

## City Voice - Newsletter No. 48

Welcome to the 48<sup>th</sup> citizens' panel newsletter. This newsletter gives you a brief summary of the results of the 48<sup>th</sup> questionnaire on "Travel and Transport" which you received in November 2023, along with a service response "this is what we are doing".

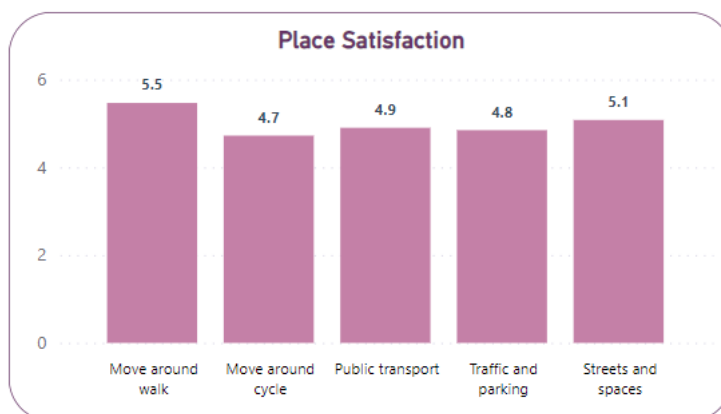
The questions included in this Travel and Transport edition of City Voice have been chosen by the Transport Strategy and Programmes Team at Aberdeen City Council. These questions, and subsequent responses, are useful to us in understanding the transport choices people make, what influences them, their perceptions of the transport network and how transport affects other aspects of life. The data is used to assist with the monitoring of the transport network and is essential in helping us monitor documents, including the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and the Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy, annually. Many of these questions have been asked in previous City Voice questionnaires and this allows us to see how usage and experiences of the transport network are changing over time. However, there are a few new questions, including a whole new Health and Wellbeing section, which will help with some of the new monitoring information we will be gathering as part of the new Aberdeen Local Transport Strategy, which is currently under development.

Of the 800 panel members who received the questionnaire, a total of **391** completed questionnaires were returned. This gives a response rate of 48.9%. The response rate for City Voice 48 is slightly lower than the response rate for City Voice 47 (50.4%) but higher than the response rate achieved in surveys prior to the panel re-fresh conducted in 2022. In addition to panellists, the survey was also sent out to a few high schools to give senior pupils the opportunity to participate. An additional 62 responses were received. Results are presented for the combined panel and pupil survey – a total of 453 participants.

## Place Satisfaction

For a place to be successful, it should be easy and enjoyable to move around and easy to travel to and from. In this first section of the questionnaire, panellists were asked how easy it was to get around their neighbourhood. Participants were asked to give a score on a scale of 1-7, where 1 = very bad and 7 = very good. The average scores for each topic were then calculated.

On the whole, responses to these questions were broadly positive, with most participants scoring 5, 6 or 7 for each of the questions. The exception to this was move around cycle. Mean scores show that move around walk was the highest scoring question (mean score of 5.5) with move around cycle being the lowest scoring question (4.7).

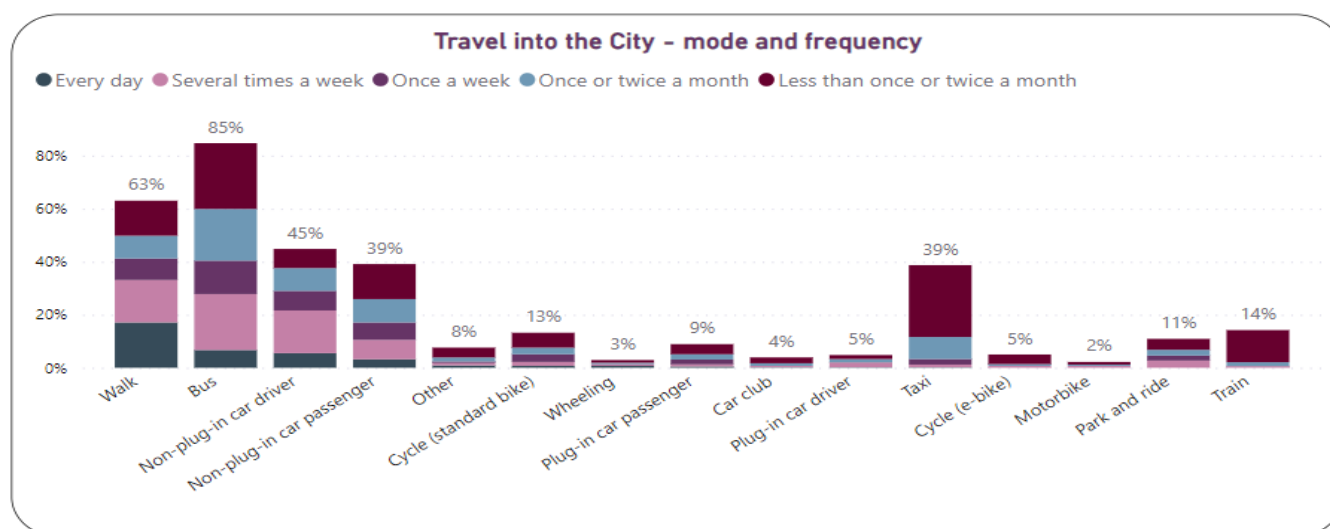


**Service Response - this is what we are doing:** We have changed this question this year to break "Moving around by walking and cycling" into two separate areas – one for walking and wheeling and one for cycling. Compared with 2021, the figures show an improvement across all areas and, usefully, a difference between ease of walking/ wheeling and cycling which we never would have captured had we not changed the question. It will be interesting to see if including more young people in this survey has impacted upon the results for this question, compared with previous years. We will investigate this further. This question is useful as it balances the hard data we get about people's travel choices in other questions later with some qualitative data about their experiences. We look forward to studying the comments in more detail to further understand the responses too.

## Travel

There are a whole range of reasons why people need to travel and their travel requirements can vary depending on their personal circumstances and the nature of the journey being undertaken. To try and make the transport network as inclusive as possible of people's needs, requirements and preferences, this section of the questionnaire asked questions about how people travel and what factors may affect their travel choices.

The first question asked when you travel into the city, how often do you use the following modes? Overall, the mode common mode of travel into the city was **bus** with 85% of respondents ever using the bus to travel into the city. **Walking** was the next most common mode of travel into the city (63% walking at least occasionally) followed by **non-plug-in car as driver** (45%). **Walking** and **bus** were the most common frequently used modes of travel into the city with 41.2% and 40.4% respectively using these modes at least once a week. The least common modes of travel into the city were **motorbike** (98% never used), **wheeling** (97%), **car club vehicle** (96%) and **plug-in car as driver** (95%).

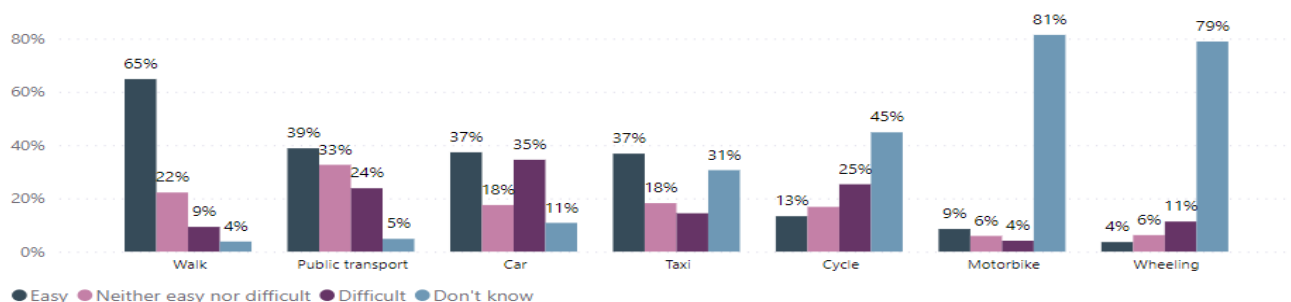


The next question in this section asked participants how they usually travel to work, city centre day, city centre night and other journeys not to work and not in the city centre. The most common usual modes of travel for **work/place of education** were **walk** (91 respondents) **non-plug-in car as driver** (59) and **bus** (58). The most common usual modes of travel for **City Centre day** were **bus** (174), **walk** (108) and **non-plug-in car as driver** (87). The most common usual modes of travel for **City Centre night** were **bus** (92), **walk** (61) and **taxi** (50) and for **all other journeys** the most common usual modes of travel were **non-plug-in car as driver** (127), **walk** (76) and **bus** (52). For all journey types, **convenience**, **quickest** and **most reliable** were the top 3 reasons given.

## Perception of ease of travel

In this section of the questionnaire participants were asked how easy or difficult they felt it was to get around Aberdeen by different modes of travel (walking, cycling, wheeling, public transport, taxi, motorbike/moped and car). The mode of transport most commonly reported as easy (very easy or easy) was **walking** (64.8%) followed by **public transport** (38.8%), **car** (37.3%) and **taxi** (36.8%). **Car** (34.5%) and **cycling** (25.3%) were the modes of transport most commonly reported as difficult (difficult or very difficult). Most respondents answered **don't know** for motorbike (81.4%) and **wheeling** (78.9%).

### Ease of getting around Aberdeen

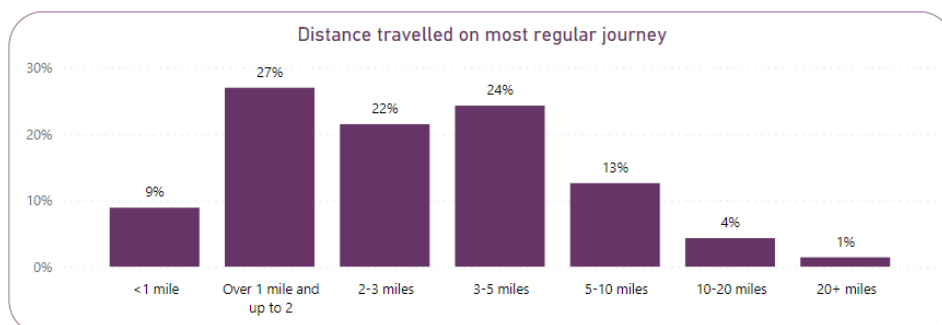


If participants rated any of the modes as difficult, they were given the opportunity to tell us why. A total of 209 comments were received and were passed to the service for full consideration. A small sample of issues raised is given below.

- Bus gates/road closures/route changes make driving into city centre difficult
- Uneven pavements make it difficult to walk/wheel
- Lack of safe cycle paths/cycle paths not continuous
- Buses unreliable/expensive/all go to city centre so need to change buses
- Taxis expensive/not enough

Participants were then asked which modes of transport they had tried in the last year in either the City Centre or the Rest of the City. Walking was the most common mode of transport for both areas in the last year with bus being the second most common. Non-plug-in car as driver, taxi and non-plug-in car as passenger were also relatively common modes of transport tried in the last year in both areas.

The next questions asked participants about their most regular journey. Firstly participants were asked approximately how far they travelled for this journey. Most participants (72.8%) reported travelling between 1 and 5 miles for their most regular journey with the most common distance being between 1 and 2 miles.



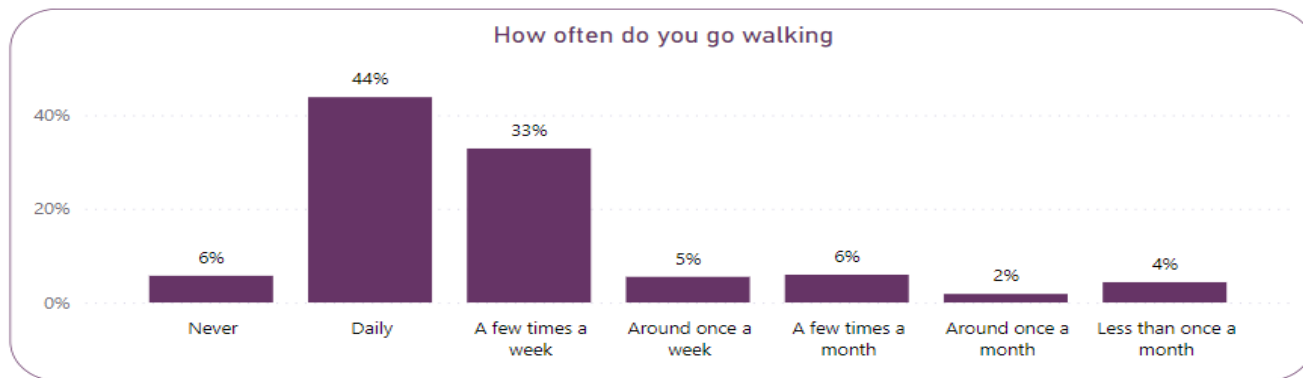
When asked how long this journey takes, the most common response (46.9%) was 15-29 minutes with over three quarters (77.4%) of all journeys being less than half an hour.

### Cycling and walking

Most respondents (80.5%) said they knew how to cycle. Participants were then asked if they had access to a bike and, if so, how often they use it. Most respondents (70.4%) reported they did not have access to a bike. Of those who did have access to a bike, most (57.1%) reported cycling less than once a month.

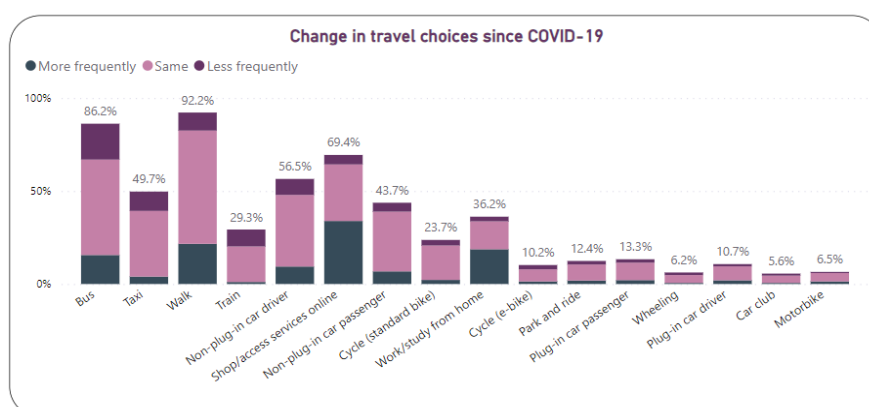
The next questions were about the Big Issue e-bike hire scheme. Most respondents (82.1%) said they were aware of the scheme, but only 2.5% said they had used it.

Participants were then asked how often they go walking (a continuous walk for at least 15 minutes outdoors). Most respondents (82.2%) reported walking at least once a week with 43.8% reporting they walked daily.



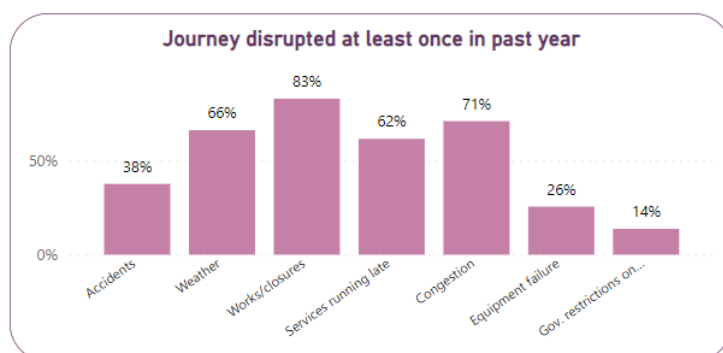
## Changes in choices of travel since COVID-19

This question asked how travel choices had changed since COVID-19. The most common options reported as being done **more frequently** since COVID-19 were **shop/access services online** (33.9%), **walk** (21.6%), **work/study from home** (18.7%) and **bus** (15.6%). Over half of respondents reported **walking** (60.9%) and using the **bus** (51.3%) at the **same level** as pre-COVID, while around a third reported **driving non-plug-in car** (38.5%), **taxi** (35.3%) and **non-plug-in car as passenger** (32.1%) at the same level. Almost a fifth (19.3%) of respondents reported using the **bus** less frequently than pre-COVID.



Participants were then asked how the number of miles travelled by car/van changed compared to the previous year. The most common response (43.2%) was that the distance travelled had **stayed around the same**. A fifth (20.3%) reported that the distance travelled had reduced, and 10.4% said the amount they travelled had increased. 16.6% reported that they don't travel by car/van.

## Journey disruption



The next questions related to travel disruption. Firstly participants were asked how often their journeys over the last year had been affected by a range of external factors. The factor most commonly reported as resulting in travel disruption was **works/closures** on transport networks with 82.9% of respondents reporting that this had impacted them at least once in the past year. The factors most commonly reported as causing frequent (at least once every two

weeks) disruption were **services running late** (31.3%), **congestion** (30.9%) and **works/closures** (28.7%). The most commonly reported modes of transport disrupted by external factors were **bus** (57.8%) and **non-plug-in car** (49.7%).

**Service Response - this is what we are doing:** Given the changes going on in the city centre, it is useful to see how the way people access it changes annually. Bus being the most popular and walking second demonstrates that people don't feel dependent on the car to do this either. Examining which mode of transport people regard as their main mode and how this changes for different situations – commuting to work/ study, accessing the city centre during the day, at night and for all other journeys is also useful to see how people's needs and preferences change depending on what they are travelling for. Again, while car remains the most popular choice, there are strong performances for walking for commuting to work/ study while bus has a good showing across all categories, especially travel at night where it pips walking to second place after car travel. Interestingly cycling is third most popular mode, after car then walking, for all other journeys. Knowing why people pick the mode they do is also useful to understand and it is interesting to see convenience, quickest and most reliable as the top three, beating cost.

In terms of perceived ease of getting around, this allows us to see if there are any modes with issues and how they compare. Encouraging to see walking/ wheeling as the easiest, as it's the mode most accessible to the most people and also interesting to see car as the mode with the highest number of people finding it very difficult. The next question, asking people which modes they have tried, allows a useful comparison with the previous questions to see if those who, for example, think a mode is difficult have actually tried it recently to see. Again, a good number of people shown to be walking/ wheeling and taking the bus.

Asking people how far they travel for their most regular journey also indicates the journey suitability for different modes. The most popular distance was 1-2 miles with most journeys less than 5 miles. These are distances which are very active travel friendly suggesting that, if conditions were improved for these modes, more people may consider them. Journey time also gives an indication of how long people are prepared to travel for a regular journey with most being under 30 minutes.

Given the LOIP commitments around encouraging greater uptake of cycling, knowing whether people have access to a bike and how often they use it is important to know so we can see if this is improving with time. 70% of people not having access to a bike is higher than we might have expected. With the Bike Hire Scheme, run under Council contract, launching in 2022, it is useful to know if people are aware of it, if they have used it and how this may change with time. Awareness is encouraging but those who reported using it is still low. As with cycling, improving walking levels is something which the LOIP looks to improve so knowing how this changes with time is useful. 75% of people walking at least a few times a week is encouraging. Seeing how travel choices have changed since COVID is important too, in order to understand if people have changed travel behaviour longer term. Of particular note are the people who have continued to work and shop online more and also those who have continued to walk more. The question asking people how the distance they drive has changed since the last year is a new question and fits with the Scottish Government's goals of 20% reduction in car km travelled by 2030. It's interesting to see that more people have decreased their distance travelled compared with those who have increased it.

Asking people how frequently their journey has been disrupted, and by what means, helps to see how resilient the transport network is to disruption and whether it is man-made or nature related disruption and also, if it was accidental or planned. This was another new question this year. Interesting to see works or closures were the most common, followed by congestion. Leading on from this, another new question asked which modes are most likely to be affected, again helping to see which modes are potentially most resilient to disruption. By the results, bus is most likely to be disrupted and walking least.

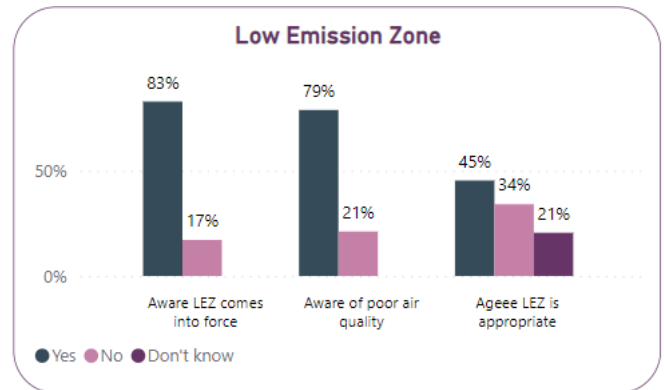
We are yet to do comparisons with previous years but will be turning our attention to this next. It will be interesting to see if including more young people in this survey has impacted upon the results for this question, compared with previous years. We look forward to studying the comments in more detail to further understand the responses too.



## Low Emission Zone (LEZ)

In 2022, Aberdeen City introduced a Low Emission Zone (LEZ). Enforcement of the LEZ is due to start on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024. The questions in this section were aimed at understanding if people are aware of the LEZ and the reasons why it was brought in.

When asked, 78.9% of respondents reported that they were aware that parts of Aberdeen City regularly experience poor air quality and that this can be harmful to human health. 82.9% of respondents reported being aware that the LEZ comes into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024 however less than half (45.4%) agreed that the LEZ was an appropriate response to air quality problems.



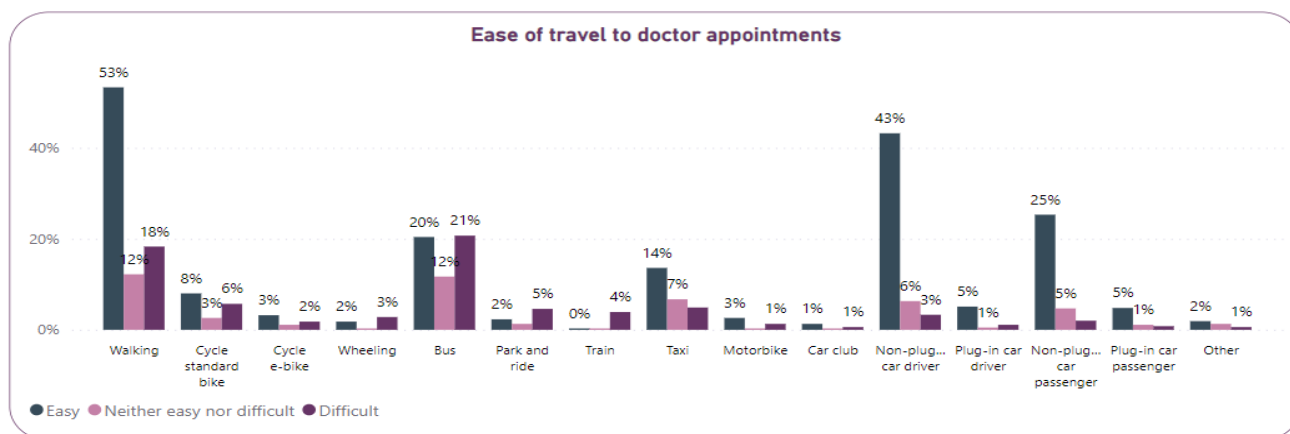
**Service Response - this is what we are doing:** The Low Emission Zone questions are important for us to ask to gauge if people are aware that there is an air quality issue in Aberdeen, to make sure they know about the low emission one coming in and also to see if they support it. While it is encouraging to see the high awareness of air quality issues and the knowledge of the Low Emission Zone, it is interesting to see that just over a third of respondents do not think an LEZ is an appropriate response. It will be interesting to see how these change with time too. We look forward to studying the comments in more detail to further understand the responses too.

## Health and wellbeing

Studies have shown that as well as helping people get around, walking, wheeling and cycling can be really good for both physical and mental health. These questions asked about experiences at a local level. It also asked about how easy it was to access healthcare by different modes of travel and how safe people felt travelling at night by different modes of travel.

Firstly participants were asked if walking/wheeling or cycling makes them feel more physically and mentally well. Most respondents reported that **walking/wheeling** makes them feel more physically (82.8%) and mentally (80.0%) well. While the most common response for **cycling** was 'not applicable', most of those who did cycle reported it made them feel more physically and mentally well.

Participants were then asked how easy they found it to travel to Doctor and Hospital appointments by different modes of travel. For Doctor appointments the modes of travel most commonly reported as **easy** were **walking** (53.3%) and **non-plug-in car as driver** (43.2%). The modes most commonly rated as **difficult** for travelling to Doctor appointments were **bus** (20.7%) and **walking** (18.3%). For Hospital appointments the modes of travel most commonly rated as **easy** for travel to Hospital appointments were **non-plug-in car as driver** (36.7%) and **non-plug-in car as passenger** (26.2%). The modes most commonly rated as **difficult** were **walking** (36.8%) and **bus** (35.5%). For both Doctor and Hospital appointments, the most common responses for most modes of travel with the exception of walking, bus and non-plug-in car as driver was **don't know/not applicable**.



## Safe travelling at night

The final question in this section asked how safe participants felt using various modes of travel at night. Non-plug-in car as driver (48.5%), taxi (39.1%), non-plug-in-car as passenger (37.8%) and bus (35.3%) were the most commonly reported as safe by respondents. Walking and bus were the most commonly reported as feeling unsafe by respondents (28.7% and 19.9% respectively) and also neither safe nor unsafe (25.1% and 22.5% respectively).

**Service Response - this is what we are doing:** The health and wellbeing section and associated questions were a new addition this year and are useful in helping evidence how the transport network, and certain modes, are able to help people stay healthy and have access to healthcare. This section is also important for monitoring of the next Local Transport Strategy where we have objectives around health, both mental and physical, and access to health.

The first question demonstrates the contribution that walking and wheeling can make to both physical and mental health and although cycling had a lower number of participants, more people again reported feeling more physically and mentally well as a result of doing it.

In terms of ease of travel to doctor appointments, doing so by walking scored highest with bus being the one showing the most issues. For hospital, car travel, whether driver or passenger, was the easiest and bus the least easy.

When asked how safe people feel travelling at night by different modes, car and taxi were, perhaps unsurprisingly, the modes that people felt safest in. Again it will be interesting to see how these change with time. We look forward to studying the comments in more detail to further understand the responses too. It is interesting to see if these change with time, as the focus would be on improving the feeling of health and also the access to it, especially without people needing to be car dependent.

The final 2 sections of the questionnaire were only given to panellists and not school pupils.

## Parking

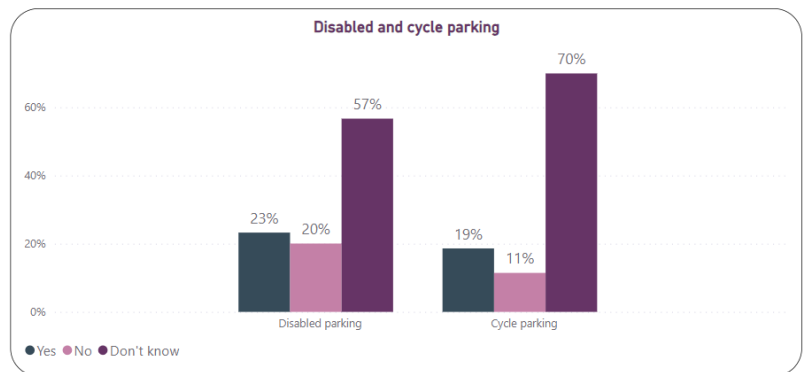
Over half (52.8%) of respondents reported their household had one car, with a further 23.2% having two cars and 5.2% having three or more cars. 17.8% of respondents reported that they did not have a car. For those who had a car, the most common space for parking at home was **privately owned off-street parking** (63.4%) followed by **public on-street parking** (24.5%).

When asked how long it normally takes to find parking in the City Centre, most respondents (72%) reported being able to find parking within 10 minutes. The most important factors when considering where to park in the City Centre were **how close it is to my destination** (62.1% of respondents), **how much it costs** (43.5%) and **how quickly I can access a space** (34.9%).

### Disabled parking and cycle parking

Participants were then asked if they thought there were enough disabled parking spaces in the City Centre. Most participants (56.7%) said **don't know** with 23.3% saying that **yes**, there were enough disabled parking spaces. However, a fifth (20.1%) said that they **didn't** think there were enough disabled parking spaces in the City Centre. Suggestions for additional spaces included:

- Beside venues e.g. theatre, art gallery etc.
- City centre areas – not just in multi-storey car parks
- Closer to amenities/where the main shopping centres are
- More enforcement to make sure people who are not disabled do not park in disabled areas



A similar question was asked in relation to cycle parking in the City. Again the most common response was **don't know** (69.9%). 11.4% of respondents thought there **wasn't enough** cycle parking in the City Centre. Suggestions for additional spaces included:

- In and around Union Street, restaurants, galleries and museums
- Union Square but closer to shops
- I don't think the issue is particularly the amount but is more about secure parking and safe routes to access the centre

The next question was also in relation to cycling and asked if increased secure bike parking would encourage you to own and use a bike more often. 17.4% of respondents reported **yes** it would. Suggestions for where this should be included: around the city and city centre, Old Aberdeen on university campus, car parks and vacant lots and shop spaces.

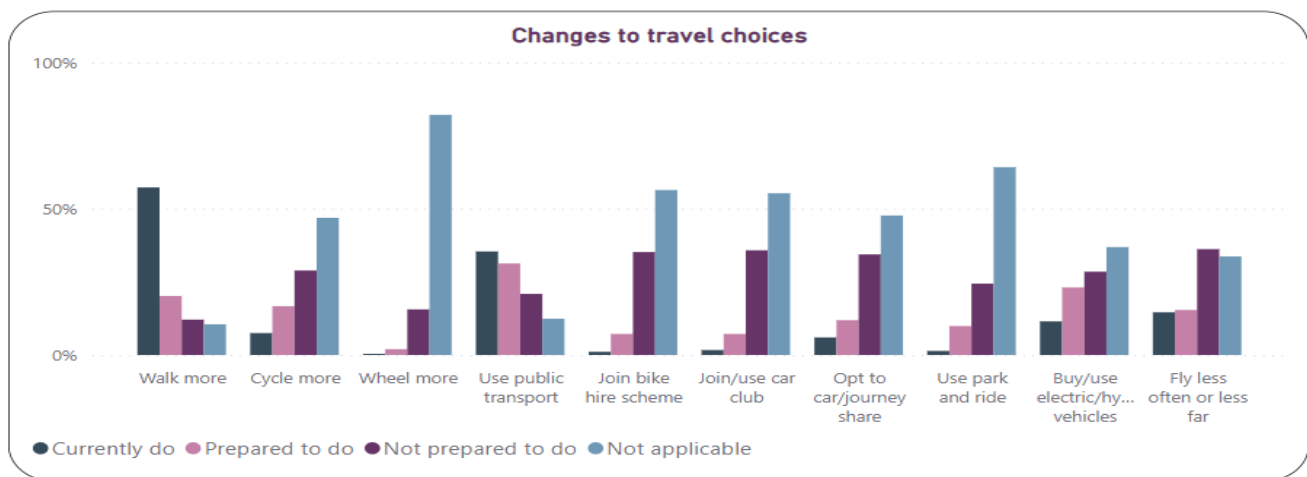
**Service Response - this is what we are doing:** The first question allows us to see if the number of households which own a car is changing over time but also if initiatives like the car club are making a difference in giving people access without the need to own. Almost 18% not having access seems consistent with information that we're getting from other sources. Knowing where people park when at home is useful to know too, to see the split of those with on and off street parking and to see how this changes through time. Given that people still rely on cars to access the city centre, ensuring that they can easily find an appropriate car park is important too. With around 70% able to find a space within 10 minutes, this suggests this is working. Interesting to see location of parking being more important than cost. We are yet to do comparisons with previous years but will be turning our attention to this next. We look forward to studying the comments in more detail to further understand the responses too.



## Environment and Sustainability

The final set of questions was around environment and sustainability. As public awareness and media coverage of climate change and emissions increases and national targets are set, these questions were aimed at understanding whether this has changed the way people move around. Participants were given a list of travel choices and asked whether this was something they **currently do**, were **prepared to do**, or **not prepared to do**. There was also a **not applicable** option.

The most common travel choices that respondents reported they **currently do** were walking more (57.3%), use public transport (35.4%), fly less often less far (14.6%) and buy/use electric/hybrid vehicles (11.5%). Almost a third (31.3%) reported they would be **prepared to** use public transport, with 23.1% saying they would be prepared to buy/use electric/hybrid vehicles, 20.2% saying they would be prepared to walk more and 16.7% saying they would prepared to cycle more. The travel choices that respondents most commonly reported they would **not be prepared to do** were fly less often less far (36.2%), join/use the city's car club (35.8%), joint the city's bike hire scheme (35.2%), opt to car/journey share (34.4%).



**Service Response - this is what we are doing:** Interesting to see people responding that they currently walk and take public transport more. Interesting also to see there is more appetite for people to want to take public transport more in the future too.

We are yet to do comparisons with previous years but will be turning our attention to this next. We look forward to studying the comments in more detail to further understand the responses too.

## And finally.....

This newsletter, together with the detailed report of the 48<sup>th</sup> questionnaire, is available to view on the Community Planning website [City Voice - Community Planning Aberdeen](#).

If you have any further queries or would like to feedback your comments, please contact:

City Voice Co-ordinator

Email: [cityvoice@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:cityvoice@aberdeencity.gov.uk)

## Useful web addresses:

City Voice: <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/city-voice/>

Community Planning Aberdeen: <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/>

Opportunities for communities to get involved in our work:  
<https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/ourcommunities/>

Join the Community Empowerment Network: <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/community-empowerment-network/>

Sign up for receiving more information through community update emails:  
<https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/community-updates/>

Community Empowerment Strategy: <https://communityplanningaberdeen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Final-Community-Empowerment-Strategy-Nov-2022.pdf>