

BCYC WALKING AND CYCLING

Introduction

Origins of the Project

This project came about for a number of reasons. First of all, in July 2020 central government published a document titled 'Gear change: a bold vision for cycling and walking,' indicating a renewed interest in walking and cycling schemes in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Secondly, during a zoom call with Bristol's then cabinet minister for transport, Kye Dudd, Youth Mayors John Wayman and Alice Towle heard that although councillor Dudd often received messages about walking and cycling related to primary schools, very few were received related to secondary schools or sixth-form colleges. Given these two points of interest, when Bristol City Youth Council's Environment and Transport Group were reassessing our campaign priorities in early 2021, we decided to capitalise on both the government interest in walking and cycling schemes, as well as the gap in Bristol City Council's knowledge surrounding walking and cycling for young people of secondary age and up.

Aims of the Project

The initial aim was to construct and distribute a survey which would identify what young people across Bristol saw as the key barriers to increasing the amount they walk or cycle to school. Following the massive success of the survey, with 1364 responses from across Bristol, we decided to run a series of focus groups to brainstorm solutions to the barriers identified by the survey. That way, young people would be able to give their input not just by identifying problems but by helping to solve them.

This Report

This report presents the overall results of the project and is divided into 2 sections. The first covers the survey itself; the process behind its creation, some of the data gathered from it and limited analysis of the trends identified. The second section covers the focus groups, giving a summary of the solutions young people presented. Hopefully one or both of these sections will be useful for decision makers who understand the importance of putting young people at the heart of transport policy.

Section 1: The Survey

Summary of the Questions

As mentioned in the introduction, the aim of the project was to find ways of increasing the number of young people in Bristol who walk or cycle to school, to produce positive benefits not only on the environment but on students' mental and physical health. As such, the survey needed to answer two key questions: firstly, what methods of transport are students currently using to get to school? Secondly, what do they see as the key barriers to increasing the amount they walk or cycle to school? Demographic questions identifying a student's age, school and postcode area were also included to gauge the diversity of voices across the city that the survey data encompassed.

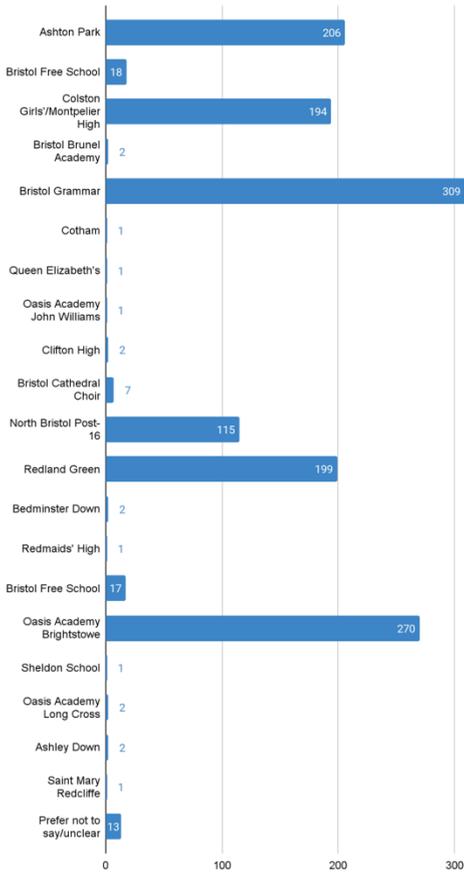
Limitations of the Data

It is worth noting that the data presented here does not necessarily represent 1364 different students, as it was possible for an individual to take the survey multiple times, with each response being logged as unique. These duplicate responses were an unfortunate side effect of not requiring students to sign in with an email address before taking the survey. However, we believe that not requiring email sign ins made the survey more easily accessible, contributing to the high number of responses. Moreover, we think that the number of duplicate responses is low enough compared to the size of the data set that it would have been significant effort without much gain to try and identify each one.

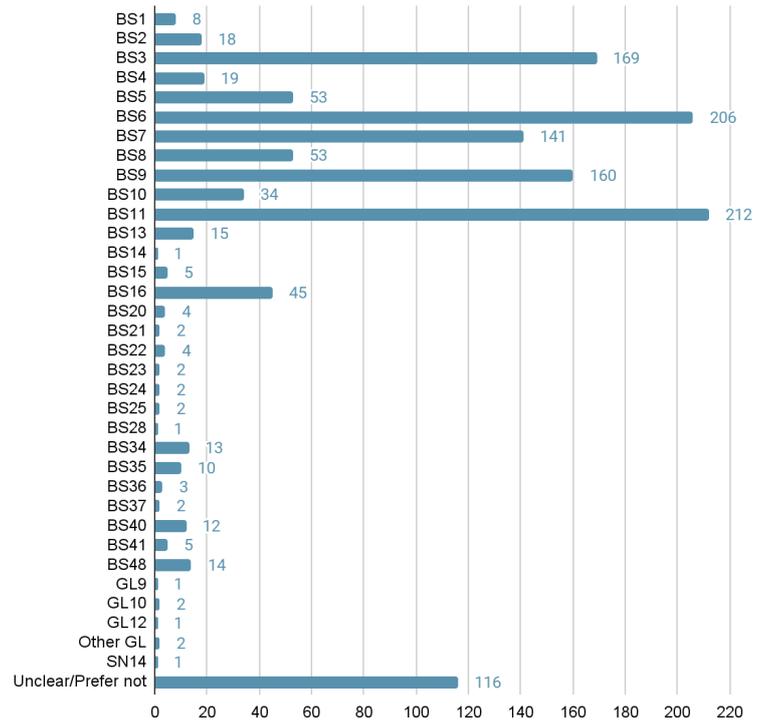
Demographic Questions

Overall, the survey was successful in representing a variety of voices in terms of age, location and school. As seen in the charts below, there was a relatively even split across the 7 year groups we took responses for, while we had responses from 20 different schools and 33 different postcode areas. In terms of shortcomings, there were certain schools and postcodes with far greater or smaller representation than average, and many large schools and sixth form colleges across the city received no representation. However, despite these issues the survey was largely successful in gathering different students' voices.

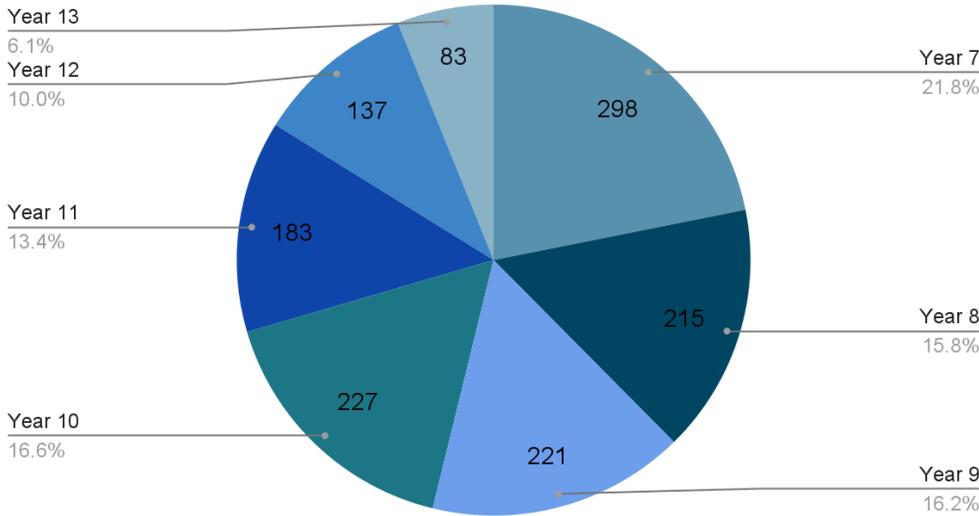
Number of Responses from Schools



Number of Responses from Postcodes



Year Groups

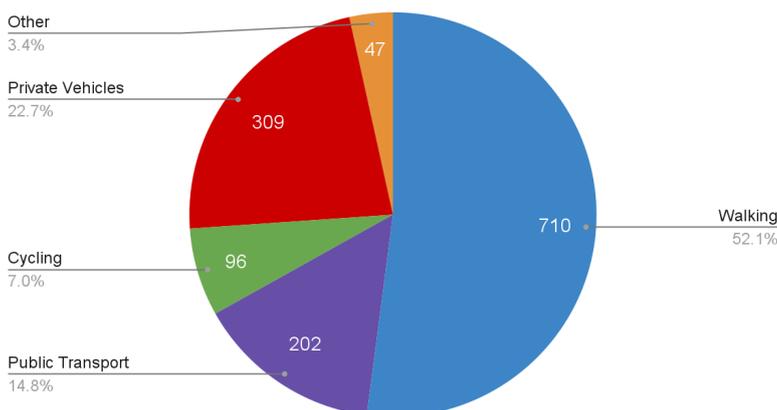


Primary and Secondary Modes of Transport

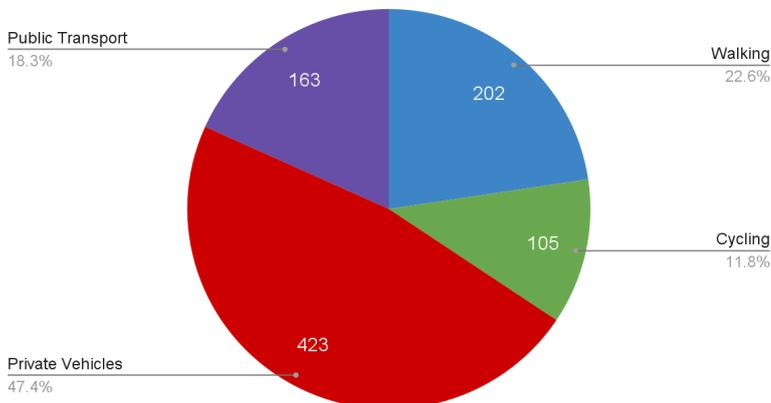
The survey asked students to specify which modes of transport they primarily use, along with any they occasionally use, providing some interesting points of analysis. On the more positive side when considering walking and cycling, over 50% of students already primarily walk to school, and walking placed as the second most popular secondary mode of transport. Conversely, cycling placed

as the least popular in both questions, indicating that work is needed to encourage more students to cycle. This disparity fed into the focus groups, where we chose to focus on the cycling barriers over the walking ones. Additionally, while outside the main focus of this project, it is notable that public transport placed behind private vehicles in both questions. The fact that students are more likely to turn to private vehicles when they need a quick, reliable or covered way to school, indicates work may be required to turn public transport into a more viable and accessible option for students.

Primary Modes of Transport



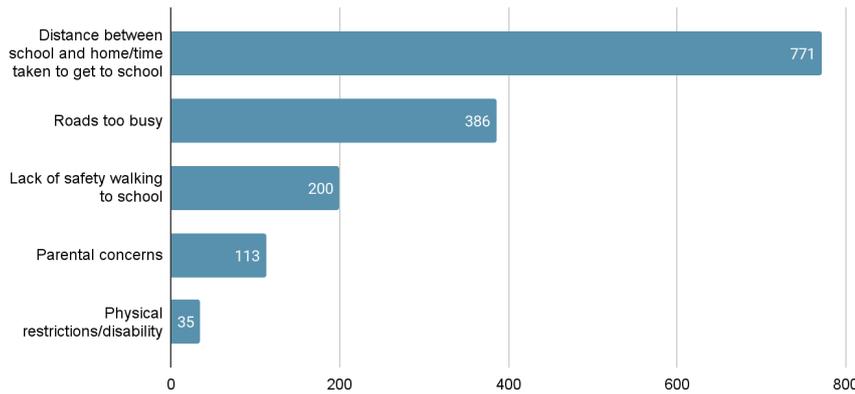
Secondary/Alternative Modes of Transport



Walking Barriers Identified

The key barriers identified for walking to school were mostly unsurprising. The time taken to get to school emerged as the most important barrier, which is understandable given that walking is primarily useful for those who live close to their schools. However, if you add together the second, third and fourth most popular barriers under a general label of ‘safety,’ their total comes close to that of the first. This indicates that more could be done regarding the safety of those walking to school.

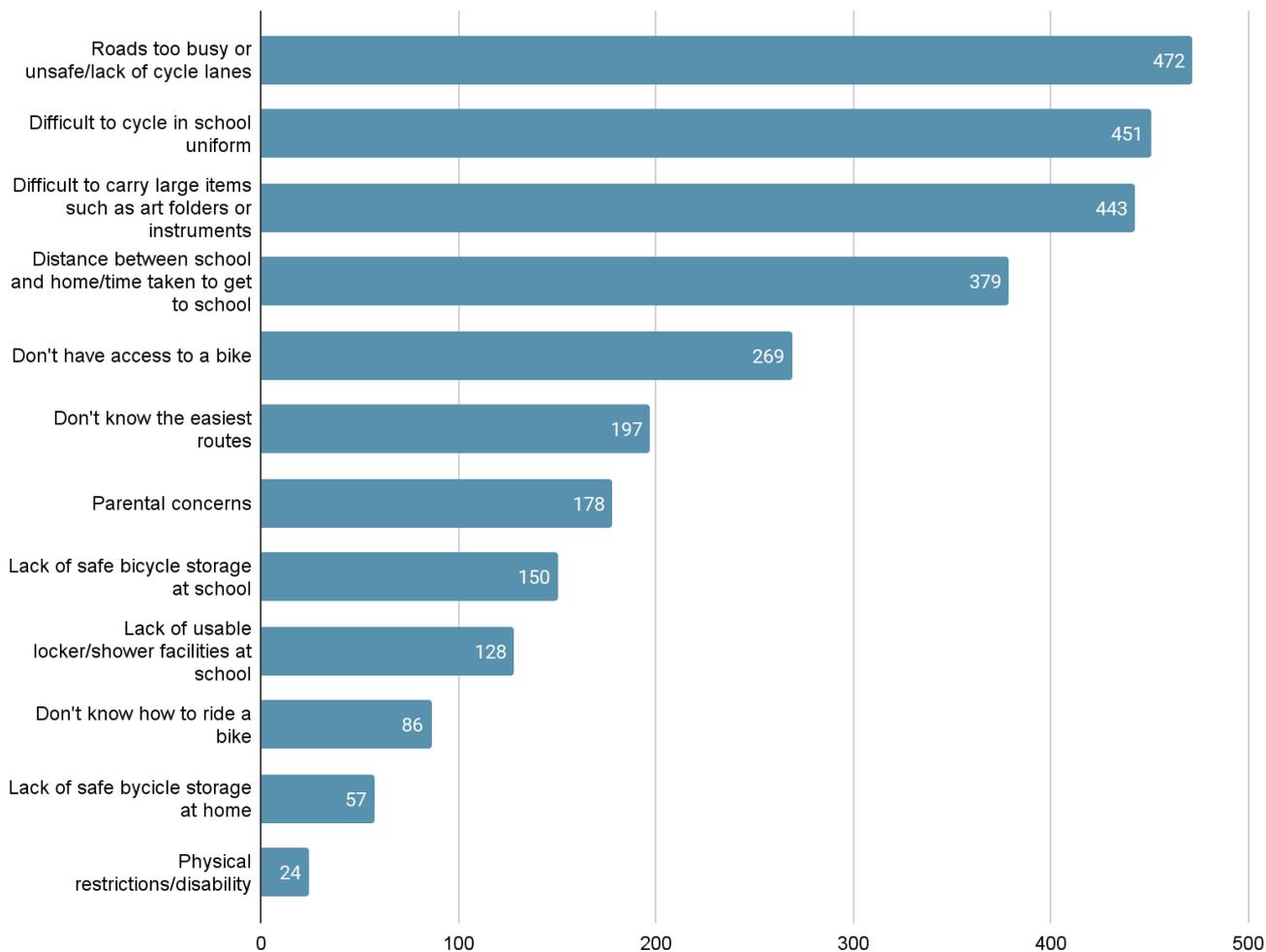
Main barriers to walking to school



Cycling Barriers Identified

In contrast to the walking barriers, no one issue emerged as the most significant barrier for cycling, with three issues close to each other at the top and larger falloffs after that. This indicates that increasing uptake of cycling represents a more complex issue than that of walking, with many students having multiple barriers they have come across. On a more encouraging note, some issues potentially more difficult to overcome such as school facilities and knowledge of how to ride a bike placed low down the list.

Main barriers to cycling to school



Section 2: Focus Groups

Structure of the Focus Groups

To gather young people's views on how they would solve the problems identified by the survey, we ran two online focus groups, each with a different group of 5-10 young people. The sessions were relatively freeform in nature, with participants presented with a list of the key barriers, alongside some context surrounding the survey, and asked to pick any barriers that jumped out at them and suggest potential solutions. As mentioned above, the focus groups

mainly dealt with the barriers to cycling as we felt that, given the much lower proportion of students that cycle to school, that was the more pressing of the two areas. Presented below are written summaries of the solutions participants gave.

Summary of Participant Responses

The young people had much to say on the issue of cycle lanes. Firstly, they mentioned that the networks of cycle lanes already in place are primarily focused on routes in and out of the city centre, as well as the centre itself, to service those commuting to and from work. While this works for many central schools, more suburban schools and those off the main roads need more cycle lane development. This could be accomplished by consulting with schools about the major routes their pupils use as a way of knowing which roads to prioritise. Even for schools in the centre, participants brought up how it's often hard to navigate between stretches of cycle lanes or know where the links are between safe routes. This could be addressed by producing maps of cycle lanes and safe routes for distribution through schools, with each one giving out a map of the surrounding area.

Another key issue discussed was the need to create a culture of cycling within schools. By implementing facilities such as large bike sheds, lockers and changing rooms alongside policies such as allowing students to cycle in non-school uniform, schools can create a culture where cycling is the norm. Having student role models and talking to students about how to make cycling more accessible could also be helpful in this regard. Additionally, any bike storage would need to be kept very safe as just one example of a bike theft could discourage others from cycling, thus stopping that culture of cycling from forming.

Additional training and equipment funding was also brought up as something that would help remove barriers to cycling. Participants mentioned that while cycle training skills are often provided in primary schools, few secondary schools offer sessions, even though cycle safety training is arguably more important for secondary-age pupils. Any training would likely have to be done during the first 3 years of secondary so as not to conflict with exams but could be delivered in a variety of ways including afterschool clubs or as part of the P.E curriculum. In terms of equipment, given that bikes are often prohibitively expensive, either the council or schools could run bike rental or lending schemes to lower the

financial barrier to cycling to school. These schemes could also involve lending bike accessories such as panniers to allow students to carry books and stationery more easily when cycling to school.

Lastly, a common theme that came up through the various solutions was the need for policies on cycling to be either led by or at least delivered through schools. Though schools may be reticent to encourage cycling given some of the safety risks involved, ensuring schemes are delivered at school level is important for many of the solutions above to be viable. By allowing schools to tailor programmes to their students' specific needs, it allows cycling schemes to be made accessible to students and thus have a much greater impact.

Conclusion

Overall, the project was successful in its aims. It identified the key barriers stopping young people across Bristol from increasing the amount they walk or cycle to school and identified ways of beginning to solve the various issues. Moreover, it highlighted the importance of engaging young people on the issues that affect them. The survey and focus groups prove that young people can identify the problems they face and provide input as to how they want those problems to be solved.