

Warwickshire County Council Concessionary Travel Scheme Review 2022

Results from survey carried out during
July-Sept 2022

Version: 1.2

Date Issue: 28 March 2023

Team: Concessionary Travel

Introduction

Warwickshire County Council (WCC) has managed the England National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS) on behalf of central government since 2011. The service provides free off peak bus travel for residents who qualify because of their age or because of a qualifying disability. When the scheme was last reviewed in 2017 it was agreed that it would be reviewed again during the summer of 2022.

To evaluate the scheme, a questionnaire was distributed as follows:

- The questionnaire was also available to complete online on AskWarwickshire and also advertised via a link from the Concessionary Travel webpage.
- The 29,241 passholders for whom we have an email address were sent a link to the electronic questionnaire.
- A paper copy with a pre-paid reply envelope was posted to 5266 customers. This was a randomised 10% sample of remaining passholders for whom we did not have email addresses. The covering letter also included the web address for filling the survey online.
- A press release was issued.

This is the first time we have contacted customers via email for the review.

In total, 12639 completed responses were received to the consultation; 1,706 paper copies and 10,933 electronic submissions.

Most respondents to the questionnaire (96%) were bus passholders themselves, and 1% were carers responding on behalf of a passholder.

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Results

About the respondents

Figure 1 uses the postcode to show how the respondents are spread across Warwickshire, and how they qualify for a pass. N.B. Not all respondents provided a recognisable postcode, and 374 responses were from outside Warwickshire.

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents and their pass types

	Total responses	Age	Disability	Age and disability	not a passholder
North Warwickshire	1134	1054	32	35	13
Nuneaton and Bedworth	2399	2126	135	94	44
Rugby	2303	2119	88	54	42
Stratford	3076	2882	62	74	57
Warwick	3353	3072	125	91	65
Warwickshire	12,265	11,253 92%	443 4%	348 3%	221 2%

In comparison, the total number of current passholders at 31 August 2022 was just under 82,500 of which 95.6% hold a pass because of the age and 4.4% hold a pass because of their disability.

We do not issue disabled person's passholders once someone reaches the eligible age, as they will be eligible for the older person's pass, so we do not have statistics about disabilities for our older person's pass holders.

Figure 2: Geographic distribution of respondents

	% of survey responses	% of passholders*
North Warwickshire	9%	11%
Nuneaton and Bedworth	19%	23%
Rugby	18%	17%
Stratford	24%	24%
Warwick	27%	25%
Out of county	3%	n/a

* The passholder percentages by district are unchanged since 2017

Travel patterns

We asked customers how they normally travel, as well as asking how their bus pass use had been impacted by COVID. – this is the first time we have asked these questions.

For all passholders, around 14% rely on their bus pass for transport and have no access to a car.

Figure 3 – Method of travel – all passholders

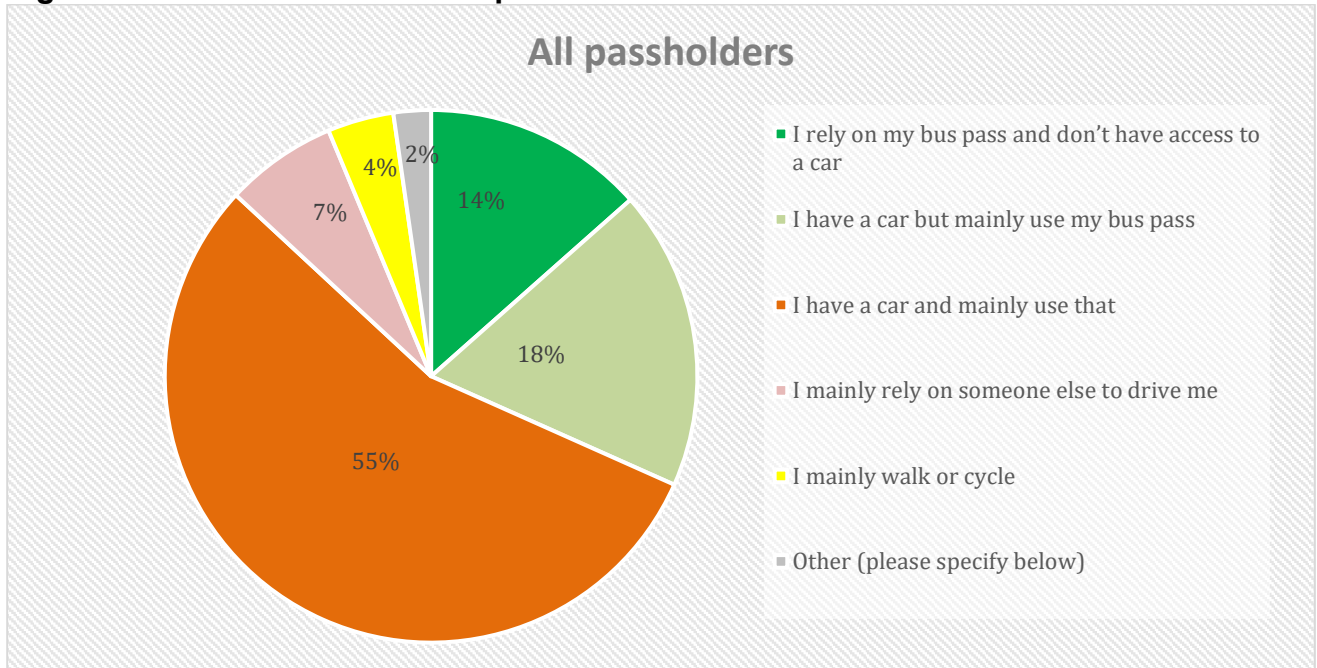
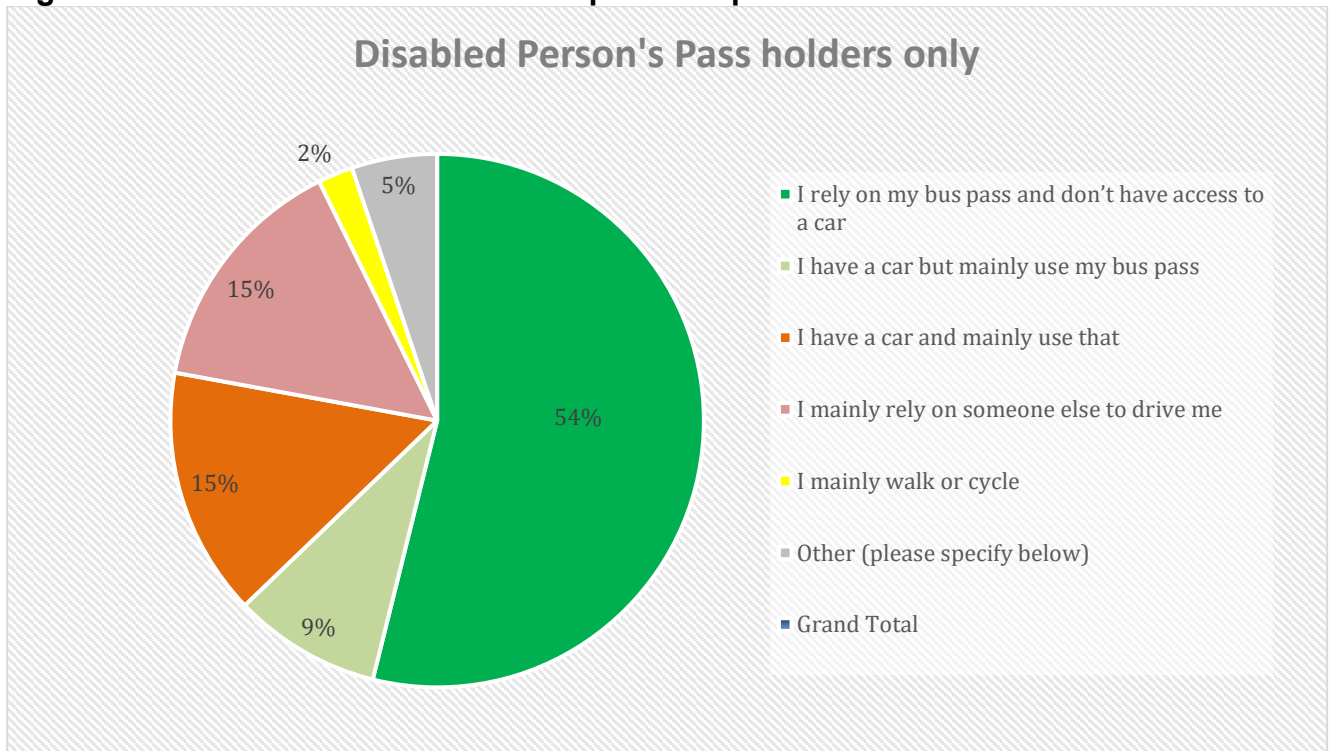


Figure 4 – Method of travel – disabled person's pass holders



It is notable that for holders of the disabled person's pass, over 50% rely on their bus pass and have no access to a car, compared with just 14% of all passholders.

We are aware that usage of bus passes dropped considerably during COVID, and has not yet recovered to the same levels as before, and so we asked "How has your bus usage changed due to COVID since March 2020?" The results are shown in fig 7

Figure 7 : Usage since COVID

I am using the bus about the same amount as I did before the first lockdown	42%
I am not using the bus as much as I was, but I think I will use it more in future	37%
I won't use the bus as often as I did before	8%
I don't plan on using public transport for the foreseeable future	7%
Other (please specify below)	5%

The figures for bus patronage had reached around 60% of pre-COVID levels during September 2022

WCC provides additional discretionary free travel from 9am until 9.30am on weekdays, and from 11pm until midnight on weekdays. As part of the review, we asked respondents about their travel during these times.

Passholders were asked how often they used their passes between 9.00am and 9.30am, for a variety of different journeys. Figure 4 shows the results. Compared to 2017 results, passholders are using the bus much less often, but the most common reasons are still shopping and social reasons.

Figure 4: Use of pass between 9am and 9:30am

	Daily	Regularly (2-4 times a week)	Less frequently (Less than twice a week)	Not at all
Medical appointments	0.7%	4.4%	36.3%	58.6%
Shopping	1.9%	14.1%	38.7%	45.3%
Work	0.5%	1.4%	3.9%	94.2%
Social	1.3%	10.2%	40.9%	47.6%
Access to council services e.g. Town Hall/Library	0.7%	3.5%	25.8%	70.0%

Passholders were then asked what they would do if they were unable to use the pass between 9.00am and 9.30am. The results are shown in Figure 5. Looking at the most common pass usage during these times, 43% of shoppers and 36% of social users would choose to travel on a later bus.

Figure 5: What would happen if respondents were unable to use their pass between 9am and 9:30am

	Catch a bus after 9:30am	Would not travel	Pay the bus fare	Use another means of travel
Medical	21.7%	10.6%	15.1%	52.6%
Shopping	42.9%	16.2%	4.3%	36.7%
Work	11.2%	48.5%	5.8%	34.5%
Social	36.1%	20.0%	5.6%	38.2%
Council services	34.5%	27.2%	3.4%	34.9%

Passholders were asked how often they used their passes between 11pm and midnight. Figure 6 shows the results. The numbers of passholders travelling between these times is very low. Passholders were also asked what they would do if they were unable to use the pass between 11pm and midnight. The results are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Use of the pass between 11pm and midnight

	Daily	Regularly (2-4 times a week)	Less frequently (Less than twice a week)	Not at all
Social	0.3%	2.9%	14.6%	82.3%
Work	0.1%	0.3%	1.6%	98.0%

Figure 7: What would happen if respondents were unable to use their pass between 11pm and midnight

	Catch a bus before 11pm	Pay the bus fare	Use another means of travel	Would not travel
Social	8.7%	3.8%	38.3%	49.2%
Work	3.4%	2.4%	27.7%	66.5%

It should be noted that there are very few bus services and bus journeys between 11pm and midnight and, as WCC only pays for the journey undertaken, the cost is minimal.

Customer service

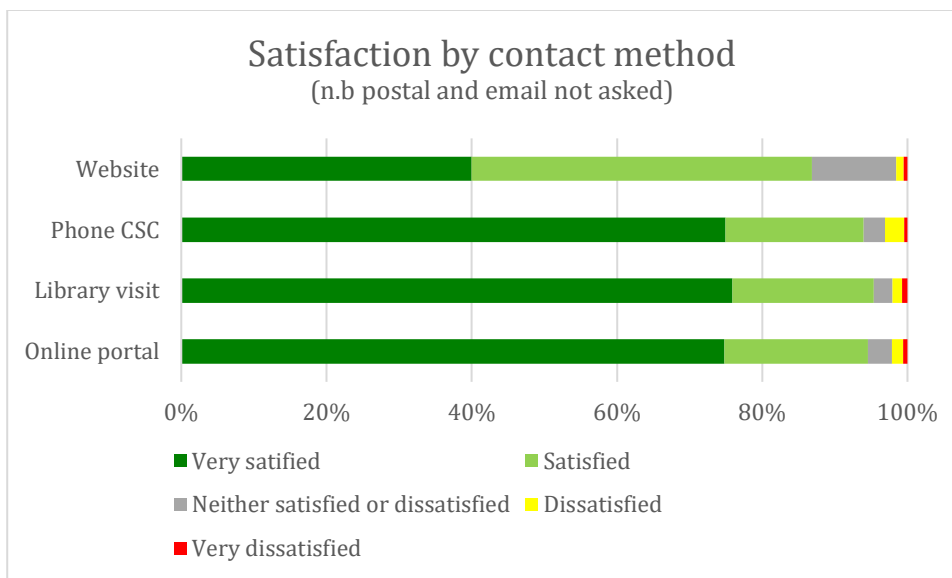
Respondents were asked if they had visited a library about their bus pass in the last 12 months, or if they had telephoned the county council, renewed their bus pass online, or visited the concessionary travel pages on the WCC website in the last year. The results are shown in figure 8 below

Figure 8 : Contact within last 12 months

Online portal	2570
Library visit	1089
Phoned CSC	1056
Visited website	2187
Contacted by post	not asked

Users of each of these methods were asked how satisfied they were with the service received; Figure 9 shows the results. All four methods received high levels of satisfaction; with around 95% of respondents being 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their dealings with a member of staff in a library by phone, or through using the online portal. 86% were satisfied or very satisfied with the website.

Figure 9: Satisfaction with contact with the county council

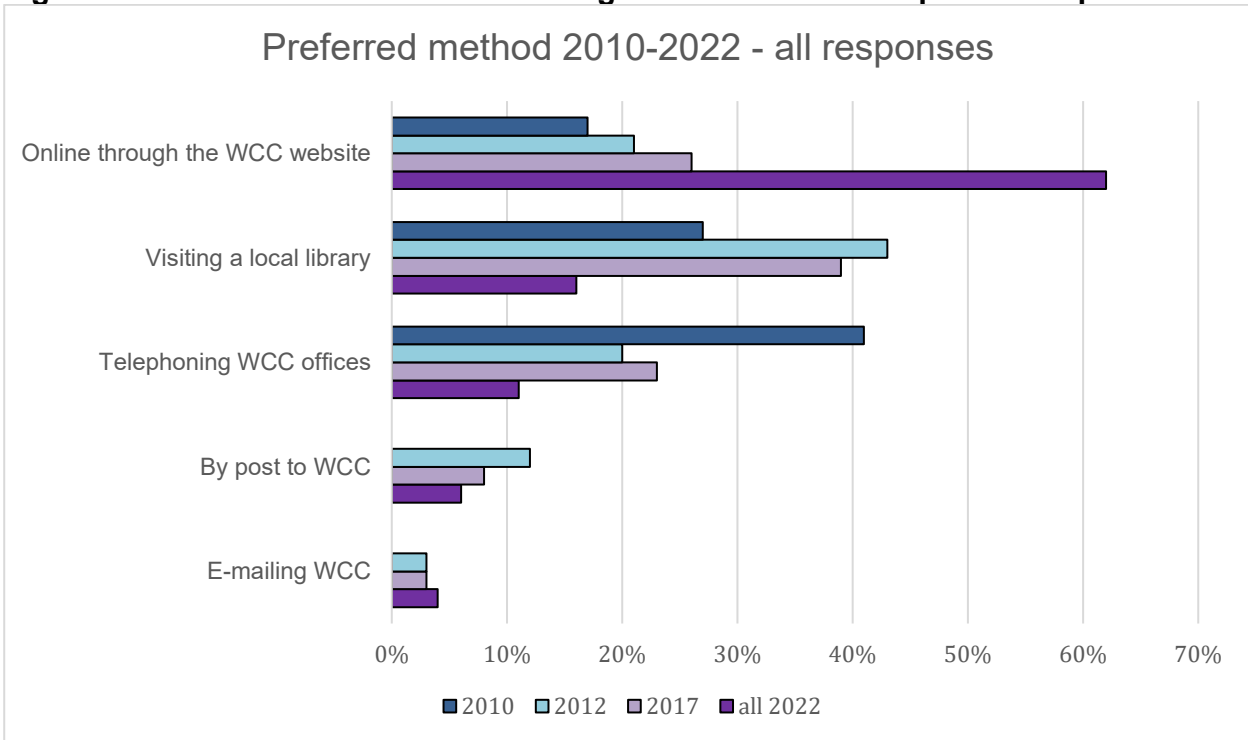


We did not ask about satisfaction when customers contacted us by post or email, which have been the main methods of contact since the start of the pandemic. This was an obvious omission and should be included in future surveys.

Respondents were asked what method they would prefer to use if wanted to replace, renew or apply for a new pass; Figure 10 below shows the results. This shows a major shift to an online service preference rising from 26% in 2017 to 64% in 2022.

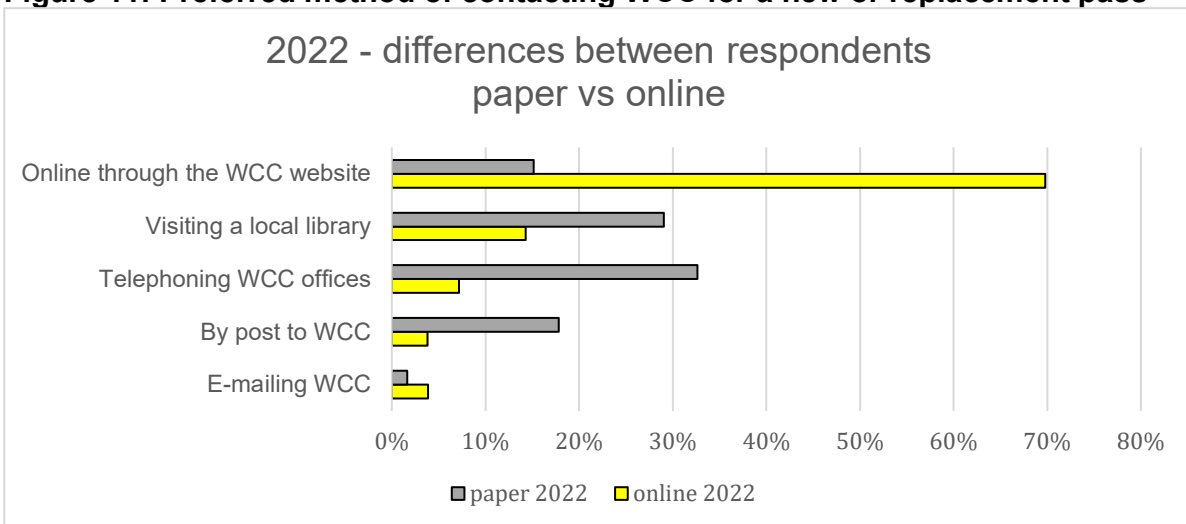
This change is likely to have been in part due people shifting to an online service during COVID, as the face to face option had previously been the most popular.

Figure 10: Preferred method of contacting WCC for a new or replacement pass



The above figures represent all the responses but it should be noted that the results are skewed to favour online as we sent out six times as many email invitations as paper copies of the survey. The 2022 figures have been split by the method of completion, and results are shown in figure 11.

Figure 11: Preferred method of contacting WCC for a new or replacement pass



We also asked for any comments about people’s experiences, and these will be shared with the appropriate service areas to see if improvements can be made.

- Online portal : ease of use – 104 comments
- Online portal : satisfaction – 211 comments
- Local library – 141 comments
- Telephoning – 109 comments
- Website – 115 comments

Customers were also asked about their use of the internet. Results are given in Figures 12-14 below.

Figure 12: How do customers use the internet

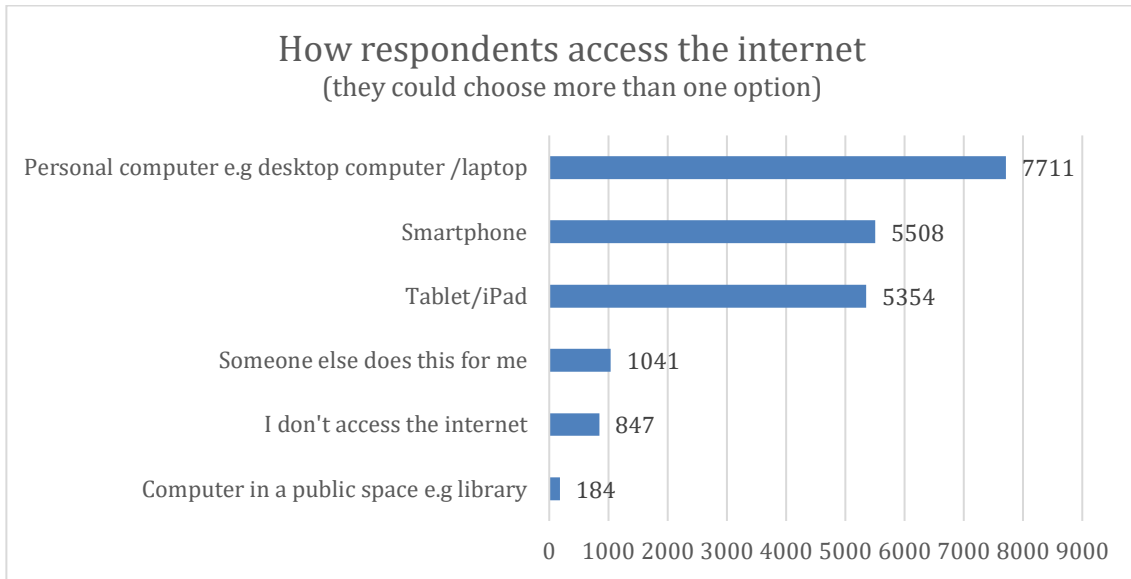
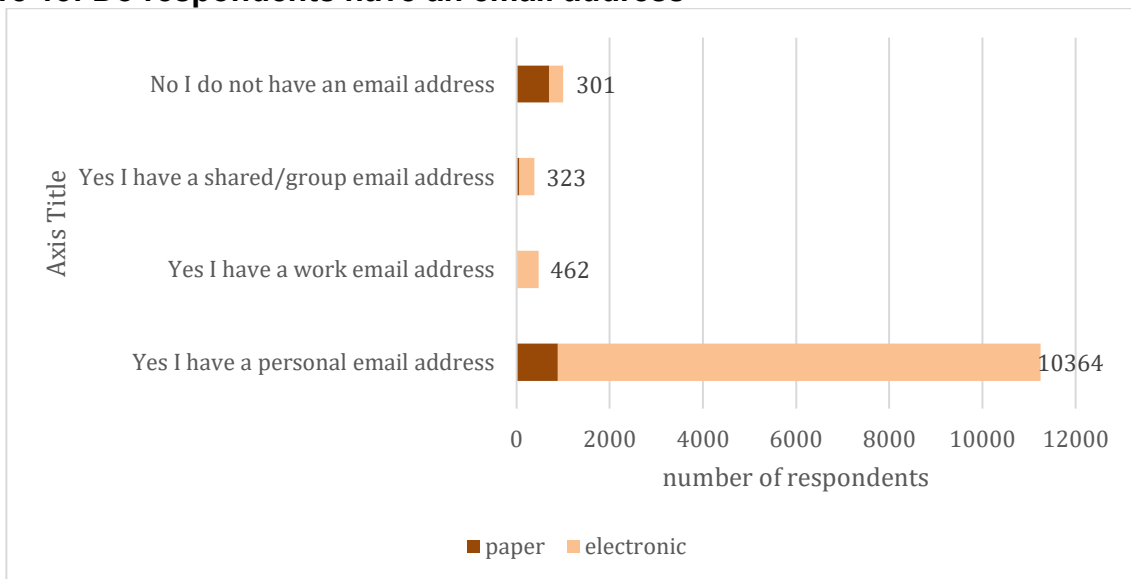


Figure 13: Do respondents have an email address



Based on the responses, it appears 8% of passholders do not have an email address at all, and 89% of passholders so have their own personal email address.

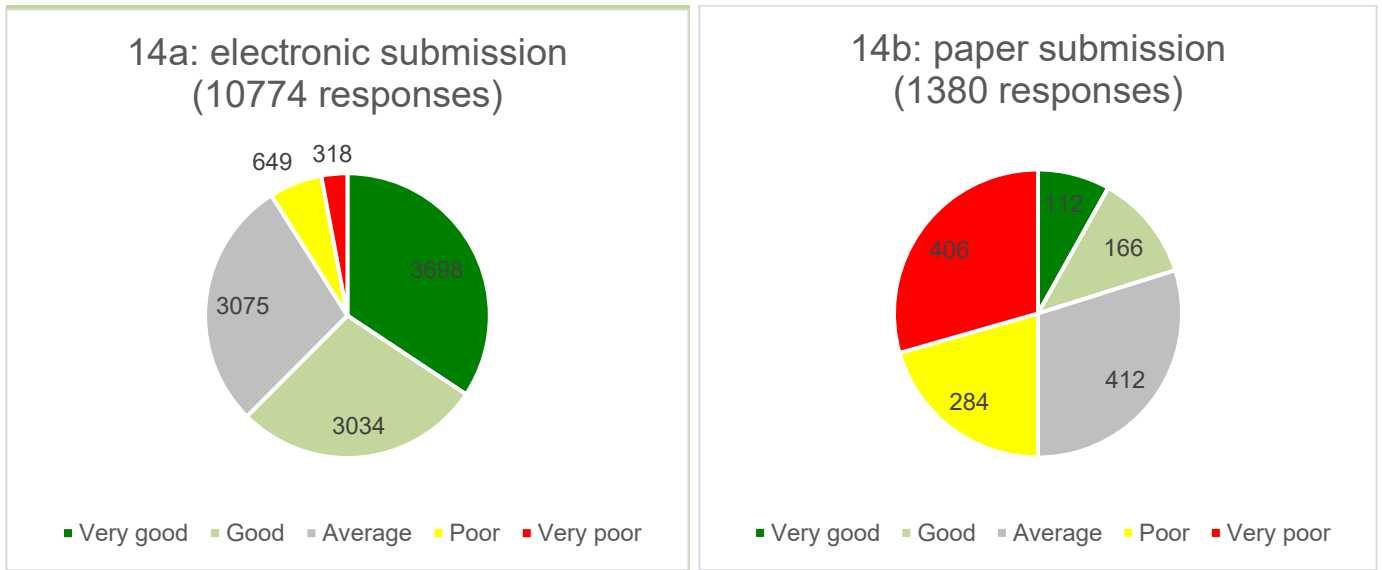
However, the survey invitation was sent to all the passholders for whole we had email addresses, and only 10% of those for whom we did not have email addresses.

41% of the paper-based respondents said they did not have an email address

Allowing for the skewed figures, we therefore estimate that 26% of all current passholders, or 21,635 passholders in total will not have an email address

Figure 14: How customers describe their ability to use the internet

We split this by whether respondents had submitted their survey online or via a paper copy



The figures are very different, with 50% of paper-based respondents describing their ability as poor or very poor, compared with 62% of electronic respondents describing their ability as good or very good.

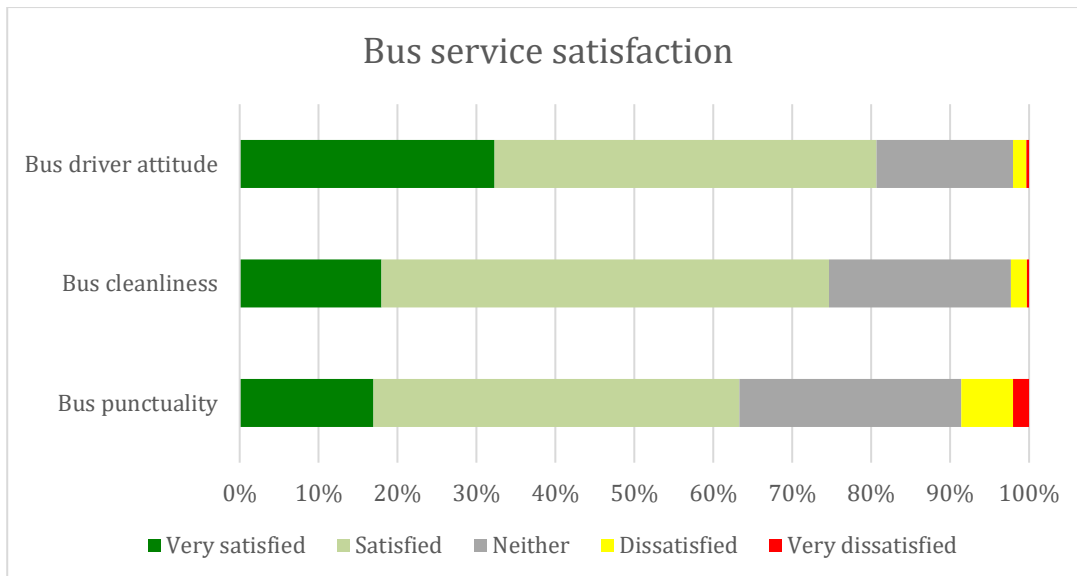
We sent out only 5000 paper surveys compared to over 30,000 email invitations and so if the figures were considered as a whole then the survey would be unduly skewed to those who have email addresses and are accustomed to using the internet.

Bus services

The final section of the survey asked respondents some more general questions about the bus services they use. Firstly they were asked how satisfied they were with the punctuality and cleanliness of buses, and also about the attitude of the drivers on services they use.

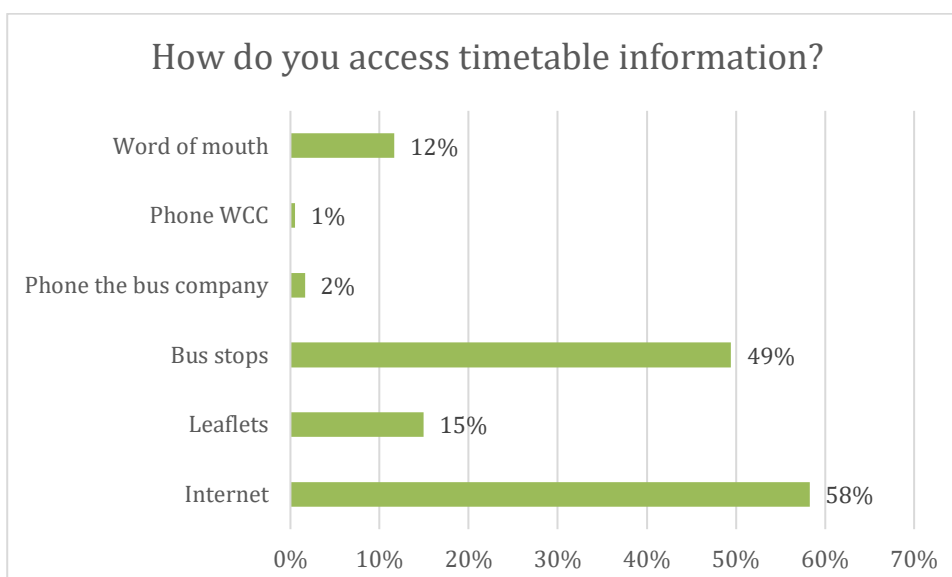
Figure 15 shows that again levels of satisfaction with cleanliness and driver attitude above 70% satisfied, but there is marked drop in satisfaction with punctuality, with only 64% satisfied, compared to over 95% in 2017

Figure 15 – Bus satisfaction

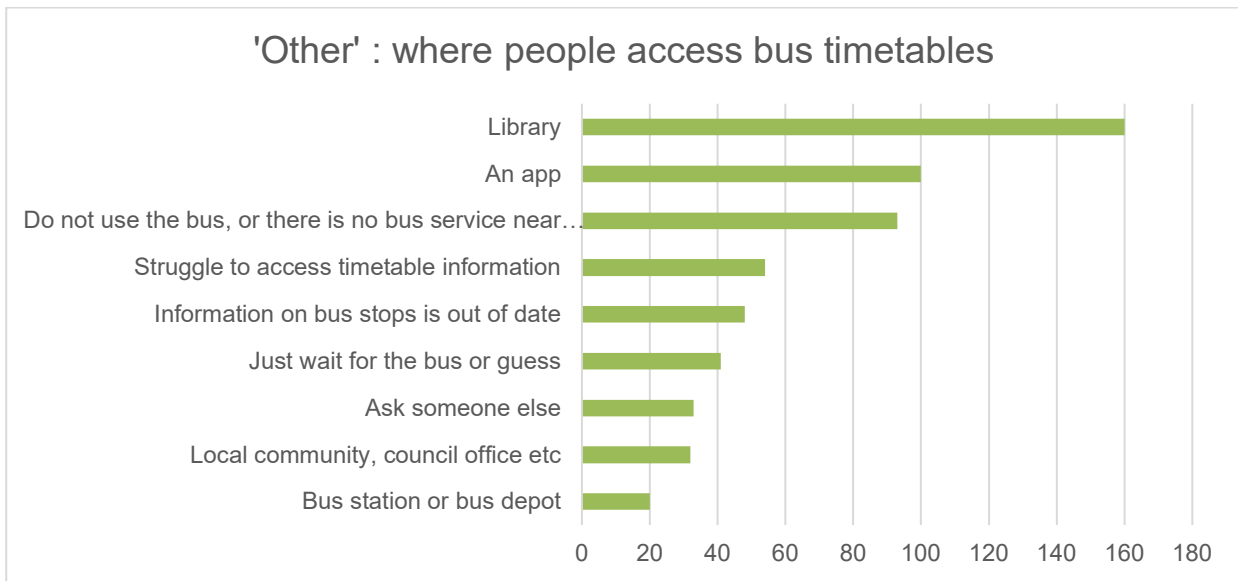


Respondents were also asked where they normally obtain bus timetable information. Respondents were able to choose more than one answer. Results are shown in Figure 16.

Figure 16 – Bus timetable information



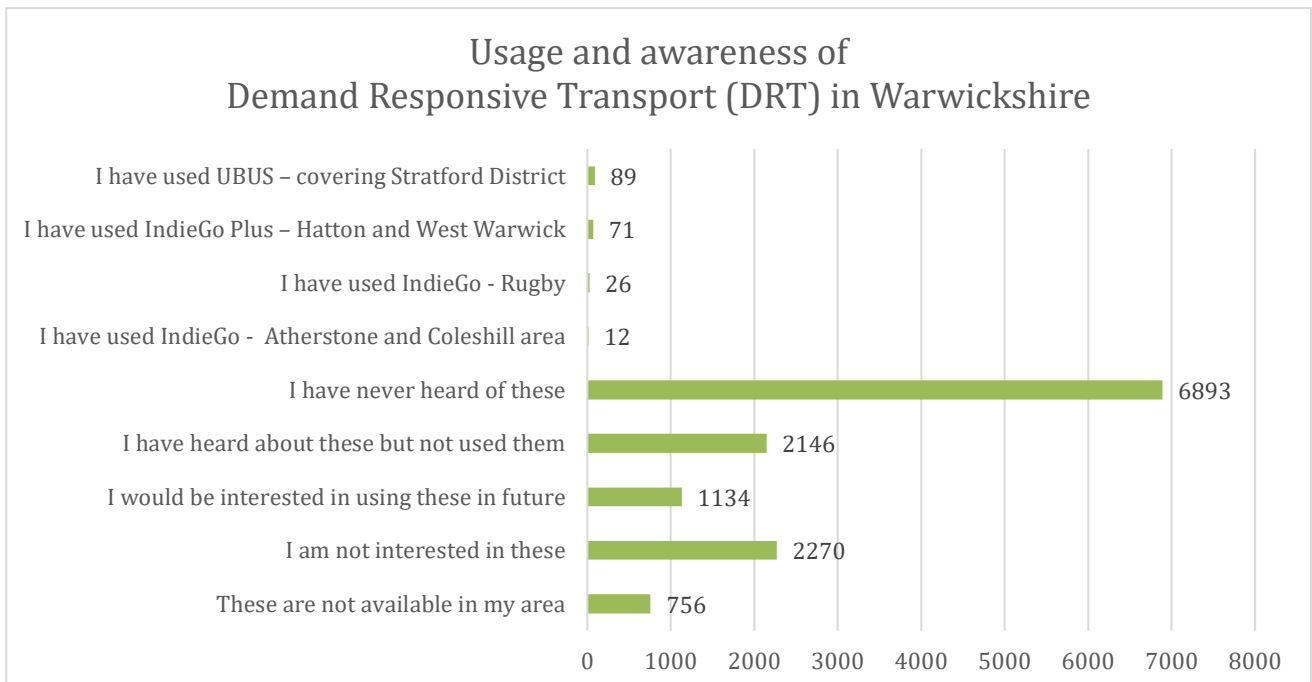
We also offered respondents the change to choose 'other' and the following groups the responses by theme.



We also asked respondents if there were any comments they wished to make about the bus services. In total 4,226 responses were received.

The majority of these were about individual bus services. These comments will be passed on to other areas of Transport Delivery for analysis and any subsequent actions.

We asked respondents if they had heard of or used any of our demand responsive transport. The results are shown in figure XXX



Potential changes to the scheme

We also asked respondents whether they thought there should be any changes to the travel times. The majority (79%) said that they should stay the same

Figure XX: Should travel times be changed?

N.B. Respondents were able to choose more than one answer

	Respondents (out of 12639)	
	Number	percentage
No (keep free travel between 9am and midnight on weekdays)	9856	78.0%
Older Person's Pass holders should travel free before 9am	1897	15.0%
Disabled Person's Pass holders should travel free before 9am	1670	13.2%
Free travel should not start until 9.30am on weekdays (as per the National Scheme)	1467	11.6%
Older Person's Pass holders should pay a reduced fare before 9am	878	6.9%
Disabled Person's Pass holders should pay a reduced fare before 9am	315	2.5%
Other	187	1.5%

Although only 193 respondents chose 'other' there were over 500 comments in answer to this question. The most common themes arising in those 500 comments were

	Number of respondents
Don't need to travel between 11pm and midnight	87
Should be able to use the pass for early medical appointments	81
Would like to travel earlier	75
Better bus services are needed as can't use my pass	75
Passholders should pay a small amount	46
Free travel should be 24/7	33
Travel should be free on trains as well	21

There were also a small number of people who were unaware the pass could be used from 9am or at weekends

Passholders were asked whether they thought anyone else should be offered free or reduced price travel. Respondents could select more than one answer.

	Total	% all respondents
A carer or companion travelling with a disabled passholder who cannot travel alone (eligibility criteria would apply)	9329	74%
Young People aged 16-25	2400	19%
Apprentices	2139	17%
Refugees	1626	13%
No one else should be offered free or reduced cost bus travel	1616	13%
Other (please specify below)	329	3%

This is the first time we asked this question with options, so we do not have any past data to compare it with. However, the percentage of respondents who thought a carer or companion should have a pass was much higher than expected.

Under 'other', the following emerged as repeated themes;

School age children should get free transport	118
People on low income/benefits (means tested)	91
Students / young people up to age 21	87
Everyone should get subsidised travel and/or proper bus service	58
Young people aged 16-18	51
People aged over 60 (current entitlement is 66 years)	36
People attending a medical appointment or job interview	33
NHS staff / blue light workers / key workers	10

Profile of respondents

Number and percentage
of respondents in each category

Gender		
Female (including trans female)	5539	43.8%
Male (including trans male)	5521	43.7%
Non-binary / agender / gender-fluid	8	0.1%
Not Answered	933	7.4%
Prefer not to say	445	3.5%
Prefer to self-describe (please state)	193	1.5%

Age		
Under 18	7	0.1%
18 – 24	14	0.1%
25 - 39	80	0.6%
40 – 49	75	0.6%
50 – 59	166	1.3%
60 – 64	143	1.1%
65 – 74	6745	53.4%
75 +	4985	39.4%
Not Answered	236	1.9%
Prefer not to say	188	1.5%

Long term illness or disability		
No	8881	70.3%
Not Answered	353	2.8%
Prefer not to answer	750	5.9%
Yes	2655	21.0%

Religion		
Buddhism	35	0.3%
Christianity	8021	63.5%
Hinduism	74	0.6%
Islam	27	0.2%
Judaism	13	0.1%
No religion or belief	2631	20.8%
Not Answered	577	4.6%
Prefer not to say	1053	8.3%
Sikhism	66	0.5%
Spiritualism	57	0.5%
Any other religion or belief (please state if you wish)	85	0.7%

Number and percentage
of respondents in each category

Ethnicity		
Arab	2	0.0%
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	4	0.0%
Asian or Asian British - Indian	144	1.1%
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	13	0.1%
Black or Black British - African	12	0.1%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	21	0.2%
Chinese	23	0.2%
Gypsy or Traveller	1	0.0%
Mixed - Asian and White	13	0.1%
Mixed - Black African and White	3	0.0%
Mixed - Black Caribbean and White	6	0.0%
Other Asian Background	23	0.2%
Other Black Background	7	0.1%
Other Mixed Background	11	0.1%
Other White background	122	1.0%
White British	11117	88.0%
White Irish	190	1.5%
Prefer not to say	376	3.0%
Prefer to self-describe (please state if you wish)	47	0.4%
Not Answered	504	4.0%

Sexual Orientation		
Asexual	626	5.0%
Bi / bisexual	122	1.0%
Gay man	47	0.4%
Gay woman / lesbian	10	0.1%
Heterosexual / straight	9060	71.7%
Pansexual	7	0.1%
Prefer not to say	1703	13.5%
Other (please state if you wish)	58	0.5%
Not Answered	1006	8.0%