

Supported Bus Services

Consultation report

Date of issue: 9 April 2018

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1. Overview

This consultation followed a proposal to justify supported bus services across the county borough, in order to meet a proposed budget reduction of £188,000 in 2018/19, as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Bridgend County Borough Council and Welsh Government support some regional and local bus services by subsidising routes that are not commercially viable. These services operate on routes to enable residents who live along them to access employment, education, health care and social activities. As a result, a Cabinet report was submitted on 3 October 2017, which identified the bus services for rationalisation, using a methodology adopted from a neighbouring authority and took into account the following criteria:

- The number of users per journey
- The subsidy per passenger
- The unavailability of alternative services
- The likelihood of related commercial bus service withdrawals
- The loss of journeys for shift workers
- The loss of journeys for healthcare and hospital visiting
- The loss of journeys for education and training.

A public consultation reviewing Bridgend County Borough Council's supported bus services was undertaken following presentation of the proposals to Cabinet in October 2017. The consultation received 1130 responses from a combination of the consultation survey (974 responses), four engagement events held across the county borough, social media interactions and by using the authority's Citizens' Panel. This paper details the analysis associated with the consultation.

2. Introduction

A public survey based on Bridgend County Borough Council's supported bus services was conducted between January 2018 and March 2018. The survey was available to complete online on the consultation page of the council's website and paper copies were made available at local libraries and bus stations. The survey was available in English, Welsh and as an accessible version. Residents could also request a paper copy or another alternative format by telephone or email.

In total, there were 17 questions which required a reply from respondents; all other questions in the survey were optional. All survey responses offered the option of anonymity. The council's standard set of equalities monitoring questions were also included with the survey, as is now recommended good practice for all public facing surveys carried out by the council.

Paper copies were made available at two councillor-led public meetings, one community engagement stand at the Your Bus Matters event organised by Bus Users Cymru and a meeting of the Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People.

The content of the consultation remains available online in closed consultations.

Comments regarding the consultation were also invited via letter, email and phone call.

3. Promotional tools and engagement methods

This section details the specific communications and engagement methods used to reach people and encourage them to share their views during the consultation period.

3.1 Social media and online

Facebook and Twitter have widely been used to promote the consultation.

Information was posted to the council's corporate Twitter accounts throughout the consultation period to raise awareness of the consultation and to encourage citizens to share their views on the proposals. The council currently has 10,331 followers on its corporate Twitter accounts. During the period, the authority 'tweeted' 24 times and the information was seen 26,441 times.

A series of Facebook adverts were placed during the consultation period to raise awareness of the consultation and to encourage citizens to share their views on the proposals. The adverts were seen 32,700 times, generating 835 clicks through to the consultation webpages.

An image was placed on the news page of the council website and the intranet homepage which linked through to the consultation webpage and survey.

3.2 Local press

Details of the consultation were sent as part of press releases emailed to local and national press.

The consultation featured on Business News Wales on 2 February and in the local Gem on both the 29 January and 3 February.

It was also featured as part of news updates from Bridge FM, referenced in magazines such as Seaside News and publicised at sites such as Oggy Bloggy Ogwr.

3.3 Councillor public meetings

Two councillor-led meetings took place during the consultation period.

These meetings were arranged independently by local councillors in response to demand from residents. Councillors explained to residents that the purpose of the meetings was to raise the profile of the consultation and to discuss the proposals/field questions. General themes of the views expressed at these meetings were captured by attending councillors and are referenced in section seven.

Residents were advised that they needed to complete the survey in order to make their individual views known and have them formally documented as part of the consultation process.

The first meeting took place on 2 February 2018 in Westward Community Centre, Cefn Glas. This was attended by 50 residents. The second took place in The Grand Pavilion in Porthcawl on 22 March 2018 with 82 residents attending this meeting. Paper copies were distributed to residents at both meetings who did not have the ability to complete online surveys.

3.4 Community engagement/meetings/events

An email about the consultation proposals and how to share views was sent to local community, equality and diversity groups.

3.4.1 Your Bus Matters event

Members of the transport service area and consultation team were invited to attend the regular Your Bus Matters event held in Bridgend Bus Station on 13 March 2018. The aim of this event is for service providers to regularly gain feedback directly from the public. The council had an engagement stand available at the event between 10:30 – 14:00. During the event, passers-by were invited to fill in paper surveys or were directed to the online survey if they preferred this method.

3.4.2 Bridgend Coalition for Disabled People meeting

The coalition invited officers from the council in to speak to members about the proposals as part of their regular group meeting. Members received a presentation about the proposals and were given the opportunity to ask questions before completing the survey. 15 members of the coalition attended the meeting, with 14 completing surveys during the meeting.

3.5 The supported bus survey

The online and paper surveys contained seventeen questions which required a reply from respondents; all other questions in the survey were optional.

The survey was available on the council's website and was sent to all 1686 Citizens' Panel members as well as 126 previous consultation responders who have asked to be kept up-to-date with similar future surveys.

Surveys were readily available in English, Welsh and via an accessible version. Alternative formats were available on request.

3.6 Posters

Posters promoting the consultation were available all local buses, at bus stations and bus stops. Posters were circulated to the library service for use in their 12 branches and to county borough Councillors. Community centres and partner organisations including Westward Community Centre and The Grand Pavilion, Porthcawl Pavilion also received promotional posters.

4. Response rate

In total, there were 1130 interactions, representing 0.8 per cent of the Bridgend County Borough population. The response rate has been divided into several areas including: consultation survey responses, emails and social media interactions:

- We received 974 survey responses in total (599 online submissions and 375 paper versions);
- During the consultation period, there were 124 interactions on our social media channels;
- 32 comments were received by email;
- One letter was received.

4.1 Petition

During the consultation period a petition which raised concerns about the 61 and 63B service was received containing 180 signatures from the Porthcawl area. Those who signed this petition requested that it was taken 'into consideration before making any decisions to curtail or axe these services'. The general themes raised as part of the petition have been summarised in section seven of this report.

5. How effective was the consultation?

The supported bus services consultation was conducted over an eight week period in which a range of marketing methods were used to create awareness of the consultation and encourage members of the public to engage with the council.

The social demographic data reflects a good cross section of the county borough's population, all respondents with the exception of two responders lived in the county borough.

The data collection methods, which include the online survey, a paper survey and an accessible survey, were all developed using plain English to maximise understanding. These response methods were designed to give a consistency to the survey across multiple platforms.

6. Headline figures

- 6.1 71% of responses came from those aged 55 or over.
- 6.2 26% of those who responded to the consultation told us that they had a disability.
- 6.3 When asked if the authority should continue to fund the subsidised routes 89% of respondents stated that the routes should continue to be funded.
- 6.4 When comparing age with how often the bus was used, 43% of respondents were aged over 55 and used the bus more than twice a week or every day. 13% of residents aged over 55 used the bus daily.
- 6.5 249 people had identified themselves as having a disability. When comparing disability with how often the bus was used 50% told us that they used the bus twice a week or more in addition to 31% of disabled people who used the bus daily.
- 6.6 Responses indicate that 38% of all responders use the bus more than twice a week, with 20% using the bus every day.
- 6.7 654 people aged over 55 felt that the council should continue to subsidise the current routes. There were in total 695 people in this age category (55+). Therefore 94% of this group felt that the subsidised bus routes should continue.
- 6.8 Of the responses, the routes most commonly used were 63b Porthcawl to Bridgend via Nottage (17%) and 68/69 Cefn Glas Circular (15%).
- 6.9 The most common areas to travel from were, Bridgend (35%), Porthcawl (29%) and Cefn Glas (9%).
- 6.10 The most common areas to travel to were, Bridgend (38%), Porthcawl (21%), Cardiff (8%) and Cefn Glas (4%).

- 6.11 35% of respondents told us that they were aware of Bridgend Community Transport services. Of those who responded that they were aware of Bridgend Community Transport only 19% stated that they used the transport.
- 6.12 Within the survey respondents were asked for additional information when deciding which routes should continue to be supported the following themes were most significant: concern for elderly and disabled residents; accessibility and isolation and access to transport issues.
- 6.13 Respondents were finally asked provide any other comments on this proposal, the most common themes were: concern for elderly or disabled residents; consideration for combining services or running less services and that we should review demand for services before making decisions.

7. Question and analysis - consultation survey

Section seven of the report looks at the questions asked in the consultation survey – with 974 respondents in total.

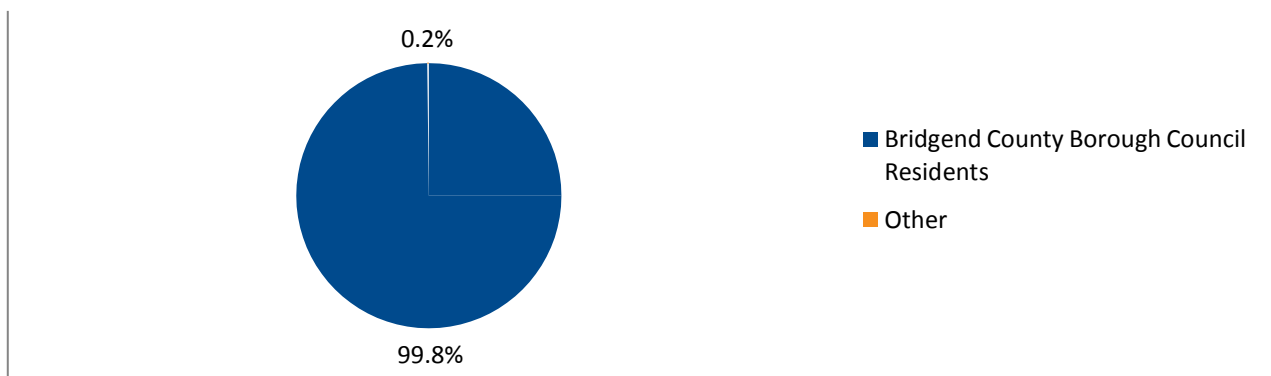
7.1 Please select a language to begin the survey.

Respondents to the consultation survey were initially asked in which language they would like to complete the survey. Overall, 99.8% of respondents selected English with only 0.2% selecting Welsh.

Language	#	%
English	972	99.8
Welsh	02	0.2
Total	974	100.0

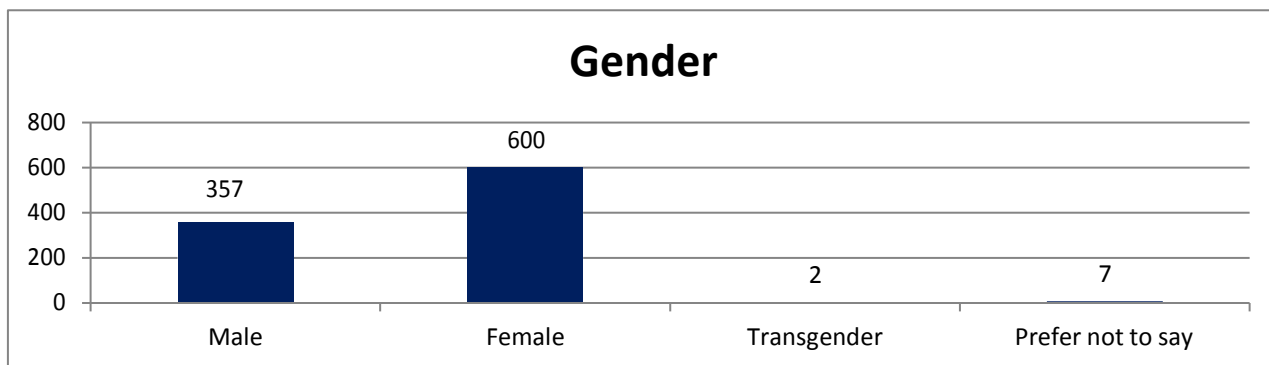
7.2 About you

7.2.1. Please supply us with the post code where you currently live



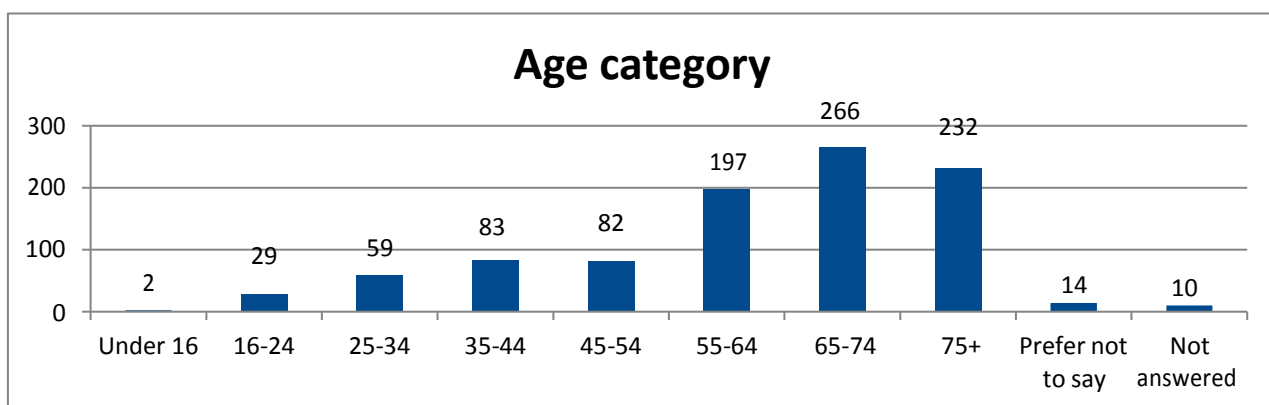
The social demographic data reflects a good cross section of the county borough’s population, all respondents with the exception of two responders lived in the county borough.

7.2.2 What is your gender?



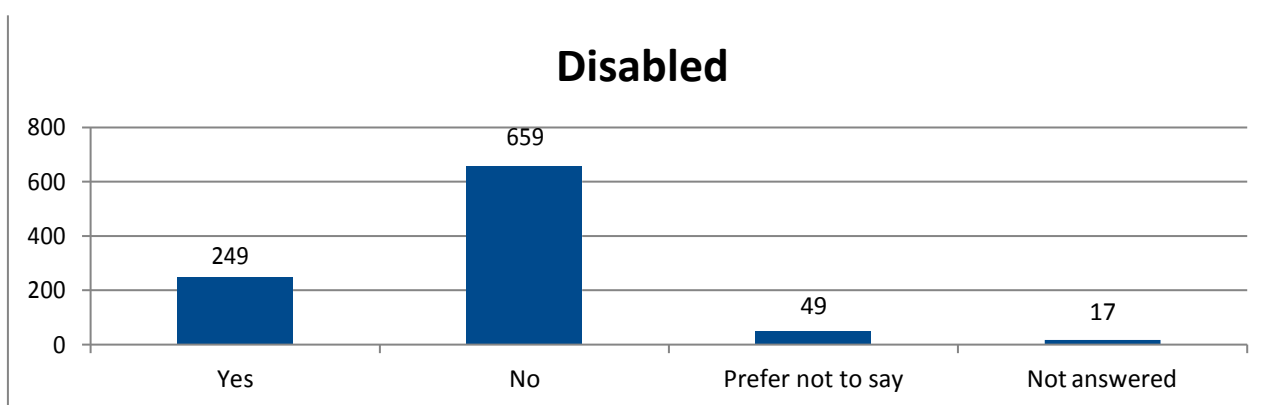
61% of responses were received from females, 37% from males. 1% stated that they preferred to not give their gender and 1% did not respond to this question. Two people stated their gender as transgender.

7.2.3 Please select your age category

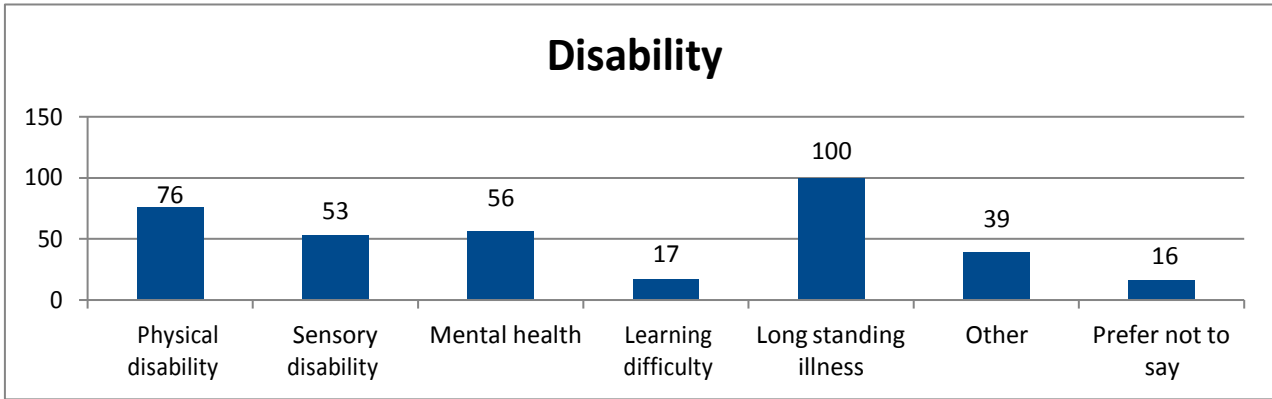


In total 71% of responses came from those aged over 55 or over. With 27% of responses coming from the age range 65-74. 24% of responses from 75+ and 20% aged 55-64.

7.2.4 Do you consider yourself to be disabled?



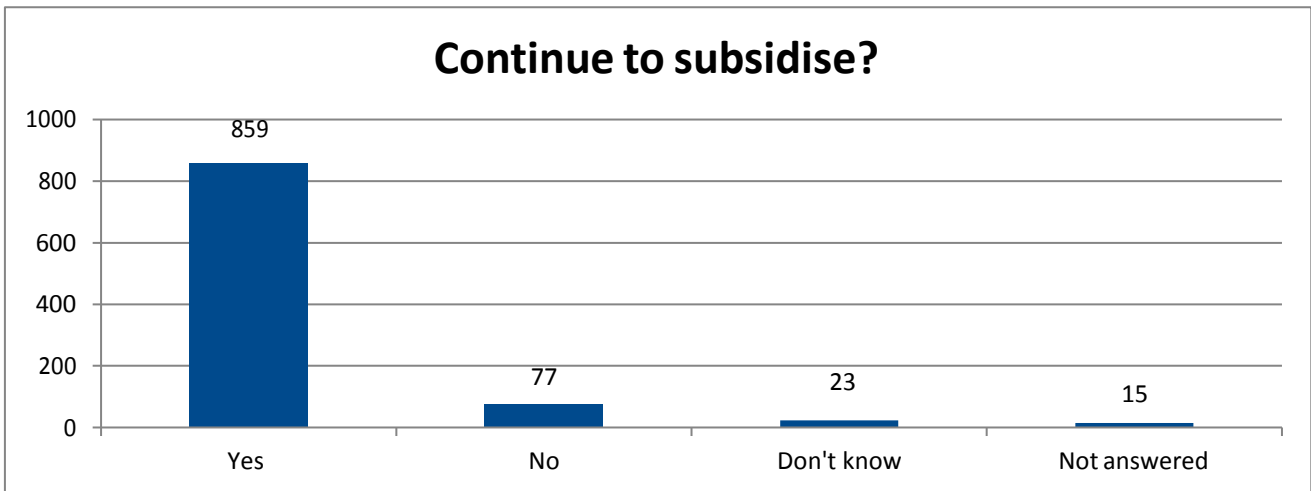
Of those who responded to this question, 26% of respondents described themselves as having a disability.



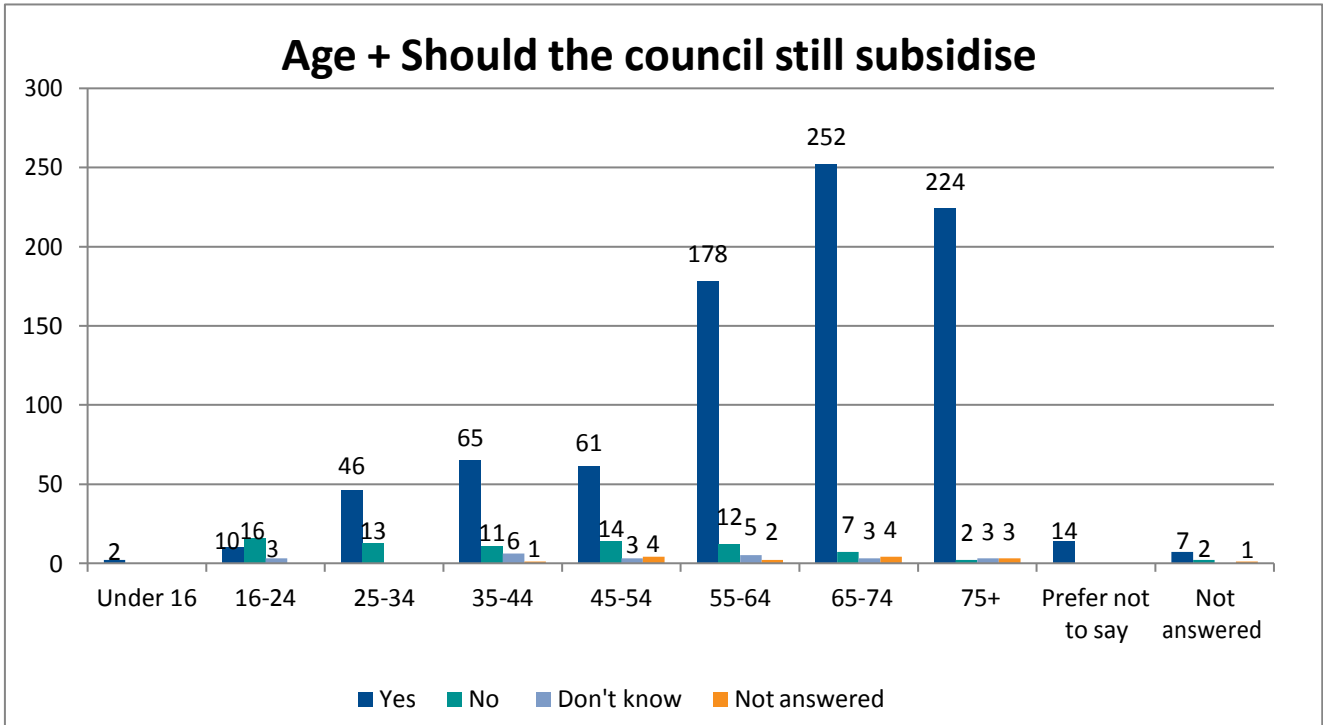
This question allowed responders to select multiple disability types. Long standing illness represented the majority of responses followed by physical disability and mental health.

7.3 Supported bus service survey

7.3.1 Should the council continue to subsidise bus routes?

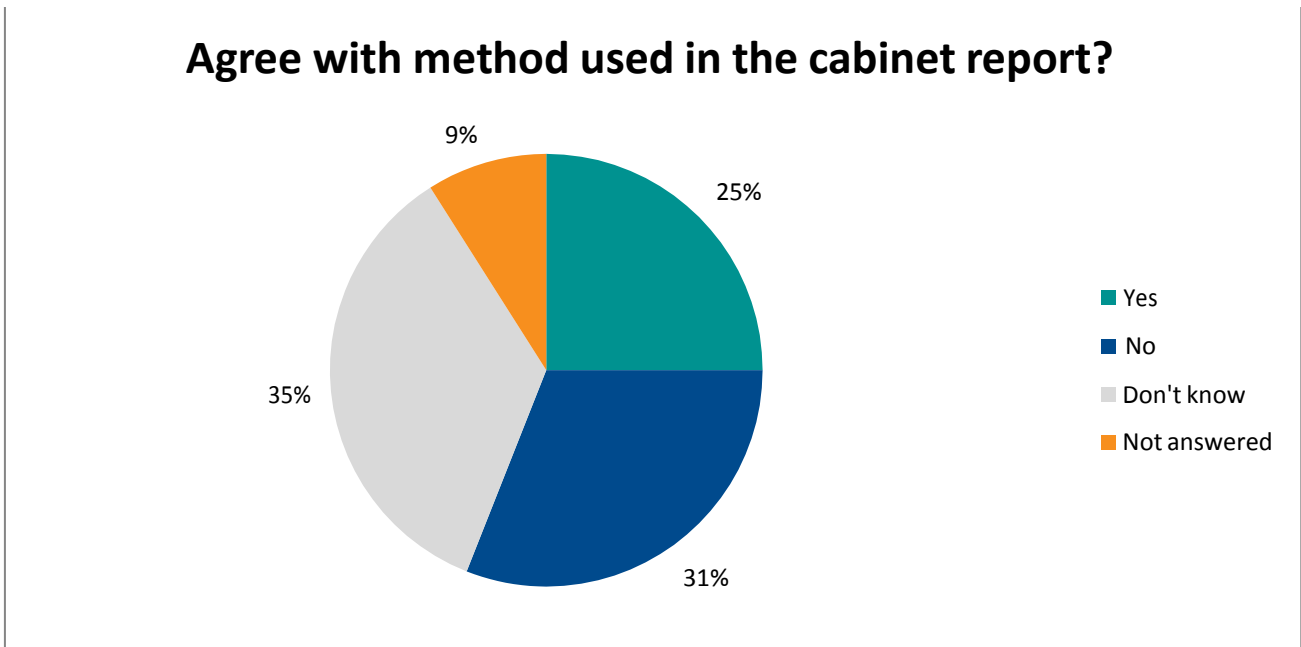


Of those who responded 89% of respondents felt that the subsidised bus routes should continue. 8% felt that the subsidy should not continue and only 2% responded 'don't know', 1% did not respond to this question.



654 respondents aged 55 and over told us that they believed that subsidised bus routes should continue. There were in total 695 people in this age category (55+). Therefore 94% of this group felt that the subsidised bus routes should continue.

7.3.2 Do you agree with the method used in the cabinet report?



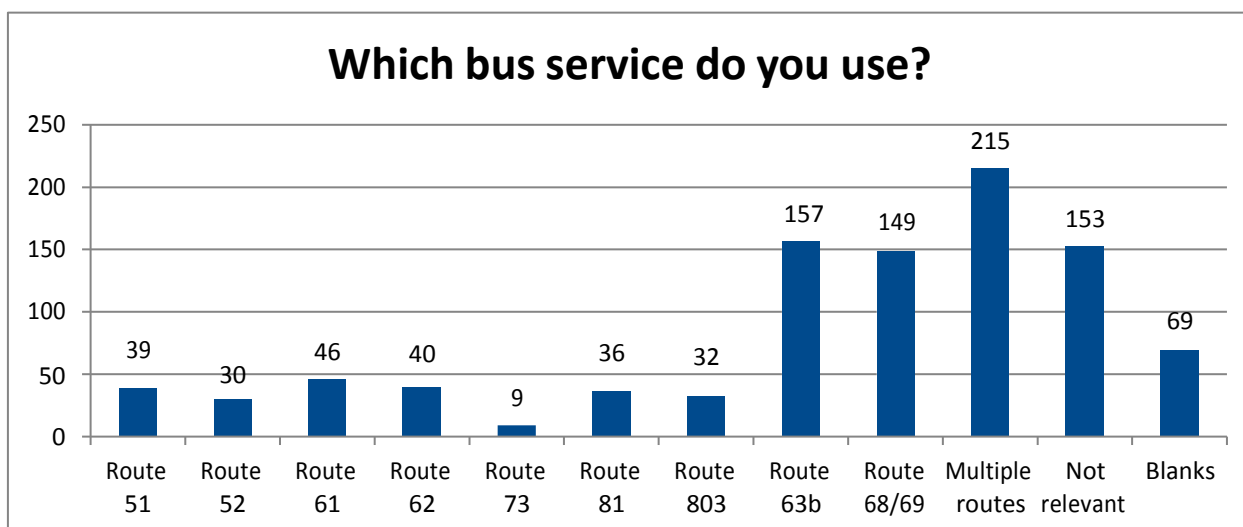
When asked whether respondents agreed with the methods used to identify the routes under consideration 31 % responded 'no' and 35% stated 'don't know'. 25% responded 'yes' to this question.

If no why...

Issues with accessibility	64
Inconvenient to remove services	10
Isolation issues for bus users	14
Not considered other ways to make savings	5
Not enough consideration of alternative travel	20
Not taking into account individual needs	14
Not taking into account vulnerable residents	27
Other	56
No response	93

Of those who responded, 30% of residents who responded 'no' did not give a reason for their response.

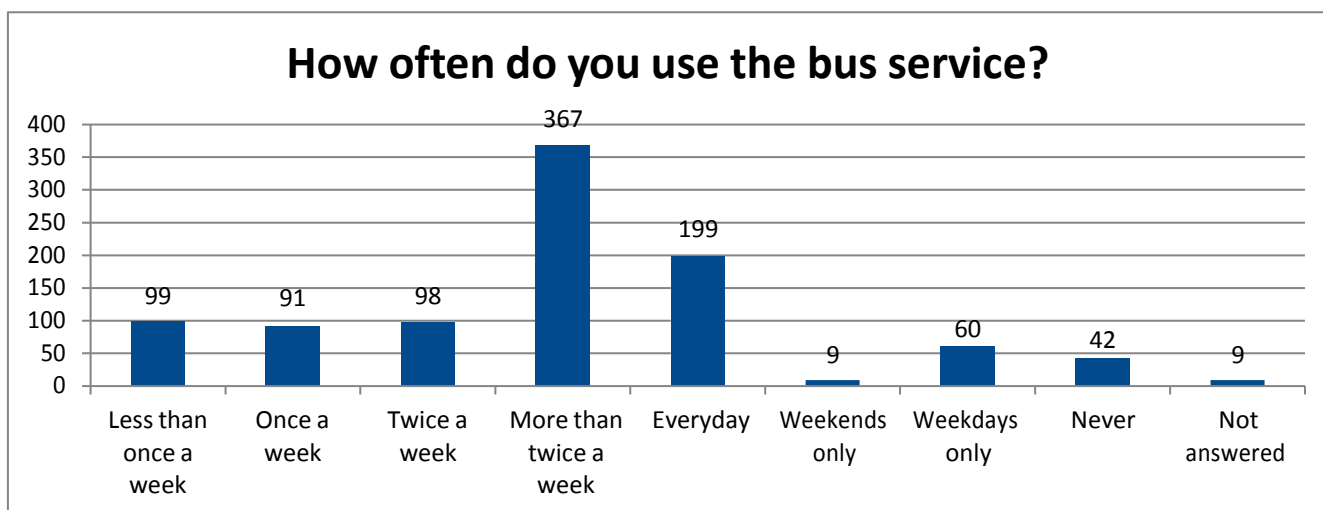
7.3.3 Which bus service do you use?



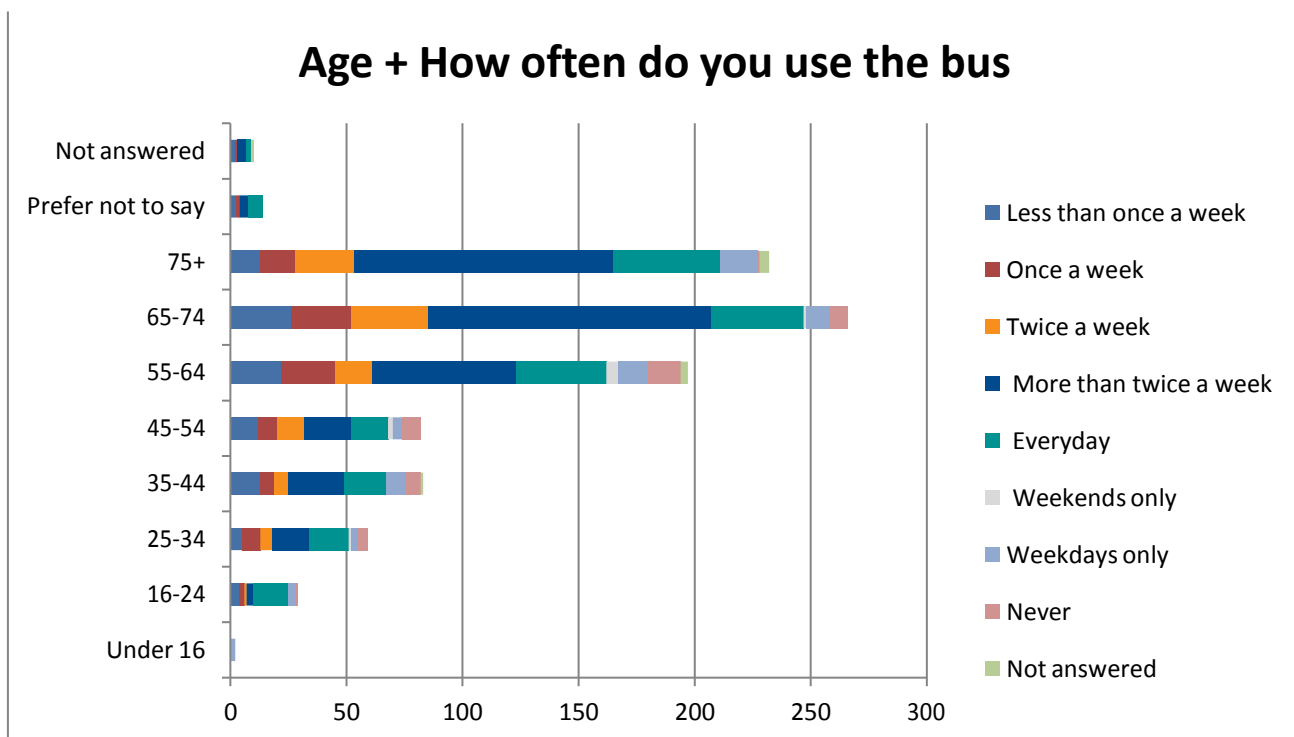
Respondents were asked which services were used, including use of multiple routes. Some responses included routes not currently part of the subsidised bus consultation so these are listed as not relevant.

Of the responses, the routes most commonly used were 63b Porthcawl to Bridgend via Nottage (17%) and 68/69 Cefn Glas Circular (15%).

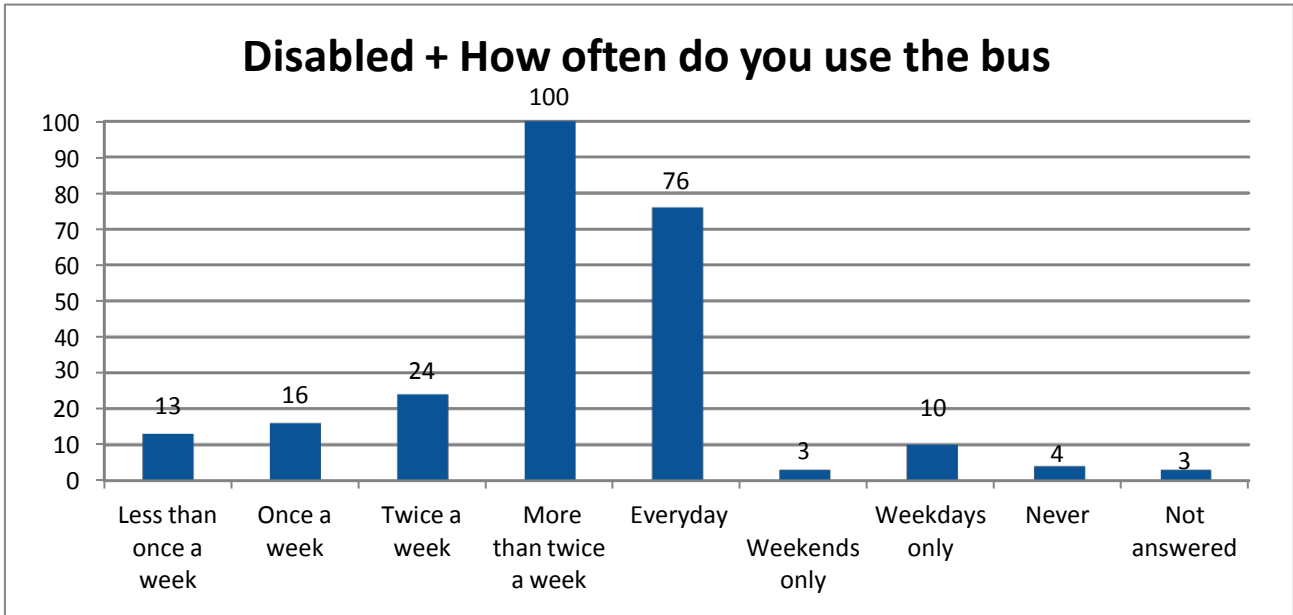
7.3.4 How often do you use the bus service(s)



Responses indicate that 38% of responders use the bus more than twice a week, with 20% of all responders using the bus every day.

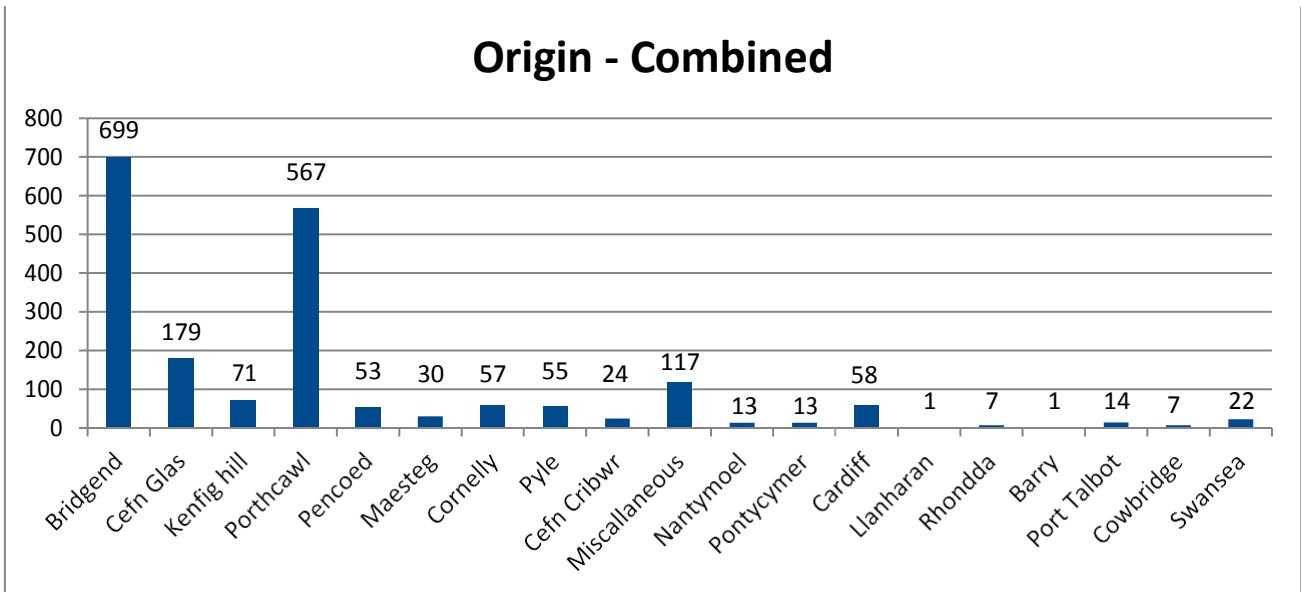


When looking at age and how often the bus was used, 43% of respondents were aged over 55 and used the bus more than twice a week or every day. 13% of respondents aged over 55 used the bus daily.



Of the 249 people that told us that they had a disability 50% told us that they used the bus twice a week or more in addition to 31% of disabled people using the bus daily. 81% of disabled people therefore told us that they use the bus between twice weekly and every day.

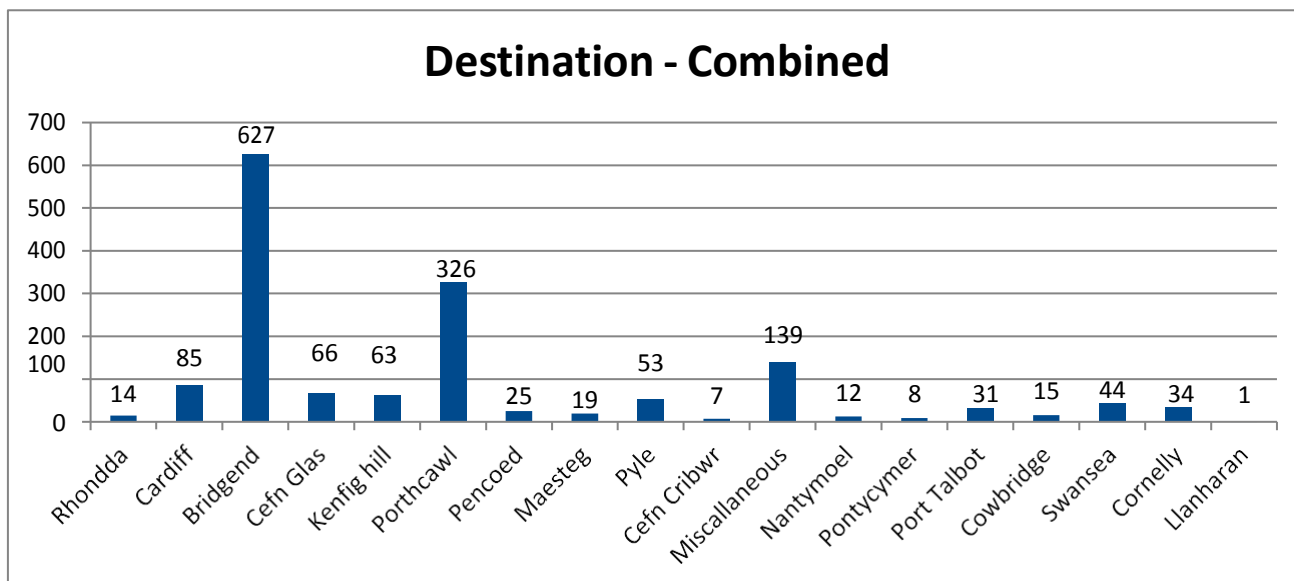
7.3.5 Where do you travel from:



The most common routes to travel from were:

- Bridgend (35%)
- Porthcawl (29%)
- Cefn Glas (9%)

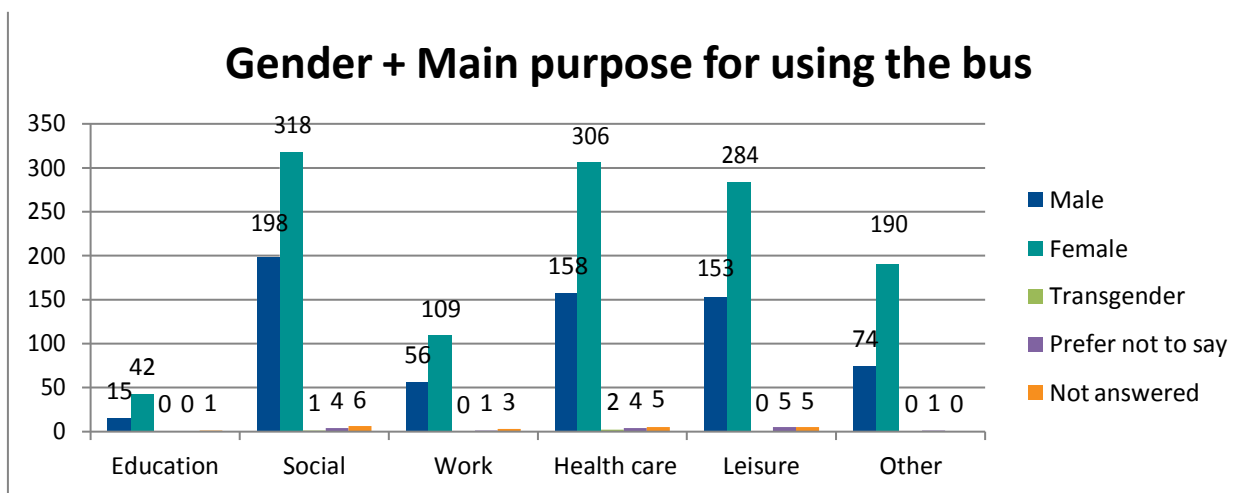
7.3.6 Where do you travel to:



The most common routes to travel to were:

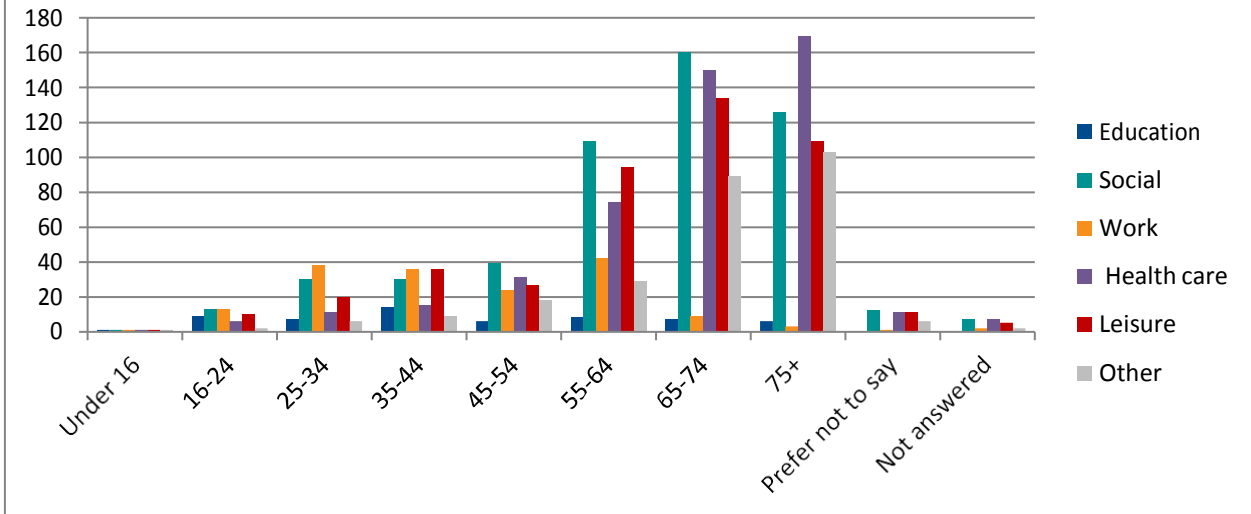
- Bridgend (38%)
- Porthcawl (21%)
- Cardiff (8%)
- Cefn Glas (4%)

7.3.7 Reasons for travel using the bus



The above chart demonstrates that both males and females used the bus for social activities, followed by healthcare followed by leisure. Of the two transgender residents bus use was for healthcare as well as social activities. Responders were able to give multiple responses to this question.

Age + Main purpose for using the bus



The age group 16-24 used the bus for social activities and work equally followed by leisure.

The age group 25-34 used the bus for work, followed by social activities then leisure.

The age group 35-44 used the bus for work and leisure equally followed by social activities.

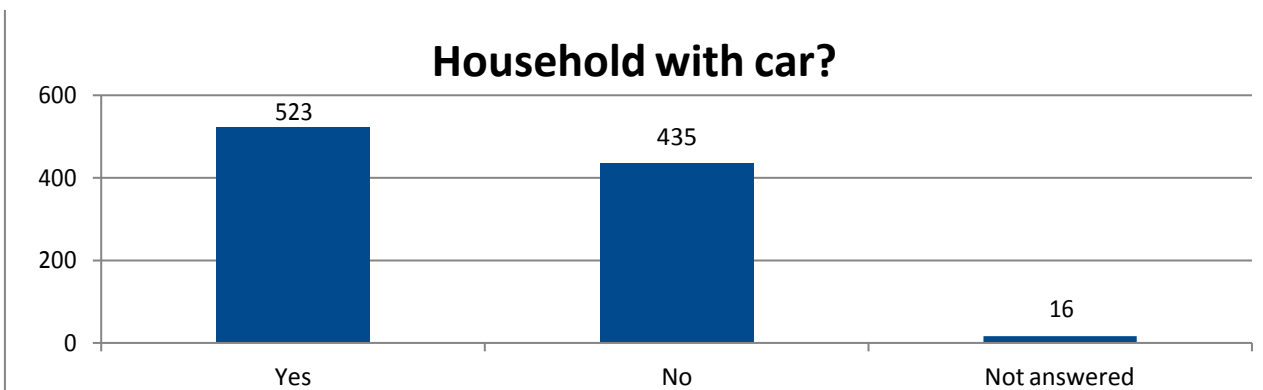
The age group 45-54 used the bus for social activities followed by healthcare then leisure.

The age group 55-65 used the bus for social activities, followed by leisure then healthcare.

The age group 65-74 used the bus for social activities, followed by healthcare then leisure.

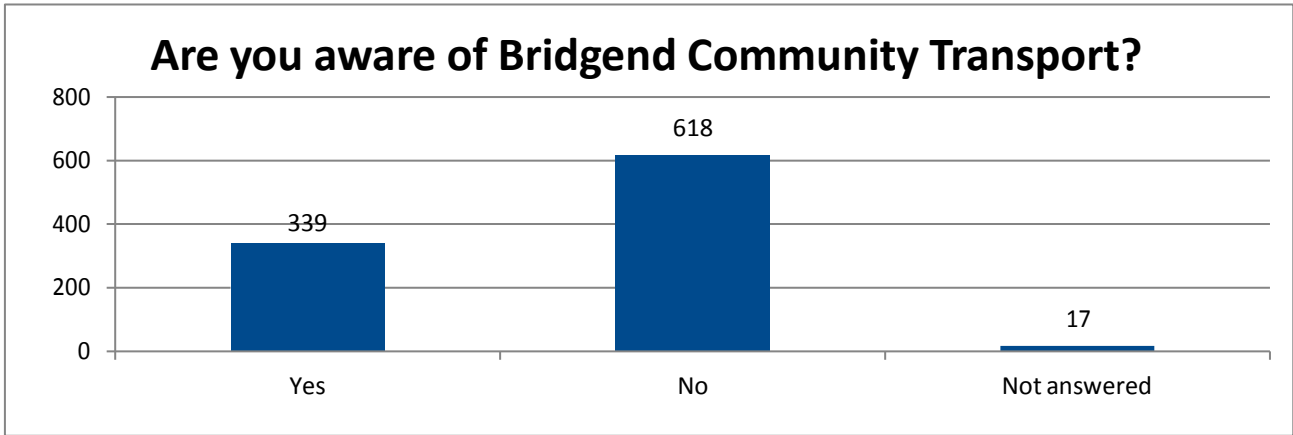
The age group 75+ used the bus for healthcare, followed by social activities then leisure.

7.3.8 Do you live in a household with a car?



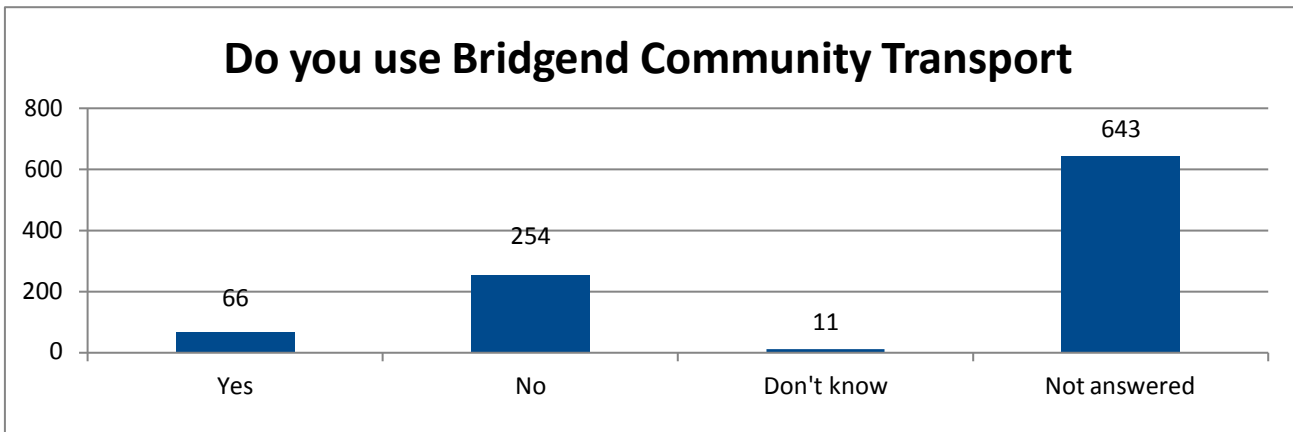
54% of respondents informed us that they lived in a household with a car, 45% told us that they lived in a household without a car, and 1% did not respond to this question.

7.3.9 Are you aware of Bridgend Community Transport?

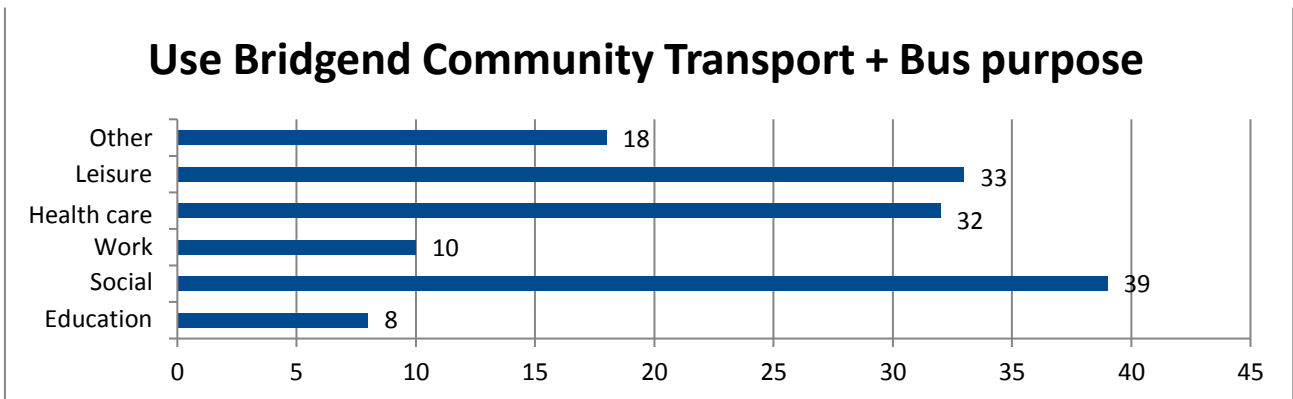


35% of respondents told us that they were aware of Bridgend Community Transport services.

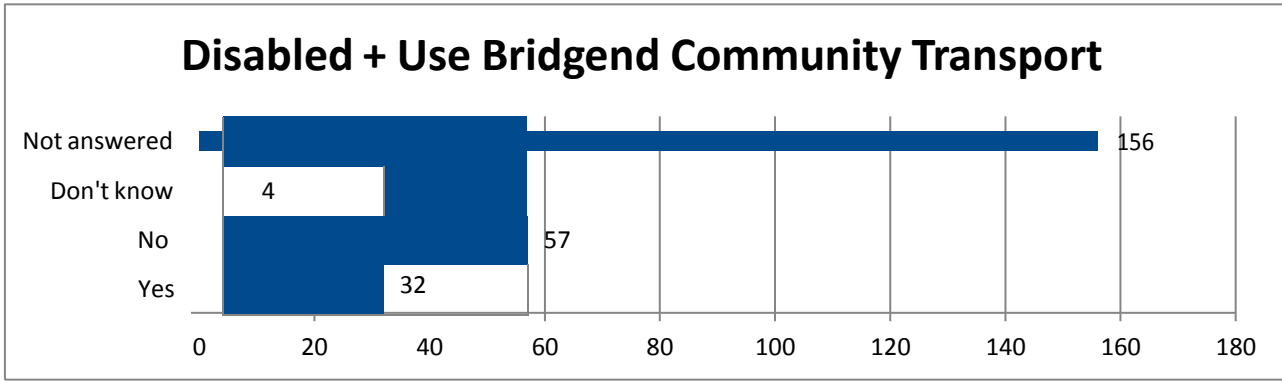
7.3.10 If you answered 'yes' do you use Bridgend Community Transport services



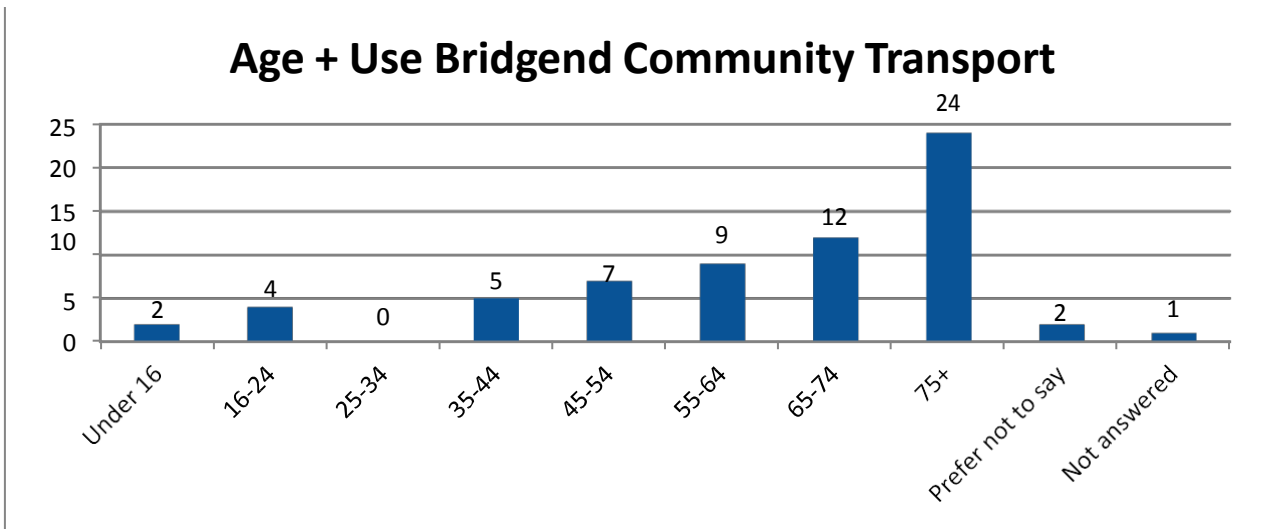
Of those who responded that they were aware of Bridgend Community Transport only 19% used the transport. Reasons for why people did not use community transport was not requested as part of the consultation.



Respondents were able to select multiple options to this question. Of the 66 people who said that they used community transport the most popular reasons for using the transport was social activities (28%), followed by leisure (24%) and then healthcare (23%).



A total of 66 people told us that they used community transport. 32 people who described themselves as disabled used Bridgend Community Transport. Therefore 48% of community transport users had described themselves as having one or more disability.



45 people over the age of 55 used Bridgend Community Transport. The most significant proportion of residents who responded to this question were aged over 75 years. This age group represents 36% of those using community transport. The age group 65-74 represents a further 18% of the community transport users.

7.4 Qualitative responses

Each response received from all methods across the survey were read and subsequently themed. Each theme was then measured to provide a quantitative figure to the qualitative responses.

7.4.1 Do you think there are any additional factors to be considered when deciding which routes should be supported?

Accessibility/ access to essential services	136
Alternative service/ review routes	13
Combine routes/ review frequency of routes	56
Demand/size of buses/ provide smaller buses	36

Concern for elderly/disabled residents	193
Environmental issues	8
Inconvenience of removing buses	26
Individual needs of users	22
Isolation issues/ alternative transport access issues	91
No cuts to services at all	20
Pay for bus passes	14
Other	94
Blanks	195

The most common comments were around concern for elderly or disabled residents, followed by issues of accessibility and the issues around isolation or no access to transport.

7.4.2 Please use this space to provide any further comments on this proposal

Accessibility / access to essential services	47
Alternative services/expense of alternatives	16
Combine services/less frequent buses	50
Demand of buses	49
Concern for elderly/disabled residents	61
Environmental issues	5
Inconvenience of removing buses	22
Isolation issues	20
No cuts to service at all	31
Pay for bus passes	21
Size of buses/ provide smaller buses	11
Other	48
Blanks	406

The most common themes were: concern for elderly or disabled residents; consideration being given to combining services or running less services; and that we should review demand for services before making decisions.

7.4.3 Social media comments

Additional responses from social media comments (126) received during the survey's live period were also themed. Of those, 16 were not relevant and as such, were removed from the table below:

BCBC should become a private company	2
Scrap or reduce bus passes	3
Change bus routes	6
Concern for elderly/disabled residents	14
Council building repairs are too costly/ complaints	13
Cut/reduce buses	6
Cut Councillors/senior staff	7
Cut Welsh Government	1
Late buses/ buses do not arrive on time	1
Increase public services rather than reduce or remove	2
Lower parking prices	1
Bridgend businesses will suffer	3
Service is essential to bus users	14
Provide smaller buses	3
Taxes are already too high	7
Keep route 62	3
Keep route 63B	5
Keep route 68/69	1
Keep route 81	1
Keep route 52	2
Reduce route 63	2
Reduce route 64	1
Reduce route 68/69	2

The most significant comments were concern for elderly or disabled residents and statements that the service was essential followed by comments about the building repairs to the council and budget for this.

7.4.4 Emails and letter comments

Additional responses received by letter (one) and email (32) during the live period have also been themed. These are detailed in the table below:

Accessibility/ access to essential services	9
Alternative service/routes	2
Combine routes/ review frequency	6
Demand/smaller size buses	1
Concern for elderly/disabled residents	8
Environmental issues	1
Inconvenience of removing buses	9
Individual needs	3
Isolation/ lack of alternative transport issues	10
No cuts to services at all	9
Pay for bus passes	1
Expense of alternative travel (too high)	2
Requested further information	9
Complaint about equalities monitoring	1

The most significant comments were isolation and access to transport issues, accessibility and inconvenience.

7.4.5 Other themes

As mentioned in section four two councillor-led public events took place to raise awareness of the consultation. Attendees were encouraged to complete the survey to ensure their views were formally recorded as part of the consultation process. Councillors fed back from these events, and noted that in general, attendees at these events did not agree with the proposals and believed that buses should not be reduced or removed.

As referenced in section four a petition entitled 'Save our Buses' from the Porthcawl area was received with 180 signatures during the live period of the consultation. The petition made reference to the 61 and 63B services which cover the Nottage, Rest Bay and Suffolk Place areas of Porthcawl. The general themes of the petition were that residents did not agree with the proposals within the consultation and did not want services to be removed. There was concern for elderly residents living in the areas serviced by these buses, who could become housebound by the removal of services. There was also concern in relation to the cost of taxis for access to essential services.

7.5 Communications regarding the consultation

Would you like to be emailed once the consultation report is available?

Yes	429	47%
No	485	53%

47% of responders told us that they would like to receive information on the consultation once the report is available.

8. Conclusion

A response rate of 974 to the survey questions is robust and is subject to a maximum standard error of ± 3.13 per cent at the 95 per cent confidence level on an observed statistic of 50 per cent. Thus, we can be 95 per cent confident that responses are representative of those that would be given by the total adult population, if a census had been conducted, to within ± 3.13 per cent of the percentages reported. This means that if the total adult population of Bridgend County Borough had taken part in the survey and a statistic of 50 per cent was observed, we can be 95 per cent confident that the actual figure lies between 36 per cent and 46 per cent.

8.1 Equality Impact Assessment

The EIA screening informed the consultation that the potential groups that could be disproportionately affected by the removal of the subsidised bus routes would be the elderly and disabled residents.

This document outlines the responses from residents aged 55 and over and those who described themselves as disabled. Including their reasons for using the bus and frequency of use.

8.2 Subsidised bus proposed saving

The majority of residents who responded to the consultation (89%) did not support the reduction in subsidised bus services in order to meet the budget reduction of £188,000 in 2018/19, as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.