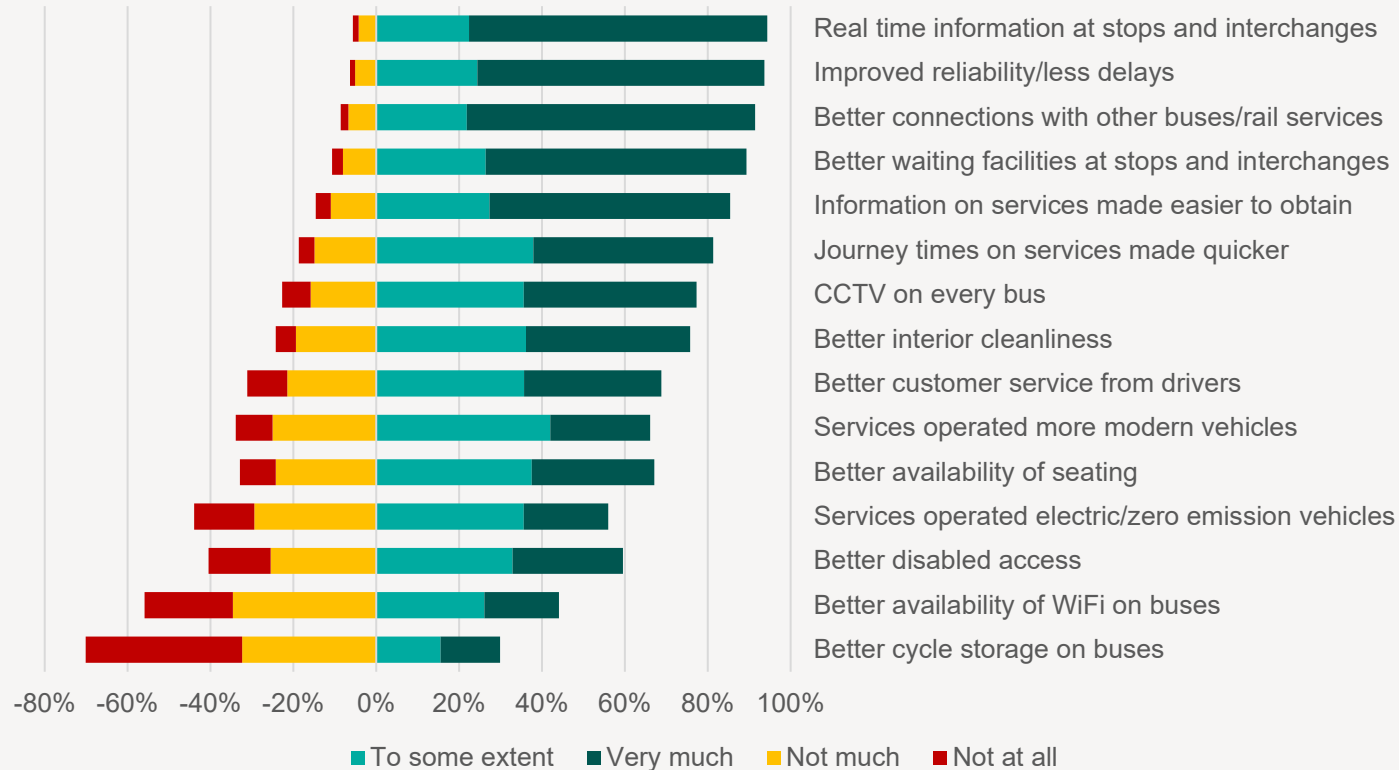
With reliability having the lowest proportion of respondents selecting ‘definitely’, further analysis was conducted by location. Responses were analysed by location to show areas where respondents felt the most positive towards the bus service (in terms of reliability).

Burton upon Trent and surrounding areas contained the highest proportion of respondents that think the bus is ‘definitely’ or ‘sometimes’ reliable. Conversely, areas of Codsall, Cannock and Stoke-on-Trent contained the highest proportion of respondents that answered ‘not really’ or never’.

In terms of safety, Burton upon Trent also contained the greatest proportion of respondents that said the bus was ‘definitely’ safe.

How could bus usage be increased? [Current users]

Real time information at bus stops, improved reliability and better connections were most likely to increase bus usage amongst current users.



OVERALL SUMMARY

Most likely to increase bus usage amongst current bus users is *real time information at stops/interchanges* (1,127 respondents). Respondents also chose *improved reliability, better connections, better waiting facilities at stops and easier access to information* as improvements that would personally make them use local buses more.

Least likely to increase usage was *better cycle storage, better availability of Wi-Fi and services operated by electric vehicles*.

Y6. To what extent, if at all, would the following make you personally use local buses more?

Base = 1,235 respondents

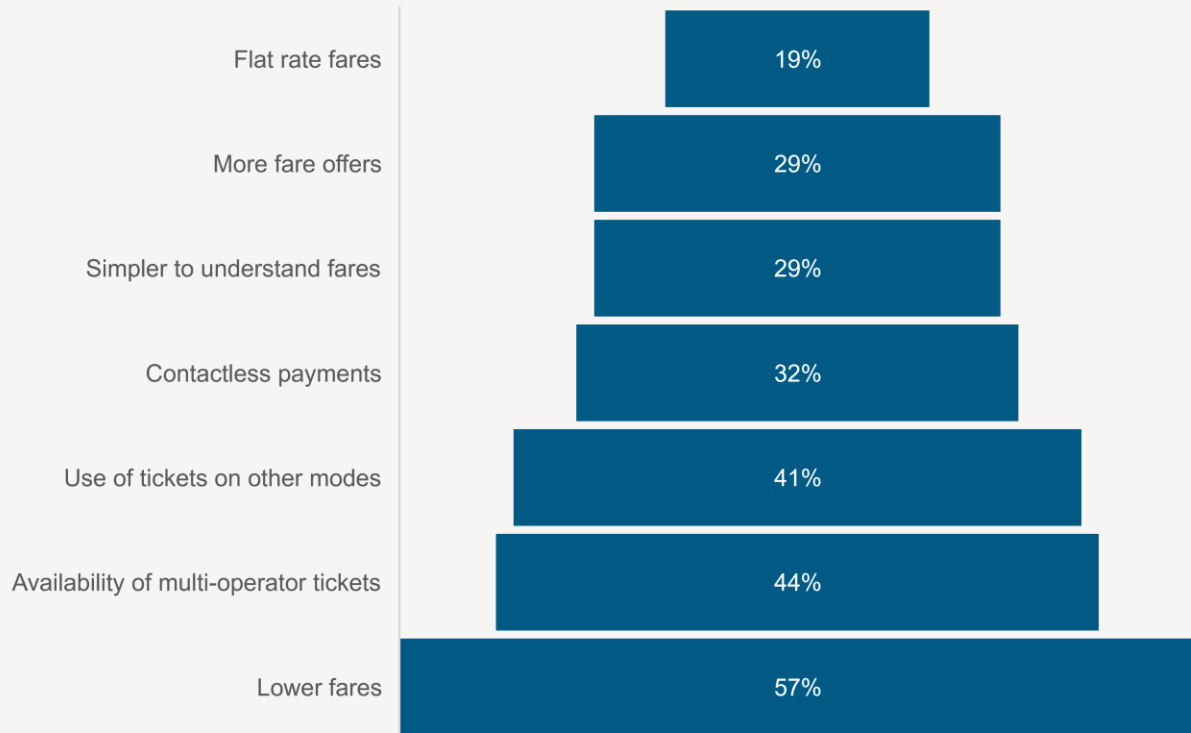
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How could bus usage be increased - Fares? [Current users]

In terms of fares, 'lower fares' were most likely to encourage current users to travel by bus more.



Y7. Thinking about fares, to what extent, if at all would the following make you use local buses more? (select up to 5)

Base = 1,235 respondents

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OVERALL SUMMARY

Respondents were permitted to choose up to five fare-related initiatives that would encourage them to travel by bus more. The most popular response was *lower fares*, chosen by 57% respondents. This was followed by *availability of multi-operator tickets* (44%) and *use of tickets on other modes of travel e.g. trains* (41%).



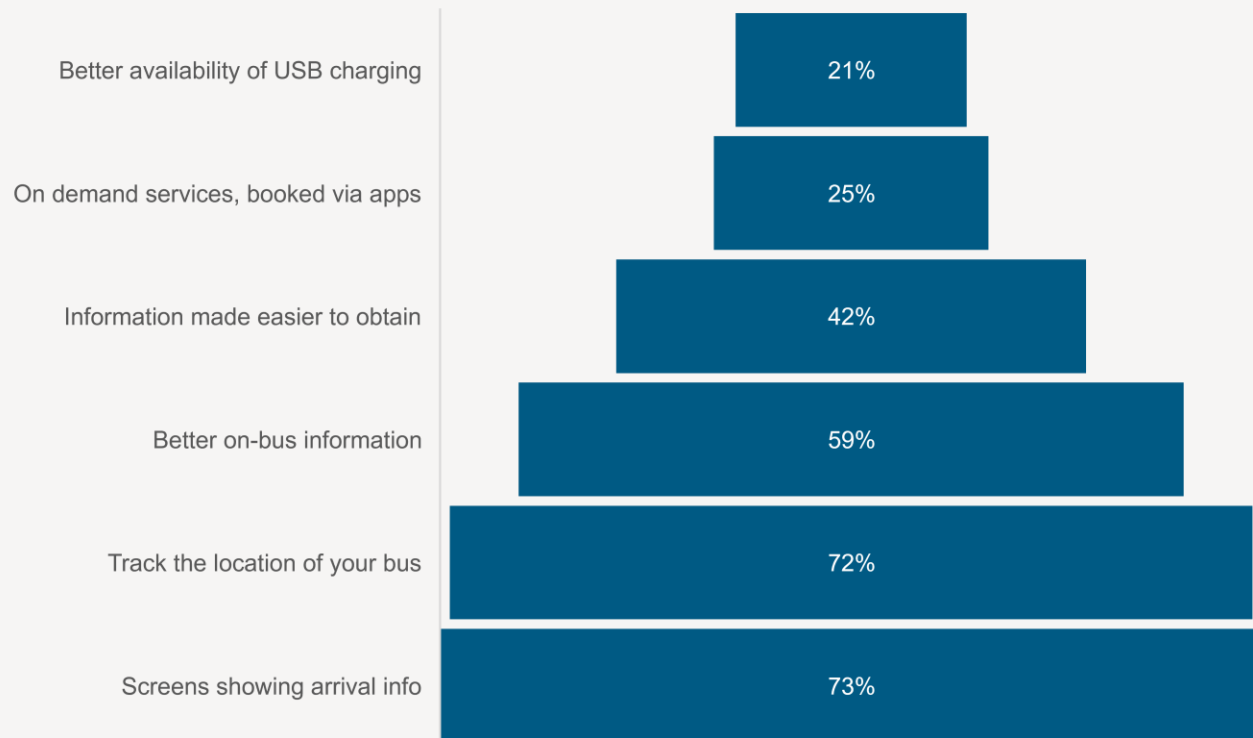
TRENDS BY RESPONDENT PROFILE

There were slight differences in response by age. The proportion of respondents that chose *lower fares* was highest amongst those aged under 65. For instance, 74% of those aged 21 and under chose this improvement. For 65+, the most frequently chosen aspect was *tickets than can be used on other transport (i.e. trains)*.



How could bus usage be increased - Technology? [Current users]

In terms of technology, 'screens at bus stops/stations showing arrival information' and being able to 'track the location of your bus' were most likely to encourage current users to travel by bus more.



Y8. Thinking about technology, to what extent, if at all would the following make you use local buses more? (select up to 5)

Base = 1,235 respondents

ATKINS

Member of the SNC-Lavalin Group



OVERALL SUMMARY

Respondents were permitted to choose up to five technology-related initiatives that would encourage them to travel by bus more. The most popular responses were *screens at bus stops/stations showing arrival information* chosen by 73% respondents and *being able to track the location of your bus* (72%). 59% also answered that *better on-bus information such as next stop displays* would encourage them to use local buses more.



TRENDS BY RESPONDENT PROFILE

There were some slight differences in response by age. Whilst all respondents appeared to value information on bus location/arrival information, a greater proportion of younger respondents chose *'track the location of your bus'*, whilst older respondents favoured *'screens that show arrival info'*.

How could bus usage be increased? [Current users]

Respondents were if anything would encourage them to use local buses more frequently (open question). Responses appear to focus mostly on bus timings – including a more frequent service and/or services that run earlier/later in the day / on a Sunday.



TIMINGS (EARLIER/LATER/SUNDAY SERVICE)

137 comments related to requests for bus services to run earlier and later in the day. Some felt that this prevented them from being able to access services/employment etc.

“ Later services, no longer able to get back from work after 18.00, let alone 21.00!



TIMINGS (MORE FREQUENT SERVICE)

A further 135 comments were also on the theme of timing, with requests for more frequent services throughout the day.

“ By having a service that ran at least every hour during the working day and the linked with other transport.



MORE ROUTES / ROUTES TO X, Y, Z

66 respondents commented that they would like to see services increased to other local areas. Some specifically asked for routes to cover particular areas.

“ Need more services to Oakamoor, Alton, etc. - ridiculous that we're in such a tourism hotspot on the Churnet Valley and next door to the UK's number 1 theme park but no busses! Entire of Staffs would benefit from evening and weekend services.



IMPROVED RELIABILITY

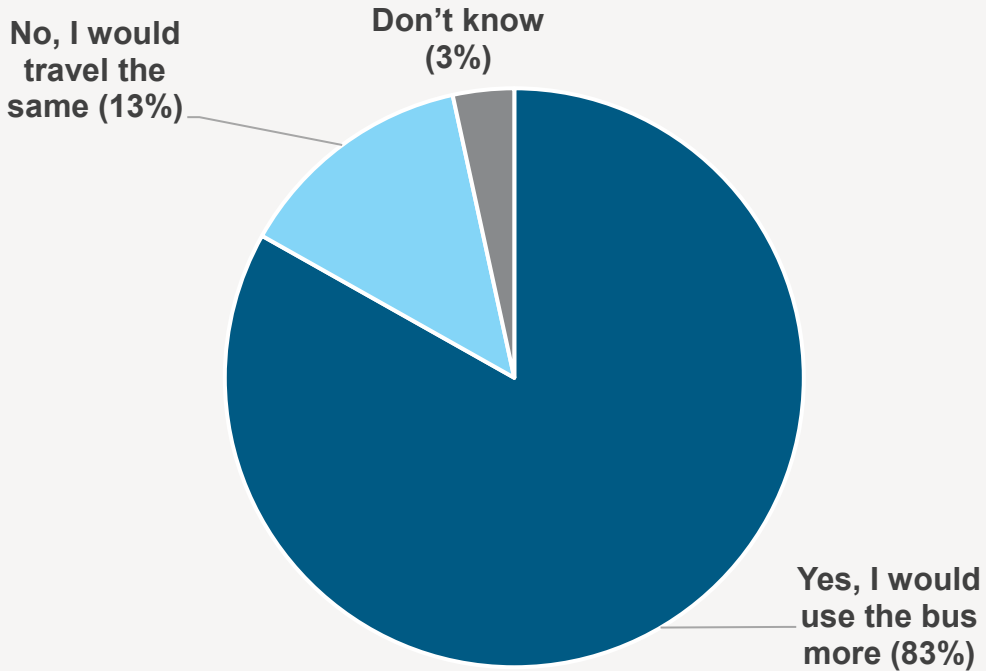
54 respondents commented that they would like to see reliability of current services improved which in turn, would encourage them to use the bus more.

“ Buses to turn up...lately a few haven't...two on the same day which caused a delay for me getting to my appointment



Would these improvements increase the amount you travelled?

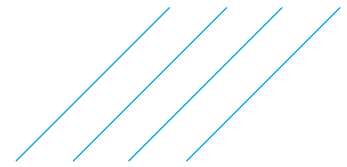
Most respondents that currently use the bus said they would use the bus more if the previous improvements were introduced



OVERALL SUMMARY

83% of current bus users said they would travel by bus more if the previous improvements were introduced. However, 13% answered 'no, I would travel the same'. A small proportion (3%) responded 'don't know'.

Y10. Would any of the above improvements affect the way you travelled? (select the most appropriate)
Base = 1,229 respondents

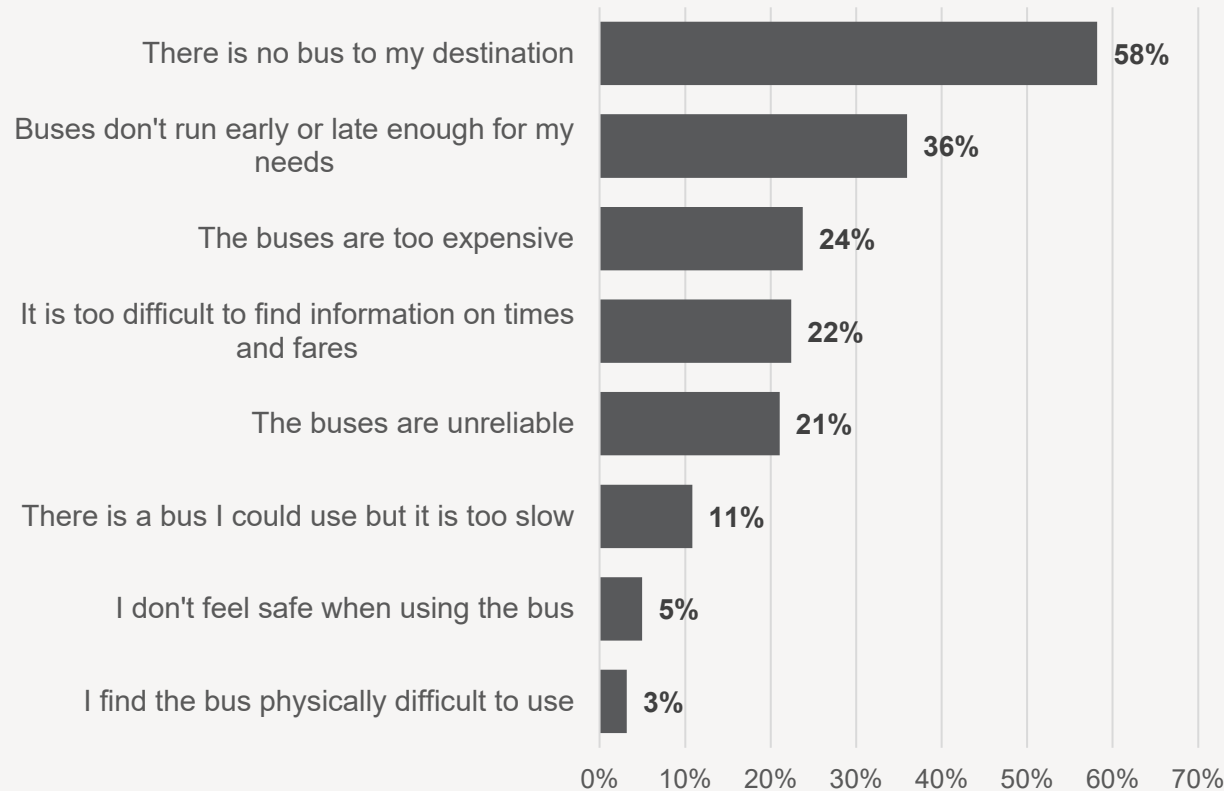


Non-bus users

The following questions were only asked to respondents who answered 'no' to Q1 (Do you currently use the bus?)

Reasons for not using the bus [Non-users]

The main reason for not using the bus is a lack of service to planned destination. Timing of bus services is also a factor in not using the bus.



OVERALL SUMMARY

58% of non-bus users said the reason they don't travel by bus is due to there being no bus to their destination. *Buses not running early or late enough* was also a reason for not travelling by bus. These reasons reflect the open responses given on the following slide.

24% non-bus users felt the *bus was too expensive*, whilst 22% struggled to find *information on times/fares*. *Unreliable buses* were also a factor for 21% of non-bus users.

N1. Why don't you currently use the bus service? (select all that apply)

Base = 665 respondents

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Feelings towards the bus service [Non-users]

Respondents were invited to add anything about how they felt towards the bus service. The most frequent reason was due to not having a local service in the first place. Similarly to current users, some respondents commented about the timing of bus services.



NO BUS SERVICE IN MY AREA

The majority of open comments (241) were from respondents who said they did not use the bus because there was not a local service to them.

Although several locations/destinations were mentioned, the key ones noted were:

- Hill Ridware
- Alton
- Perton to Codsall
- Drayton Bassett
- To Stafford

“ All public transport vehicles have ceased to run in my area. this makes it impossible for me to get to work using bus services and my children can no longer get to school using bus services. ”

“ There is no longer a bus from my area meaning I need to use a car to access facilities. ”



TIMINGS (MORE FREQUENT SERVICE)

52 commented that the bus service was not frequent enough for their needs.

“ There is considerable unhappiness about the routes available , frequency and reliability of the bus service. Many do not use it due to these problems. ”



TIMINGS (EARLIER/LATER/SUNDAY SERVICE)

40 respondents noted that bus services did not start early enough / run late enough / run on a Sunday, which meant they were unable to use the service.

“ It is completely unacceptable to not have an evening and Sunday bus service which adversely affects young people and those without access to own car travel. ”

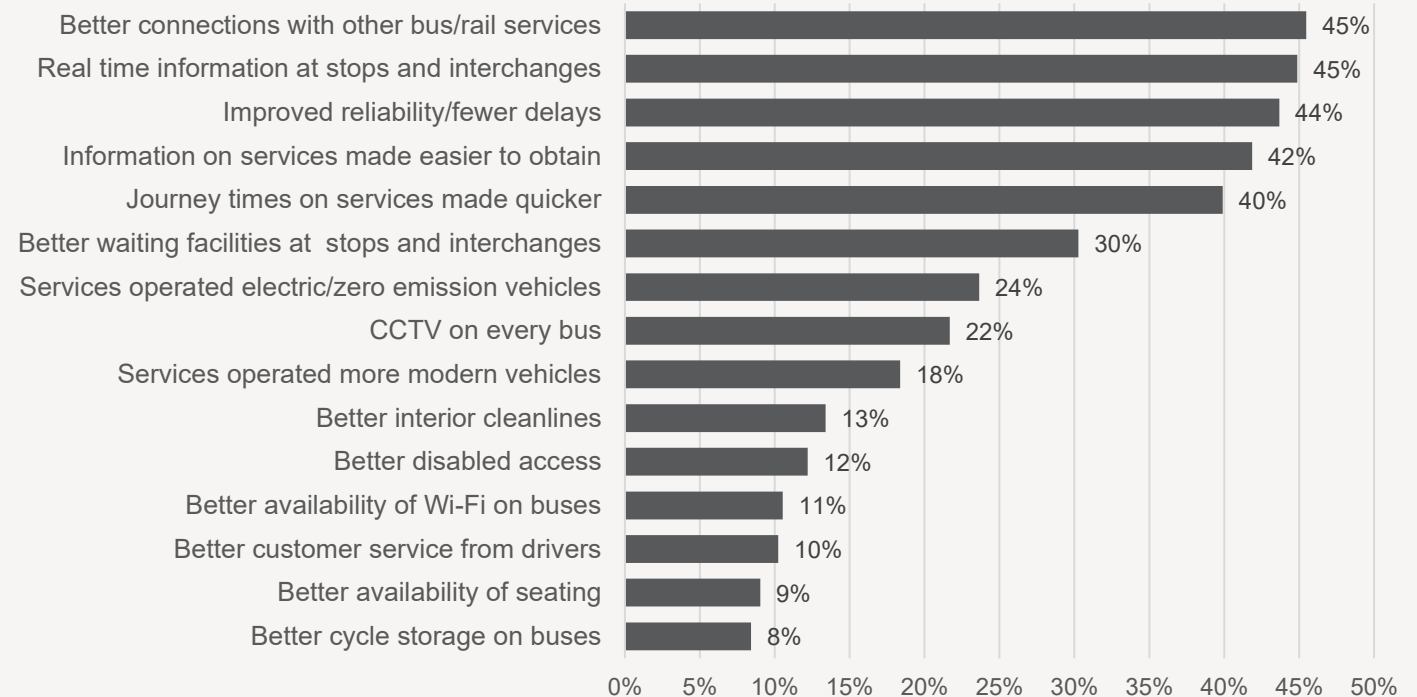
How could bus usage be increased? [Non-users]

As with current users, real time information at bus stops, improved reliability and better connections were most likely to increase bus use. However, making information easier to obtain was also key.

OVERALL SUMMARY

Most likely to increase bus usage amongst non-bus users are *better connections with other bus/rail services, real time information at stops/interchanges, improved reliability, easier access to information, and quicker journey times.*

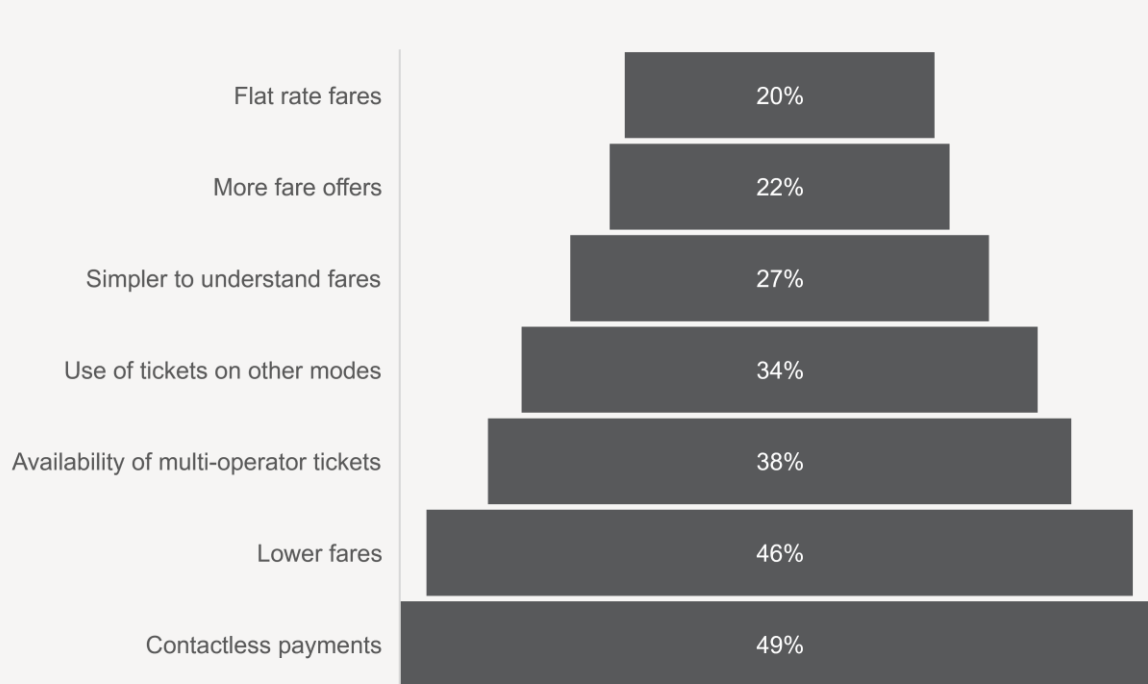
These findings are very similar to those from current users.



N3. What improvements to the bus service might encourage you to use it. (select up to 5)
Base = 665 respondents

How could bus usage be increased - Fares? [Non-users]

In terms of fares, 'contactless payments' were most likely to encourage non-users to travel by bus more, along with 'lower fares'.



N4. Thinking about fares, to what extent, if at all would the following make you use local buses more? (select up to 5)

Base = 665 respondents



OVERALL SUMMARY

Respondents were permitted to choose up to five fare-related initiatives that would encourage them to travel by bus. The most popular response was 'contactless payments', chosen by 49% respondents. This was followed by 'lower fares' (46%) and 'availability of multi-operator tickets' (38%).

These results were slightly different to those chosen by current users. 32% of current users wanted to see *contactless payments* vs. 49% of current users.



TRENDS BY RESPONDENT PROFILE

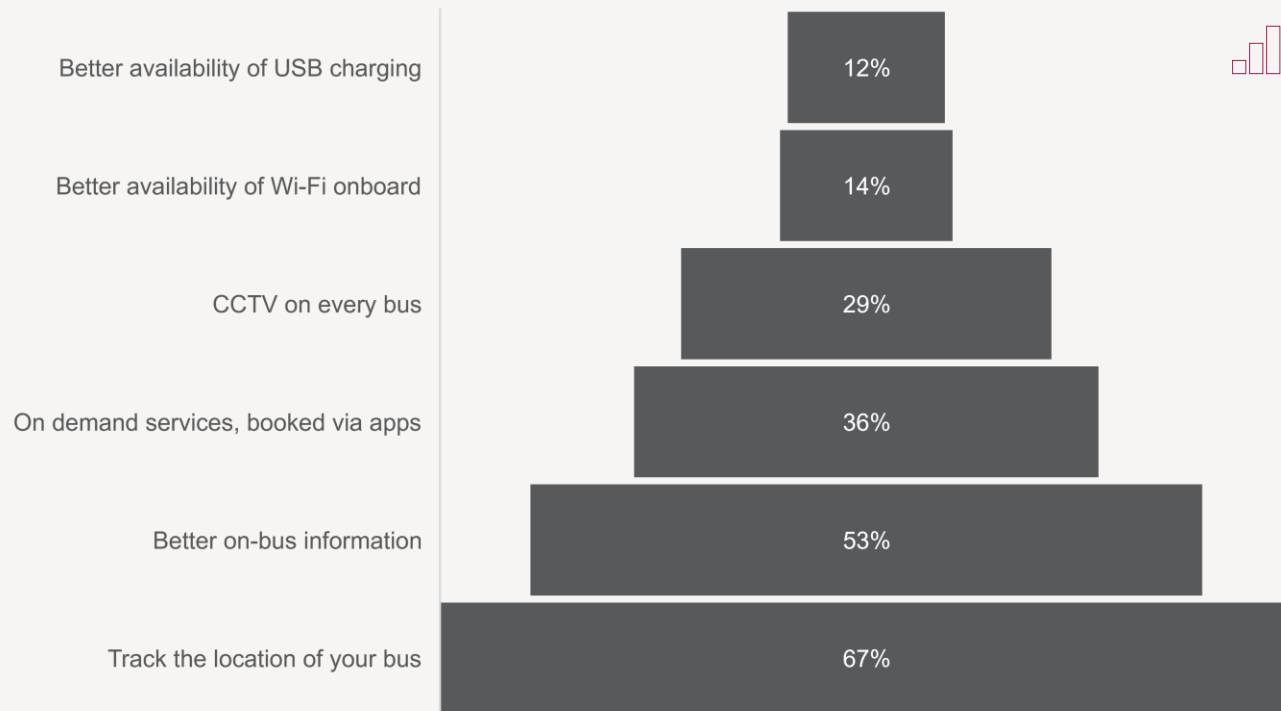
As with current bus users, there were slight differences in response by age. The proportion of respondents that chose 'lower fares' was highest amongst younger respondents.

ATKINS

Member of the SNC-Lavalin Group

How could bus usage be increased - Technology? [Non-users]

In terms of technology, 'screens at bus stops/stations showing arrival information' and being able to 'track the location of your bus' were most likely to encourage current users to travel by bus more.



OVERALL SUMMARY

Respondents were permitted to choose up to five technology-related initiatives that would encourage them to travel by bus more. The most popular responses were *'being able to track the location of your bus'* chosen by 67% respondents and *'better on-bus information'* (53%). 36% also answered that *'on demand services, booked via an app'* would also encourage them to use local buses more. Answer categories were slightly different for current/non-users, but a high proportion of both respondent types chose being able to *'track the location of your bus'* as something that would encourage bus use.

N5. Thinking about technology, to what extent, if at all would the following make you use local buses more? (select up to 5)

Base = 665 respondents

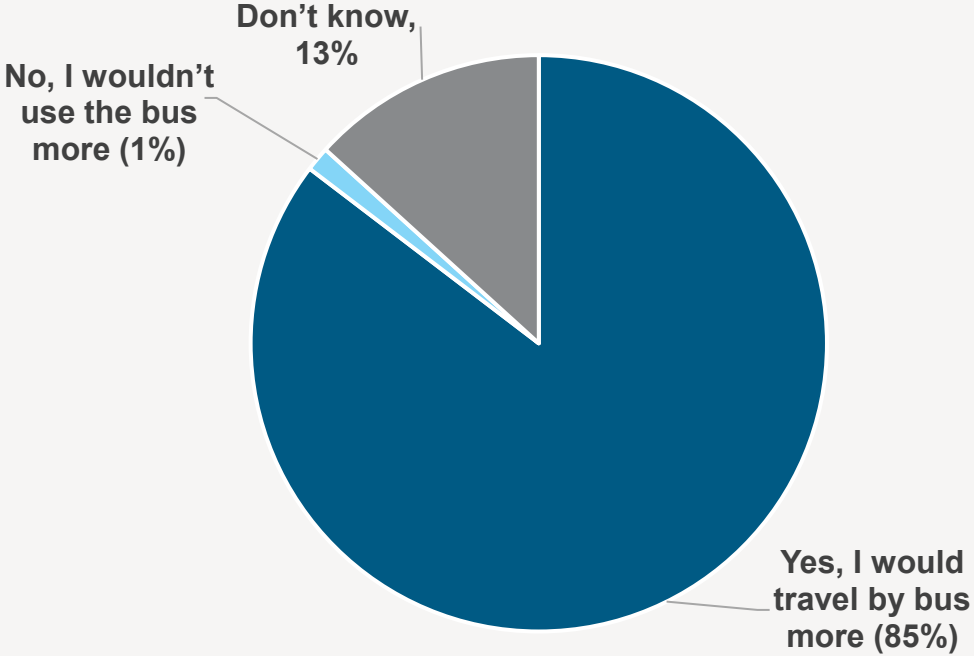
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Would these improvements affect the way you travelled?

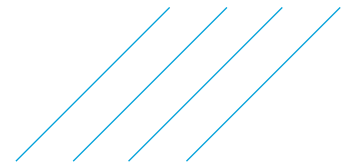
Most respondents that do not currently travel by bus said they would if the previous improvements were introduced.



OVERALL SUMMARY

85% of non-bus users said they would travel by bus more if the previous improvements were introduced. These results align with the responses from current bus users, however a larger proportion of non-bus users answered, 'don't know'.

N7. Would any of the above improvements affect the way you travelled? (select the most appropriate)
Base = 655 respondents



Key take outs

Summary

- During August/September 2021, Staffordshire County Council conducted a passenger engagement survey to understand current views and experiences of bus services. **1,900** people responded to the survey, covering a range of demographics and current bus usage.
- Nearly **two-thirds of respondents currently use the bus**.
- Most respondents who use the bus are frequent users – **76% travel at least once a week**.
- The most frequent reasons for travelling by local bus are to go **shopping** and/or for **social** reasons (meetings friends/relatives), but reason does differ by age.
- Current users generally feel **positive** towards the bus service, but fewer feel the bus is reliable or affordable compared to the proportion that feel safe on the bus.
- For both current and non-bus users, **real time information** at stops/interchanges was most likely to encourage bus travel. Other improvements included improved **reliability**, better **connections**, better **waiting facilities** at stops and easier **access to information**.
- In terms of fare initiatives, both non-bus users and current users felt that 'lower fares' would encourage use. A high proportion of non-bus users also chose **contactless payments**.
- In terms of technology initiatives, both non-bus users and current users wanted to see 'screens at bus stops/stations showing **arrival information**' and 'being able to **track the location** of your bus'.
- The survey's open questions also garnered detailed feedback. For both types of users, a **lack of bus service** in their local area was a key issue. Several respondents specifically mentioned that a previous route had been removed and not reinstated. Many also said they would use the bus more if services were more **frequent**, and a key issue was also services running **early/late** enough and on **Sundays**.
- 85% of non-bus users and 83% of current bus users said they would use the bus/use the bus more if the improvements listed in the survey were introduced.