



Results and Analysis of the 'Have your say on the Home to School Transport Consultation'

December 2022

by Business Intelligence and Improvement (BII) Team



About the surveys

On the 19 October 2022, Buckinghamshire Council launched its Home to School Transport Consultation inviting residents to share their views on proposed changes to council-run school bus charges (Spare Seats Scheme), the Home to School Transport Policy (0- to 25-Year-Olds) and the Post-16 Transport Policy Statement for 2023 to 2024.

Between Wednesday 19 October and midnight on Sunday 4 December, people in Buckinghamshire were able to provide their views on proposals for:

- ***Spare Seats Scheme*** charging options
- ***Updates to our home to school & Post-16 transport policies***

Any changes will apply for the 2023 to 2024 academic year onwards and will apply to both new and existing customers.

Spare Seat Scheme Charging

The Spare Seats Scheme offers paid-for seats on timetabled Council-run school buses once all young people who are eligible for free school transport have been allocated a seat.

The changes will even out the cost of travel over a child's whole school career by reducing the cost of post-16 travel for some Spare Seats passengers, making it easier for parents and carers to know upfront how much they will have to pay before applying for a seat.

The consultation addresses concerns that the Spare Seats fee structure is complex and difficult to understand and proposes three options for simplified school bus ticket charges.

Under all proposed options, non-Buckinghamshire Council residents will pay a higher fee than customers who live within Buckinghamshire.

Updates to Home to School and Post-16 Transport Policies

The Home to School Transport Policy sets out the Council's approach to providing transport to schools and educational settings for students up to 19 years old, and up to 25 years old for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

The Post-16 Transport Policy Statement sets out transport arrangements for students aged 16 and over.

Minor changes to these policies are being proposed to make them clearer and easier to understand.



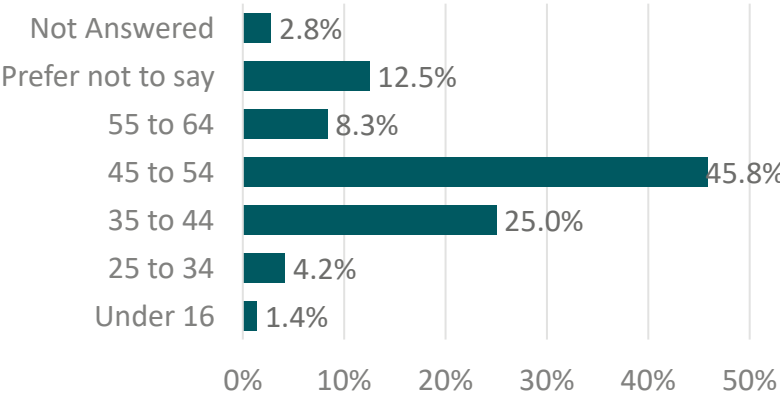
Spare Seat Scheme Charging Proposals

72 Responses

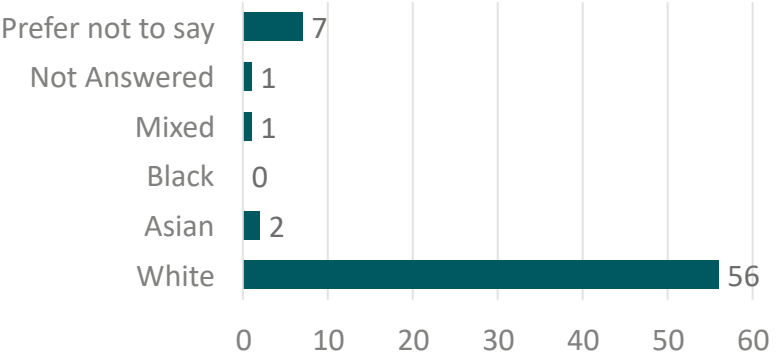


Who responded?

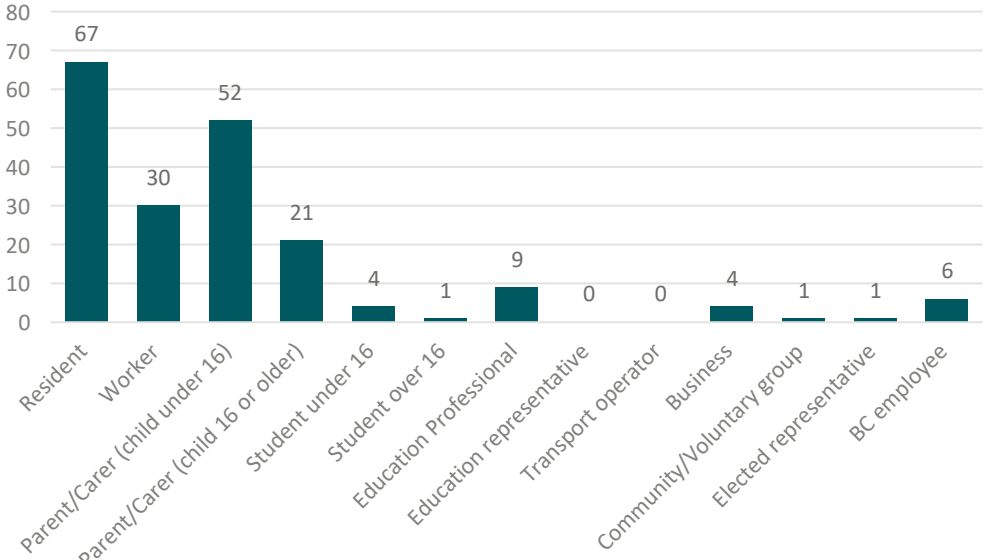
Q: What is your age?



Q: What is your ethnicity?



Q: Which of the following roles best describes you?



Q: Are you?

The majority of the respondents were white-females, aged 35-54 years, and who described themselves as Residents, Parents/Carers, and Workers.

The skew towards female and white ethnic background is not unusual in a consultation response about school transport.

Spare Seat Scheme Charging Proposals

Education Setting / School



Inside Bucks



Option 1: Distance banding
(small difference between distance bands)

£843	↔	£865	↔	£886	£1,200
------	---	------	---	------	--------

Option 2: Distance banding
(medium difference between distance bands)

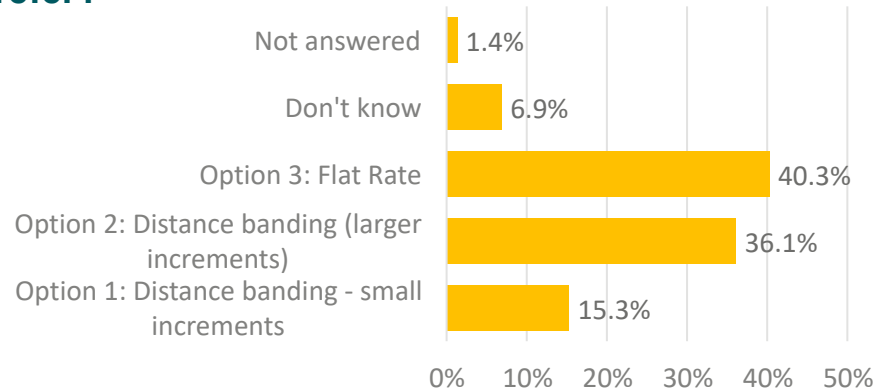
£806	↔	£859	↔	£912	£1,200
------	---	------	---	------	--------

Option 3: Flat fee
(irrespective of distance)

£868					£1,200
------	--	--	--	--	--------

Option Preference by Paying/Not Paying for a Spare Seat

Q: Which spare seat charging option did respondents prefer?

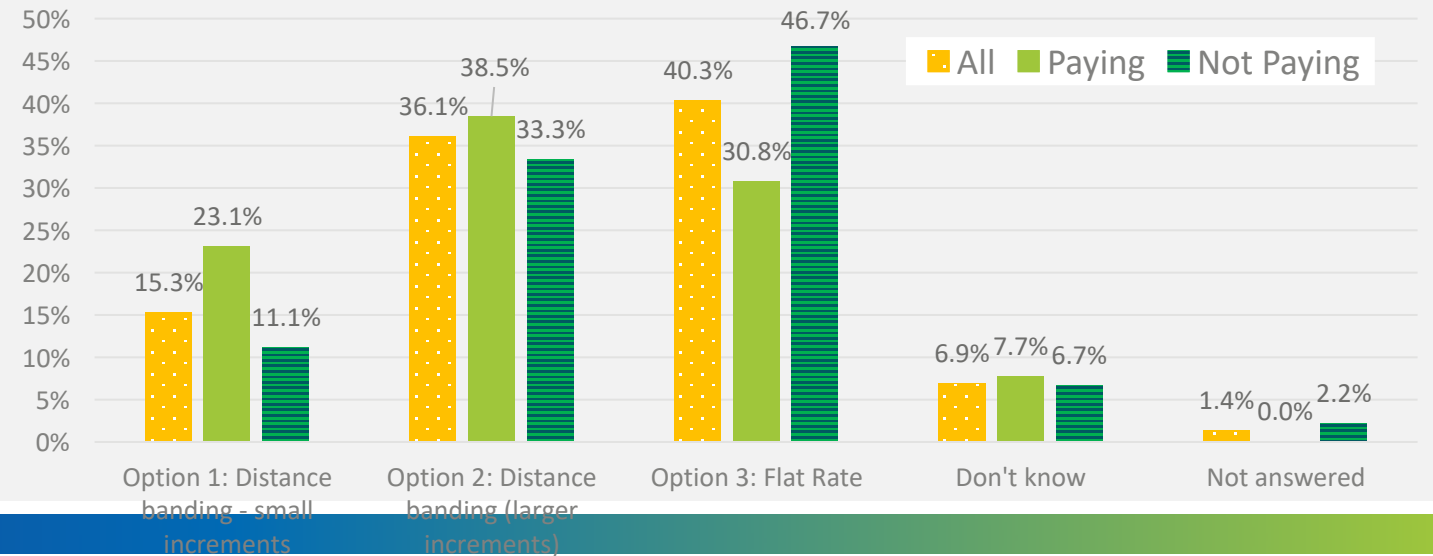


Q: Are you currently paying for a Spare Seat?

This table ranks respondents' preferences based on whether they are currently paying for a Spare Seat on Council run transport or not.

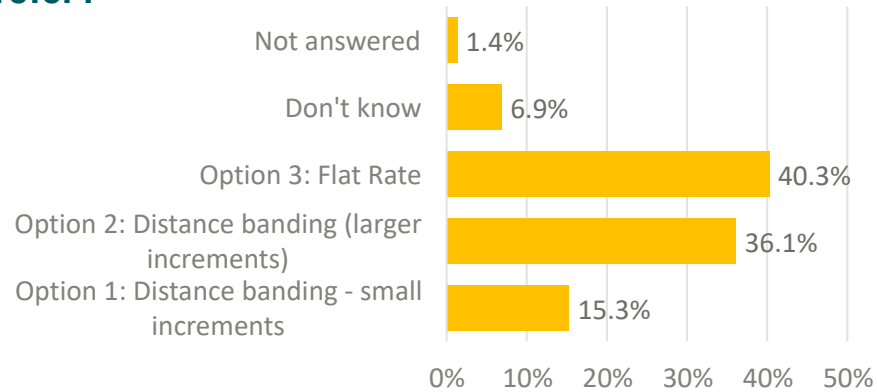
- This shows that respondents who currently pay have a preference for 'medium' distance banding followed by a flat rate, then 'small' distance banding.
- Those who don't currently pay have a preference for 'flat rate' followed by 'medium' distance banding.
- Both groups selected 'small' distance banding as their least favoured option.

Option	Overall	Paying	Not Paying
1 'small' distance	3	3	3
2 'medium' distance	2	1	2
3 flat rate	1	2	1

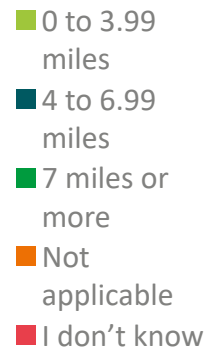


Option Preference by Respondents' Distance from School

Q: Which spare seat charging option did respondents prefer?



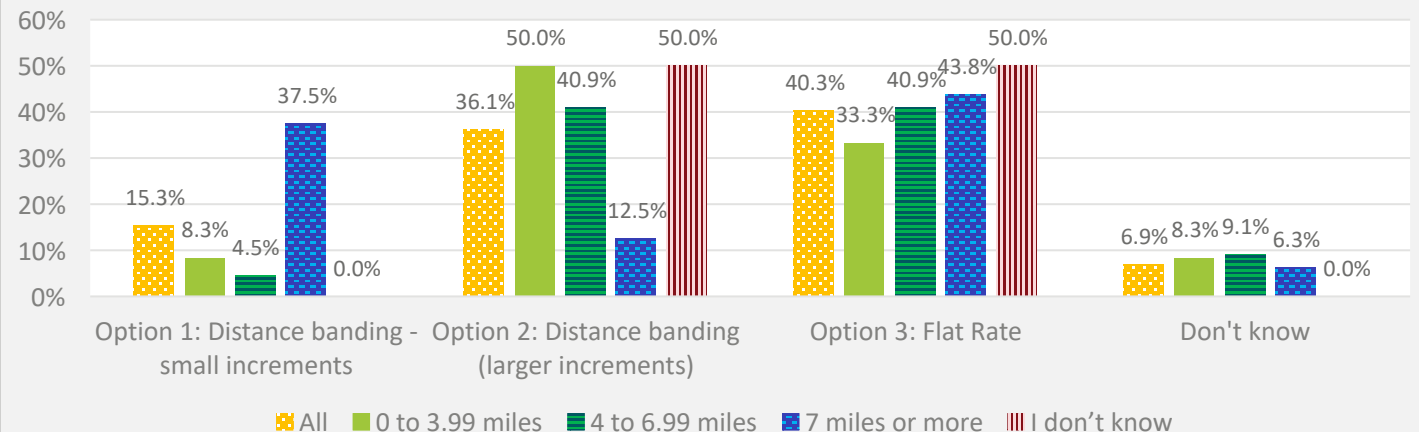
Q: What distance does your child travel to their educational setting?



This table ranks respondents' preferences based on how far they live from the educational setting their child goes to.

- For those that live within 4 miles, they have selected the cheapest option 2 'medium' increments.
- For those that live between 4-6 miles, they have chosen the cheapest Option 2 'medium' increments, and Option 3 (flat rate).
- For those that live 7+ miles have chosen the cheapest option for themselves, option 3 (flat rate).

Option	0-3.99 miles	4-6.99 miles	7+ miles
1 'small' distance	3	3	2
2 'medium' distance	1	1	3
3 flat rate	2	1	1



Respondent comments on the proposed options

Q: If you have any comments about the Spare Seat Charging proposals for 2023 to 2024, please tell us them here:

Emergent Themes	Number of responses mentioning this theme
Option 2 (medium banding) is fairest	12
Specific individual circumstance	11
Option 3 (flat rate) fairest – other options penalise those who don't live close to school	10
Option 3 (flat rate) is simple	7
Option 3 (flat rate) as seat will count at 'occupied' regardless of how far is travelled to school	3
Option 1 (small banding) fairest	3
Spare seat only option to travel to school	2
None are affordable	2
Individual bookings should be possible	2
Can't control school allocation policy	2

Comments tended to fall into two categories:

1. Either respondents were commenting about their **personal situation** (see 'specific individual circumstance' theme above), or
2. Their comment relates to the **scheme as whole**.

All other themes are still likely to include individual bias based on respondent circumstance, and some do both.

Distance-banding options:

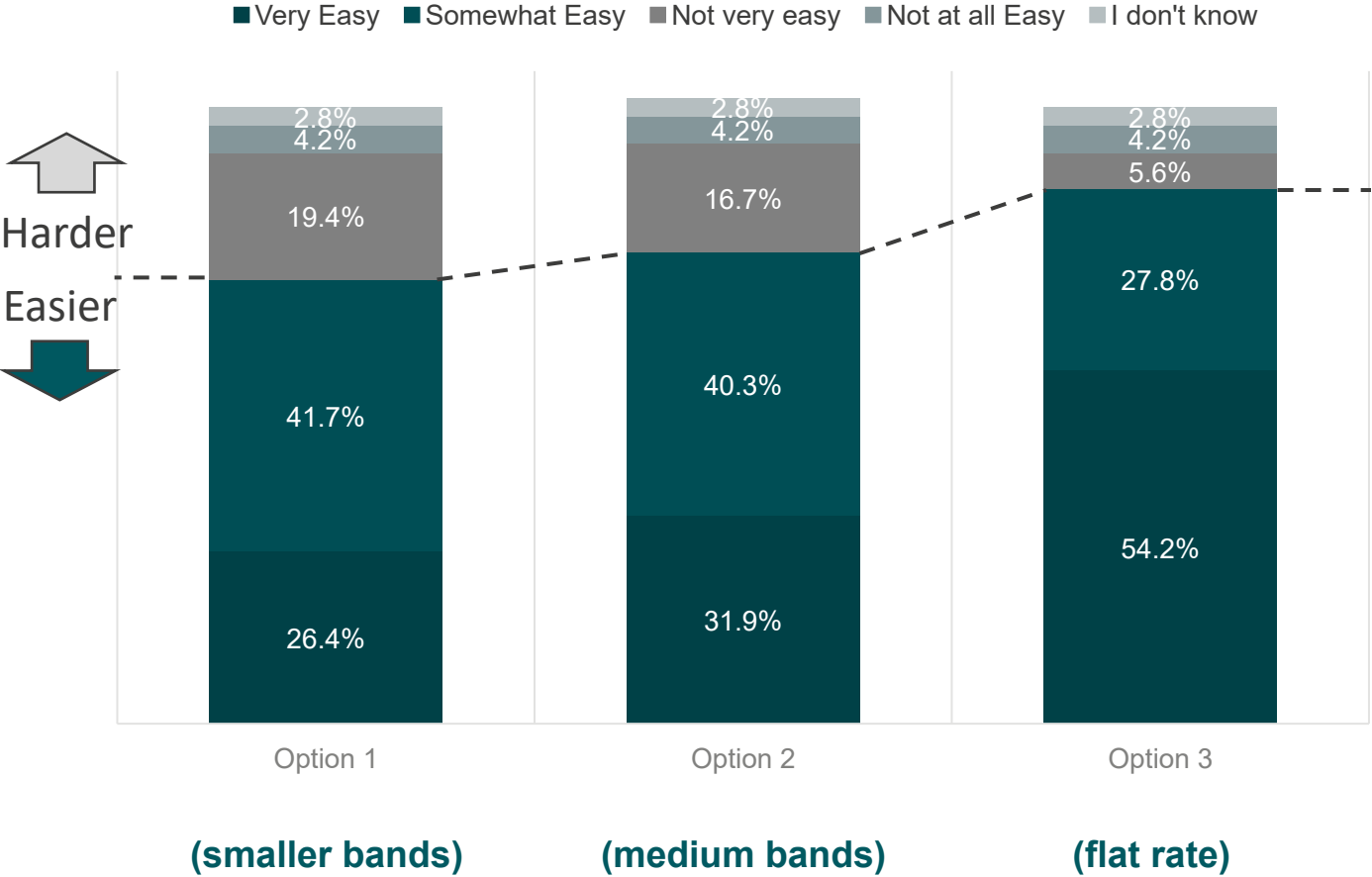
- Respondents selecting one of the distance-banding options (1 and 2) did so on the basis that those were the “fairest options”. When the respondent has given more detail about their rationale for “fairness” it related to the concept that the further you travel, the more you should pay.
- There was no discernible rationale provided between the two distance banded options.

Flat-rate option:

- Respondents who selected option 3 (flat rate) as the “fairest” option, said it was unfair to penalise those who don't live as close to the school because the school your child goes to is not always a choice due to the school allocation system, which is further complicated by the Grammar school system.
- Respondents that selected Option 3 Flat rate also did so because it was simple.
- An interesting point made by a few respondents in support of option 3 was that the seat can only be allocated to one student regardless of how far they are travelling, i.e., even if your child is on it for a short distance, the seat is effectively blocked, therefore it should be a flat rate.

Were the options easy to understand?

Q: How easy was it to understand the different proposed options?



Results show that respondents found that Option 3 (flat-rate) the easiest proposal to understand (83%).

The two distance-banding options were more complicated with the medium-banding being found to be slightly more comprehensive at 72.2% than the small-banding (68.1%), although they were the same conceptually to understand.

Key Findings

Option 3 (flat rate)

- The 'flat rate' option was the most popular (40.3%) option because it was considered the:
 - Simplest, 83% found the proposal easy to understand
 - Fairest, firstly because parents/carers can't always choose which educational setting their child goes to, so should not be penalised for it, and secondly because the seat is taken up whether the child travels a short or a long distance.
- The Flat rate option was also the most popular (43.8%) amongst respondents who lived 7+ miles from their child's educational setting.

Options 1 and 2 (distance banded)

- Distance-banded options were considered 'fair' because the further you travel the more you should pay. Respondents preferred Option 2 (medium distance banding) (36.1%) to Option 1 (small distance banding) (15.3%), which cannot be based on the principle of 'fairness' alone, as these are effectively the same.
- The preference between Option 1 and Option 2 emerges when you consider the individual circumstances of respondents i.e. choosing the option that works out cheapest for them based on the distance they live from their child's educational setting. 64% of respondents live within 7 miles of the school and Option 2 is more cost-effective for this cohort than Option 1.
- 72.2% of respondents found Option 2 easy to understand compared to 68.1% for Option 1, even though in terms of understanding the proposal, these are the same.



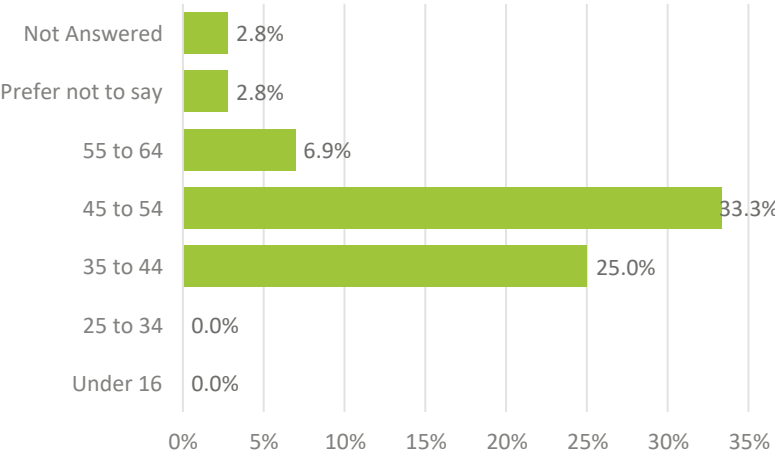
Home to School Transport Policy updates

51 Responses

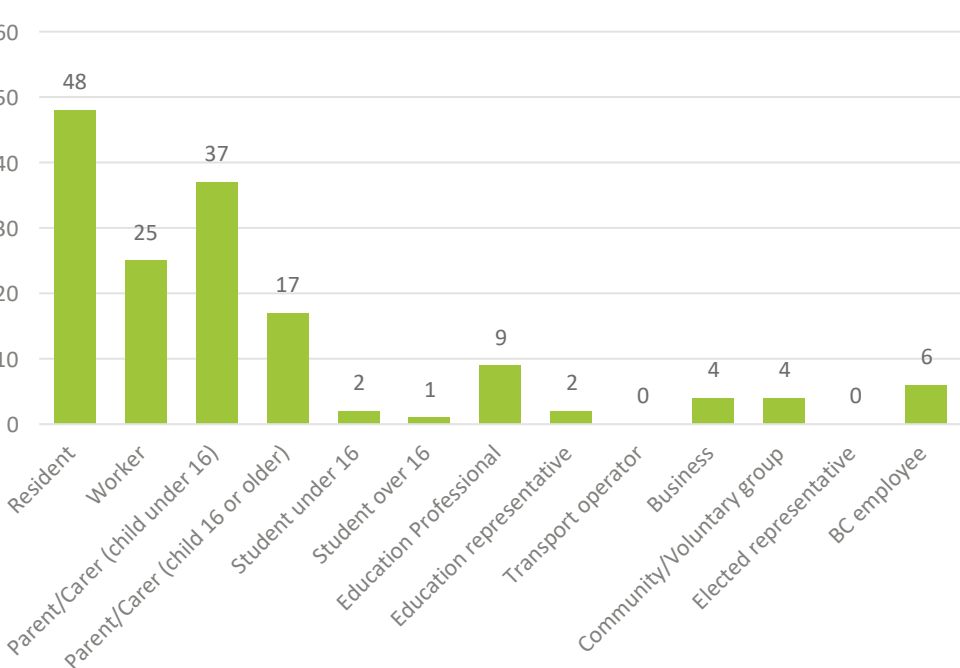


Who responded?

Q: What is your age?

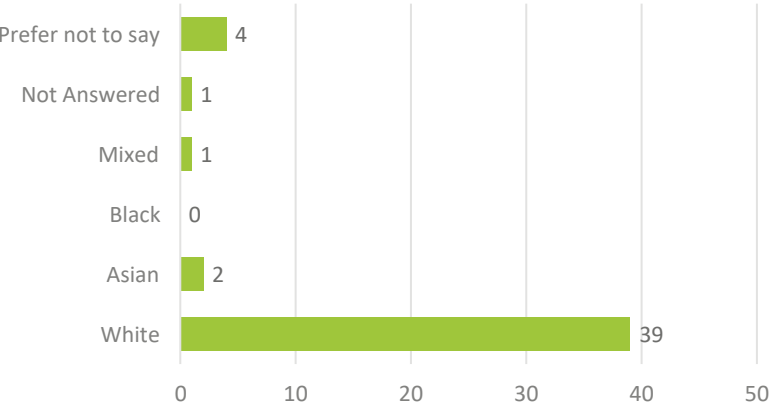


Q: Which of the following roles best describes you?



Q: Are you?

Q: What is your ethnicity?

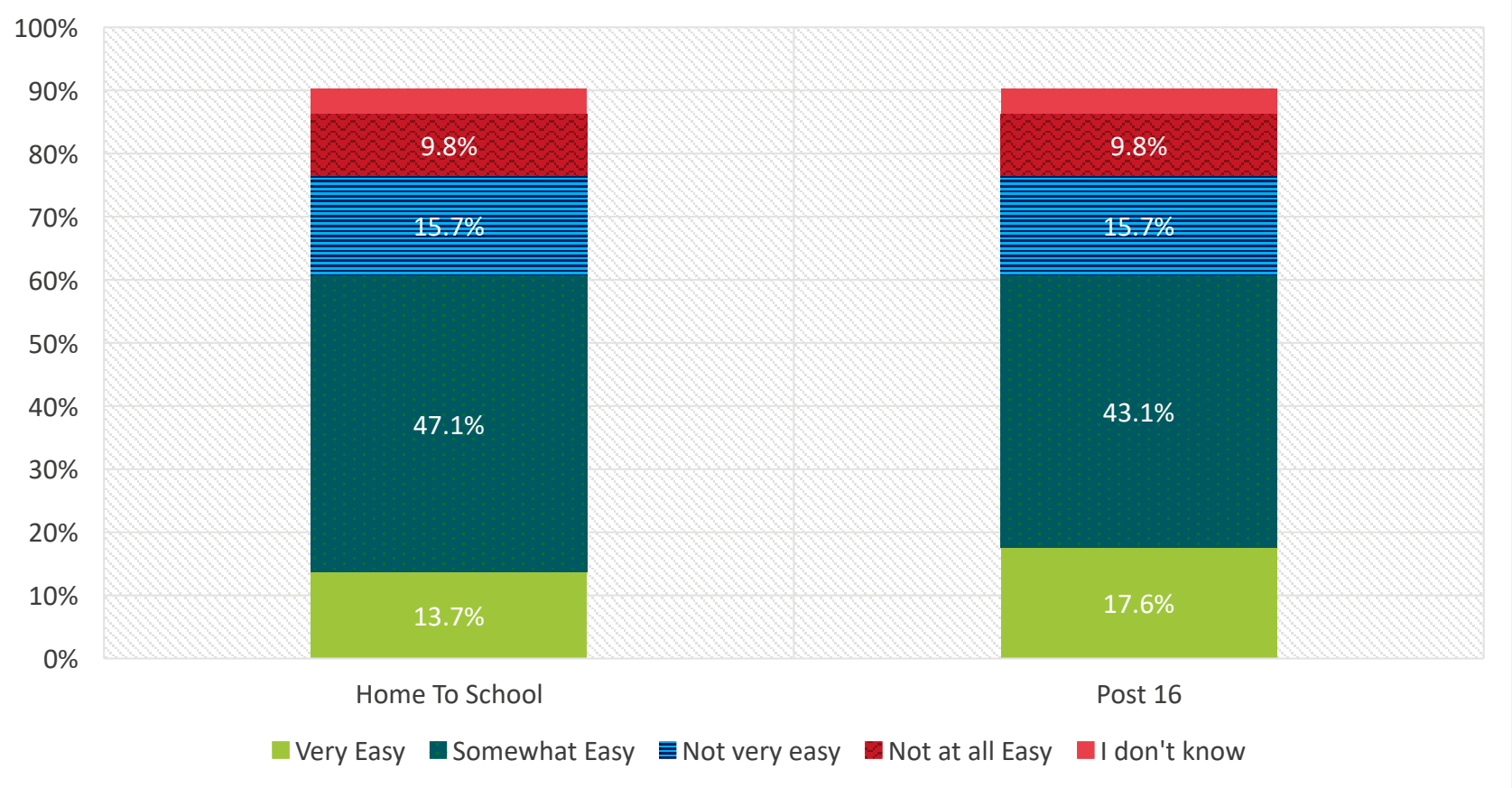


The majority of the respondents were white-females, aged 35-54 years, and who described themselves as Residents, Parents/Carers, and Workers.

The skew towards female and white ethnic background is not unusual in a consultation response about school transport.

Were the policies easy to understand?

Q: How easy was it to understand the Home to School Transport Policy and Post-16 transport policy statement?



61% of respondents found the policies easy to understand:

- Results show that respondents found the policies equally easy to understand with Home to School Policy scoring 60.8% for 'Very' and 'Somewhat Easy' and Post-16 Transport Policy Statement scored 60.7% for 'Very' and 'Somewhat Easy'.
- The Post-16 Transport Policy Statement scored slightly higher on 'Very Easy' at 17.6% compared to the Home to School Transport Policy at 13.7%.

Respondent comments on the proposed policy updates

Q: If you have any comments about the proposed changes to the Home to School Transport Policy and Post-16 Transport Policy Statement 2023 to 2024, please tell us them here:

Emergent Themes	Number of responses mentioning this theme
The annual fee for Council arranged Post-16 SEND transport is unaffordable and should not increase	3
The updates are clear and easy to understand	1
The updates are not clear or easy to understand	1
The proposed increase Council arranged Post-16 SEND transport is too low and should be in line with inflation	1
All costs are rising therefore the proposed increase to the annual fee for Council arranged Post-16 SEND transport is acceptable	1

Notes:

- There are a large number of blanks/"not answered" in this part of the survey. It is likely that respondents clicked to continue from part 1 and perhaps haven't read the policy items.
- A number of the comments relate to the spare seat scheme (and are a repetition of what they said in the Spare Seat Scheme part of the survey).

Consultation response from Families and Carers Together in Buckinghamshire (FACT Bucks)

[FACT Bucks](#) is a group of parents and professionals who meet to discuss issues that affect children and young people with additional needs and disabilities locally. This parent forum submitted a specific and comprehensive response to the consultation, which has not been included in the table to the left.

Instead, their comments and feedback, as well as those of [Bucks SENDIAS](#) have been submitted directly to the service via email. These have been reviewed by senior officers in both Children's Services and Transport Service. As a result, some amendments will be included in the draft policies put forward for key decision.