

## **7. PUPILS' AND PARENTS' SURVEYS**

### **Overview of key issues from this chapter**

The key issues raised by respondents in 1394 pupil surveys and 293 parents' surveys were;

- Traffic congestion, especially outside the school gates
- Parking outside school gates
- The provision of footpaths, especially in rural areas and alongside busy roads
- The state and general repair of footpaths
- Crossing roads safely
- The provision of crossing points and patrols to assist in the crossing of roads, especially busy routes close to schools and in both urban and rural areas
- Safety concerns while walking – as a result of traffic concerns and worries about personal security in some areas
- The provision of cycle lanes and associated facilities
- Arrangements for dropping off and collecting children from school
- The availability of seatbelts on school buses
- The enforcement of wearing of seatbelts on school buses
- Standing on school buses
- Issues of overcrowding on school buses, mainly provided by Translink
- The behaviour of other young people, especially onboard buses and while walking or cycling to and from school

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter reports on the findings from the questionnaire surveys of pupils and parents conducted as part of this study. The pupil survey data is representative of the Northern Ireland school population and reflects the structure of the education sector by school management type. This survey was undertaken in 21 schools across Northern Ireland using pupil self-completion questionnaires in class under teacher supervision. Schools were selected using data obtained from the Department of Education (DE) database to ensure proportional representation from all school levels, management types, locations and age groups. Completions were obtained from primary, preparatory, secondary, grammar and special schools in the State Controlled, Integrated and Catholic maintained sectors. The questionnaires covered all aspects of travel to and from school, namely journeys by car, bus, train, taxi, walking and cycling. Pupils were also asked to complete the sections relevant to their own individual trips including why they use the mode they do, why they choose not to use certain modes, their experiences (both positive and negative) of journeys to school and thoughts and feelings about ways in which the experience may be improved or made safer. Information from the distribution of returns from the pupils' surveys is detailed in the annex. A parallel survey of parents was also carried out to obtain information on their perceptions of their children's travel to and from school. This questionnaire also asked for information on all aspects of travel to and from school, namely journeys by car, bus, train, taxi, walking and cycling from a parental point of view and parents were asked to complete the survey for one of their children only.

The questionnaires developed consisted of three versions (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3). For the school pupils, two versions were distributed for the older children and the one for younger pupils as well as those from the special education sector. The shorter, simpler survey was distributed to children in primary and preparatory schools from four to eight years of age (school years one to four) and to all pupils in the special schools. The same basic information was contained in both versions, but it was felt that the younger children would have difficulty completing the full questionnaire and providing all the information required.

Of those pupils who participated, the vast majority were of secondary school age, ranging from 11 to 15 years old (56.14%). A small proportion of younger children took part, with few aged 5 to 6 years old (just 5.92% of the total), but with an increasing proportion of pupils from the older primary school age groups (33.94% aged from 7 to 10 years). Pupils of Sixth form age account for a smaller proportion of the school population, this is represented in the returns (3.91% of 16 and 17 year olds with no 18 year olds represented). Many of the older pupils did not participate due to other classes and examinations (GCSE, A/S and A-level). The total numbers and proportions of each age group that took part are detailed in the annex of this report.

Completions by parents varied from small numbers (for example one parent of a 5 year old pupil) to a larger representation from parents of year 11 (15 year old) pupils (73 returns). The full breakdown of parental responses relating to children in the

various school year groups is also given in the annex. The representation from all the different school sectors is illustrated in the annex section. This is broadly representative of the school population in Northern Ireland, as detailed in the DE (NI) census data for 2004-2005. By way of a comparison, the DE census also shows 52% of the school population in the primary education sector (including preparatory schools) with 44% of pupil responses and 51.2% of parental responses represented in this sector from the survey. The DE census shows 46% of the school population in the post primary (secondary and grammar schools) sector, while the pupil representation for this survey is 52.4% and the parental representation is 48.8%. A total of 3.6% of the pupil respondents are drawn from the special education sector, while the representation in the DE census is 2%. It was not possible to include parents in the survey with children from the special school sector. In terms of gender representation, the DE census shows a male/female split of 50.2% to 49.8% across all school sectors. This is broadly represented by the proportion of survey completions by both male and female pupils in the questionnaire survey, although with marginally more male pupil responses and marginally more responses by the parents of female pupils. Within the parameters of both the parental and pupil surveys, the responses are broadly representative of the school sectors and gender makeup of the pupil population in Northern Ireland.

## 7.2 Travelling to and from school by car

A total of 66.2% of pupils who completed the survey use the car to travel to and/or from school every day at some time during the normal school week. The majority of these pupils use the car for journeys to and from school (25.4%) while a similar proportion (24.6%) only use the car to go to school in the mornings. This, it was stated, is because many pupils are often 'dropped off' by parents on their way to work and make other arrangements for the homeward journey. This, it seems is mainly because those parents are at work and cannot collect them after school. 67.2% of parents surveyed stated that they take their children both to and from school by car, as shown in table 7.1. Just over one quarter (25.5% of pupils and 27.6% of parents) stated that the private car is never used for journeys to and/or from school.

**Table 7.1 Use of car**

	Number recorded by pupil surveys	Percent of total pupil respondents	Number recorded by parental surveys	Percent of total parent respondents
to school only	343	24.6%	15	5.2%
from school only	226	16.2%	0	0.0%
to and from school	354	25.4%	197	67.2%
never	355	25.5%	81	27.6%
no response	116	8.3%	0	0.0%

From the information contained in table 7.2 below it is clear that 66.2% of those who hold bus passes never use the car, with 22.9% using the car for both the journeys to and from school, despite holding a sessional pass for school bus transport.

**Table 7.2 Car use by bus pass holders**

bus pass?	n=923	when use car			
		to school only	from school only	to and from school	never
yes		6.1%	4.8%	22.9%	66.2%
no		17.4%		54.2%	28.4%

When disaggregated by pupil age groups, as shown in table 7.3, it is clear that all children in the lower age groups (5 to 7 years of age) are more likely travel to and from school by car. As pupil age increases, the level of car use decreases. This is unsurprising, although the proportion of pupils who travel both to and/or from school by car is largely more than half of the total respondents.

**Table 7.3 Use of car by age**

		when use car (n=923 responses)			
		to school only	from school only	to and from school	never
age	5 - 7 (n=220)	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
	8 (n=39)	0.0%	3.7%	59.3%	37.0%
	9 (n=125)	0.0%	.8%	64.8%	34.4%
	10 (n=84)	0.0%	2.4%	67.9%	29.8%
	11 (n=85)	0.0%	0.0%	63.5%	36.5%
	12 (n=93)	26.0%	0.0%	34.2%	39.7%
	13 (n=92)	25.9%	7.1%	23.2%	43.8%
	14 (n=86)	22.6%	1.6%	19.4%	56.5%
	15 (n=79)	14.7%	0.0%	43.1%	42.2%
	16 (n=20)	15.0%	0.0%	15.0%	70.0%
	17 (n=0)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

The only exceptions can be seen amongst 14 year olds, 16 year olds and 17 year olds. All 17 year olds surveyed stated that they never use the car to make journeys to and/or from school. The figures, nonetheless, show that the vast majority of pupils across the majority of age ranges use the private car to make some, if not all, journeys to and/or from school on a regular basis. The three 17 year olds who participated in the survey and who never use the car came from Banbridge Academy.

7% more girls than boys never use the car. The proportion of both girls and boys who travel both to and from school by car is very similar (40.1% of girls and 44.2% of boys). This points towards little difference in the travel patterns of boys and girls who get a lift by private car to and/or from school.

**Table 7.4 Use of car by gender**

		when use car (n=923 responses)			
		to school only	from school only	to and from school	never
gender	Girl (n=439)	12.9%	0.3%	40.1%	46.7%
	Boy (n=484)	13.2%	2.9%	44.2%	39.7%

With regard to reasons for not using the car, the majority of all pupils stated that this was because they don't want to (57.0%) with 30% stating there is no car in their household. This is reflected by the parental responses, where 75.3% stated they do not take their children to school in the car because they don't want to and 19.8% recording that they have no car available. Fewer respondents amongst both pupils and parents stated that the reasons for not using the car are down to parental choice, indicating, perhaps that many parents would prefer to take their children by car, but respect their wishes by ensuring they get to and from school by another mode (tables 7.5 and 7.6 below).

**Table 7.5 Reasons stated by pupils for not using the car**

	n=355	Percent of those who don't use car	Percent of total respondents
don't want to	200	57.0%	14.3%
parents don't want me to	46	13.0%	3.3%
don't have a car	109	30.0%	6.5%

**Table 7.6 Reasons stated by parents for not using the car**

	n=81	Percent of those who don't use car	Percent of total respondents
He/she doesn't want to	61	75.3%	20.8%
I don't want him/her to	4	4.9%	1.7%
don't have a car	16	19.8%	5.5%

The age breakdown in table 7.7 shows that a majority of pupils of secondary/grammar school age (12 year upwards) do not use the car because their parents don't want them to. This is much less a factor amongst primary school children, of whom the majority stated that it is as a result of their choice. This is also indicative of the fact that parents feel that many older children are too old to be chauffeured to and from school by them in a car and that many children of a younger age consider it 'uncool' to be escorted by car to and from the school gates.

**Table 7.7 Reasons for not using the car by age**

		why never use car (n=355 responses)		
		don't want to	parents don't want me to	don't have a car
age	5 (n=10)	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	6 (n=22)	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	7 (n=24)	5.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	8 (n=17)	5.0%	0.0%	0.8%
	9 (n=22)	11.5%	2.2%	0.0%
	10 (n=30)	8.5%	0.0%	4.1%
	11 (n=36)	10.5%	6.5%	9.9%
	12 (n=29)	3.5%	10.9%	14.0%
	13 (n=34)	11.5%	13.0%	20.7%
	14 (n=54)	22.5%	34.8%	32.2%
	15 (n=60)	11.0%	30.4%	8.3%
	16 (n=14)	2.0%	0.0%	8.3%
	17 (n=3)	0.0%	2.2%	1.7%

The majority of both pupils and parents stated that the main reason for using the car is simply because the pupils want to, as shown in table 7.8. It was claimed by both pupils and parents that public transport is not suitable and that using the car is the fastest way possible. Safety and comfort were only cited by a small number of pupils as their reasons for using the car and bad weather was a consideration among just 0.6% of pupil respondents. Parental choice was considered one of the key reasons for the mode choice by only 3.5% of pupils and parents did not cite this as an explanation for choosing the car over other modes.

**Table 7.8 Reasons for using the car**

	Number recorded by pupil surveys (n=462)	Percent of pupils	Number recorded by parental surveys (n=212)	Percent of parents
want to	277	60.0%	197	92.9%
fast	66	14.3%	7	3.4%
bad weather	3	0.6%	0	0.0%
parents want me to	16	3.5%	0	0.0%
safest way	10	2.2%	0	0.0%
most comfortable way	13	2.8%	0	0.0%
no alternative	8	1.7%	0	0.0%
public transport not suitable	69	14.9%	8	3.7%

Non response – 932 pupils; 81 parents

The majority of those who responded stated that they feel happy about travelling to and from school by car. There was a proportion of just 2.9% of pupils who suggested they feel unhappy about this mode. Of those pupils who responded, 25.3% stated that travelling by car is 'ok' with 71.8% stating that they are happy with their journeys

by car. This is a fact reflected by the parental responses, where the majority (92.9%) stated they are happy with travelling by car.

**Table 7.9 Feel about travelling by car**

	Responses from pupils' surveys (n=479)	Percent of pupils	Responses from parental surveys (n=212)	Percent of parents
happy	344	71.8%	197	92.9%
ok	121	25.3%	15	7.1%
unhappy	14	2.9%	0	0.0%

Non response – 915 pupils, 81 parents

From the responses shown in table 7.10 below, it is evident that the vast majority (70.4%) of pupils have concerns about traffic levels and congestion while travelling to and from school by car. This fact is not reflected by the parental responses, of which only 7.3% stated they are unhappy about traffic and congestion. More parents (92.7%) said that they feel 'ok' about this.

**Table 7.10 Feel about traffic and congestion while travelling by car**

	Responses from pupils' surveys (n=923)	Percent of pupils	Responses from parental surveys (n=82)	Percent of parents
happy	56	6.1%	0	0.0%
ok	217	23.5%	76	92.7%
unhappy	650	70.4%	6	7.3%

No response – 471 pupils, 211 parents<sup>1</sup>

**Table 7.11 Feel about traffic and congestion while travelling by car by age**

		feel about traffic (n=923)		
		happy (n=56)	ok (n=217)	unhappy (n=650)
age	5 - 8	11.8%	41.2%	47.1%
	9	3.7%	18.3%	78.0%
	10	5.1%	27.1%	67.8%
	11	0.0%	31.3%	68.7%
	12	32.7%	13.5%	53.8%
	13	2.7%	32.4%	64.9%
	14	10.3%	32.8%	56.9%
	15	21.1%	17.1%	61.8%
	16	8.3%	33.3%	58.4%

Table 7.11 shows the proportion of those pupils who feel happy, 'ok' or unhappy about traffic and congestion while travelling by car by age group. As pupil age increases the level of dissatisfaction does so also, with many more secondary school pupils feeling unhappy than those from primary school age groups.

<sup>1</sup> Variation in non-response higher for explanations of car use, but non-response lower when pupils asked about their experiences of traffic and congestion

### 7.3 Travelling to and from school by bus

Just over half (53.5%) of pupil respondents use the bus to travel to and/or from school every day on a regular basis. The vast majority make journeys both to and from school by this mode (31.6%) while a significant proportion (17.9%) use the bus for the homeward journey only. This broadly reflects the pattern of car use shown in table 7.9 for journeys to school, with many of the same pupils using the bus for the homeward leg of their daily journeys. Just 4% of all pupils surveyed stated that they use the bus in the mornings only. The parental responses indicate a differing pattern of bus use for school journeys, however. The majority (57.7%) stated that the bus is the mode of choice for the homeward journey only, with just 8.9% of parents stating that their children use the bus for both the forward and return trips. Those parents who stated that their children never use the bus accounted for 25.9% of the total respondents.

**Table 7.12 Use of bus**

	Number recorded by pupil surveys	Percent of pupils	Number recorded by parental surveys	Percent of parents
to school only	56	5.5%	0	0.0%
from school only	249	24.4%	169	62.4%
to and from school	440	43.1%	26	10.0%
never	277	27.0%	76	27.6%

No response – 372 pupils, 22 parents

100% of 5, 6 and 7 year olds never use the bus for school journeys. As age increases, bus usage tends to do so. The vast majority of pupils from primary school age groups do not, however, use the school bus, although a significant proportion of 11 year olds in their final year of primary or preparatory school do use the bus for both the outgoing and return journeys (48.6%). As pupils move into secondary and grammar school age groups, the proportion of those who use the bus to travel both to and from school is markedly on the increase. Rarely does the proportion of post primary age pupils who use the bus for journeys in the morning and the afternoon fall below 60% of the total. A 100% of 17 year olds in this survey were found to travel by bus for all trips. The full breakdown of bus usage by age group is given in table 7.13 below.

**Table 7.13 Use of bus by age**

		when use bus (n=745 responses)			
		to school only	from school only	to and from school	never
age	5 - 7 (n=0)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	8 (n=22)	4.5%	31.8%	0.0%	63.6%
	9 (n=36)	0.9%	49.1%	0.0%	50.0%
	10 (n=31)	2.8%	47.9%	1.4%	47.9%
	11 (n=47)	0.9%	38.3%	48.6%	12.1%
	12 (n=109)	0.0%	7.1%	71.7%	20.2%
	13 (n=147)	2.7%	6.8%	60.5%	29.9%
	14 (n=189)	0.0%	12.9%	60.7%	26.4%
	15 (n=121)	0.0%	14.9%	53.7%	31.4%
	16 (n=40)	0.0%	4.7%	86.0%	7.0%
	17 (n=3)	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%

There are virtually no differences in the level of bus usage between male and female pupils. Just under half of all girls and boys use the bus for journeys to and from school as shown in table 7.14 below.

**Table 7.14 Use of bus by gender**

		when use bus (n=745 responses)			
		to school only	from school only	to and from school	never
gender	Girl (n=360)	0.2%	22.4%	45.5%	31.8%
	Boy (n=385)	1.6%	21.2%	48.7%	28.2%
Total		1.0%	21.7%	47.3%	29.8%

Regarding the bus services used the majority of pupils use Translink (mainly Ulsterbus services). This usage is split between public scheduled stage carriage services and dedicated school buses. Many of the younger users of school buses stated that they use Ulsterbus school services, while an increasing proportion of older pupils stated that they use stage carriage Ulsterbus services. The proportions using Education and Library Board buses are much less and mainly accounted for trips in rural areas or special education transportation. 100% of pupils who completed surveys in the special education sector were drawn from the 9, 10 and 11 year old age group and use ELB or private coach company's buses for their journeys to and from school. These figures account for 100% of all 9 year olds (but it should be noted that this accounts for just 36 pupils) and 5.6% of all 11 year olds using private coaches or minibuses, 33.3% of all 10 year olds and 13% of all 11 year olds using ELB buses.

**Table 7.15 Bus services used by age group**

		bus service used (n=745)				
		Ulsterbus public stage carriage services (n=247)	Ulsterbus schools services (n=184)	Metro (Translink in Belfast) schools (n=84)	Education and Library Board buses (n=130)	Other (private) (n=100)
age	8 (n=22)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
	9 (n=36)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	10 (n=31)	0.0%	66.7%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%
	11 (n=47)	16.7%	53.7%	7.4%	13.0%	5.6%
	12 (n=109)	14.1%	50.0%	20.5%	0.0%	15.4%
	13 (n=147)	60.4%	27.4%	3.8%	5.7%	2.8%
	14 (n=189)	62.9%	27.2%	6.0%	3.3%	0.7%
	15 (n=121)	59.0%	27.7%	12.0%	0.0%	1.2%
	16 (n=40)	42.1%	52.6%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%
17 (n=3)	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	

Many pupils from schools in rural areas or who live in rural areas stated that they use private coach or minibus companies to make journeys to and/or from school in the qualitative sections of this research. Those who use other private operators account for 100 of the total pupil respondents, as shown in table 7.15. A smaller proportion of pupils from secondary schools in rural areas or who live in rural areas stated that they use ELB bus services for some, if not all, journeys. In terms of those pupils who use school bus transport, a total of 72% are entitled to bus passes (free transport provision). The majority of younger pupils do not receive free school bus transport, but the proportion increases throughout secondary and grammar school age groups, where around three quarters of all pupils hold a Translink bus pass. The total number of bus pass holders in the survey sample is 745 as shown in table 7.16 below.

**Table 7.16 Bus pass holders by age group**

		bus pass holders (n=745 responses)
		yes
age	8 (n=22)	3.7%
	9 (n=36)	4.0%
	10 (n=31)	6.9%
	11 (n=47)	58.1%
	12 (n=109)	70.3%
	13 (n=147)	73.0%
	14 (n=189)	72.3%
	15 (n=121)	75.4%
	16 (n=40)	77.3%
17 (n=3)	100.0%	

The vast majority of pupils who don't use the bus stated that this is because they don't want to (59.6%). Many also recorded the fact that there is no bus stop or service close to where they live and they, therefore, have no choice to find an alternative mode of transport. Just a small proportion of pupils stated that the reasons for not using the bus centre on issues of safety (1.8%), overcrowding (0.7%), cost (0.4%) or reliability (9.7%). This could be as the result of perception, but is indicative of a lack of concern regarding travel by school bus and an acceptance of the current situation as school transport is frequently accepted as simply a means to an end. Moreover, parents also stated that the main reason for not using the bus is that their son/daughter simply does not want to.

**Table 7.17 Reasons stated by pupils for not using the bus**

	Frequency	Percent of those who don't use bus	Percent of total respondents
don't want to	165	59.6%	11.8%
don't like it	7	2.5%	0.5%
not reliable	27	9.7%	1.9%
too expensive	1	0.4%	0.1%
overcrowded	2	0.7%	0.2%
no bus stop	70	25.3%	5.0%
don't think its safe	5	1.8%	0.4%
Total	277	100%	19.9%

Amongst parents there is less concern about bus reliability. Just 10.5% of parent respondents stated that their children do not use the bus as a result of an absence of a service close to where they live. There was, unlike the pupils, no mention of safety concerns, overcrowding or cost as a factor influencing the decision of parents to prevent their children from travelling to and/or from school by bus. When compared with those who obtain free school transport and those who do not, the reasons for not using the bus are similarly evenly represented amongst both groups.

**Table 7.18 Reasons stated by parents for not using the bus**

	Frequency	Percent of those who don't use bus	Percent of total respondents
He/she doesn't want to	61	80.3%	20.8%
not reliable/no service	7	9.2%	2.4%
no bus stop	8	10.5%	2.7%
Total	293	100%	25.9%

Many older pupil respondents stated that they do not use the bus due to concerns about overcrowding. 50% of 13 year olds and 50% of 16 year olds cited this as the main reason they do not use the bus services provided. Unusually, concerns about the cost of travelling by bus are centered on 100% of all 10 year olds who use school buses.

**Table 7.19 Reasons for not using the bus by age**

		why never use bus (n=277)						
		don't want to	don't like it	not reliable	too expensive	over – crowding	no bus stop	don't think its safe
age	8 (n=13)	75.3%	24.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	9 (n=37)	30.9%	42.9%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	22.5%
	10 (n=38)	17.0%	28.6%	3.7%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	46.2%
	11 (n=34)	27.3%	24.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	24.4%	24.0%
	12 (n=40)	49.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	27.1%	23.1%
	13 (n=35)	10.3%	0.0%	25.9%	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	13.8%
	14 (n=36)	35.3%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	31.4%	0.0%
	15 (n=28)	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%	33.4%	0.0%
	16 (n=14)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%

The reliability of bus services was a key concern for 3.7% of 10 and 11 year olds, 25.9% of 13 year olds and 33.3% of both 14 and 15 year olds. Safety concerns are marginally more prevalent in the decisions of 9 and 10 year old pupils not to use the bus for their school trips, while such issues also feature amongst the younger age groups in secondary and grammar schools. This is indicative of the fact that buses are often quite intimidating for younger pupils at post primary schools with the presence of much older students. The overwhelming reason for using the bus was that pupils want to. This was a factor recognised by both the young people (13.8%) and parents (55.6%). More young people stated that there is a bus stop and a service running close to their house (22.2%) which added to the convenience and ease of use, attracting them to use the bus for school journeys. This was less of a factor amongst parents with just 7.5% of them citing this as one of the key considerations. The issue of free school bus transport was highlighted by 0.9% of pupils who acknowledged it as a reason they choose to use the bus. This was not a consideration amongst parents.

The availability of alternatives was called into question by 3.2% of pupils and 1.4% of parents who stated that the bus is used as a result of having no other option. The convenience of the bus service provided was further emphasised by 0.8% of pupils who stated this as a factor in their choosing the bus.

**Table 7.20 Reasons for using the bus**

	Number recorded by pupil surveys	Percent of total pupil respondents	Number recorded by parental surveys	Percent of total parent respondents
want to	193	29.4%	163	83.6%
parents want me to	87	13.3%	6	3.1%
free	13	2.0%	0	0.0%
bus stop close	309	47.1%	22	11.3%
no other option	45	6.9%	4	2.0%
convenient	9	1.3%	0	0.0%

No response – 738 pupils, 98 parents

Despite the fact that many pupils are unhappy with travelling by Translink bus services this does not prevent them from travelling by this mode (see table 7.20). Just 1.6% of all pupils who use the bus stated that they are happy with the experience, reinforced by the fact that just 7.5% of parents are happy about their children travelling by bus. 16.8% of pupils and an overwhelming 92.5% of parents recorded that they felt 'ok' about the experience of school bus travel, as shown in table 7.21 (broadly representative of those who use Translink services). Those who stated that they are 'happy' are largely drawn from ELB and private company users. The vast majority of users of Translink services stated that they are unhappy with the experience (71.7% of those who use Ulsterbus public stage carriage services, 94% of those who use Ulsterbus schools services and 77.8% of those who use Metro in Belfast). None of these respondents stated that they felt happy with the school transport provided by Translink.

**Table 7.21 Feel about travelling by bus**

	Responses from pupils' surveys (n=1115)	Percent of pupils	Responses from parental surveys (n=80)	Percent of parents
happy	18	1.6%	6	7.5%
ok	187	16.8%	74	92.5%
unhappy	910	81.6%	0	0.0%

No response – 279 pupils, 213 parents

**Table 7.22 Feel about travelling by bus by operator**

		feel about bus		
		happy	ok	unhappy
bus service used	Ulsterbus public (n=247)	0.0%	28.3%	71.7%
	Ulsterbus schools (n=184)	0.0%	6.0%	94.0%
	Metro (Belfast) (n=84)	0.0%	22.2%	77.8%
	ELB (n=130)	73.7%	26.3%	0.0%
	Private operators (n=100)	72.7%	27.3%	0.0%

No respondents stated that they were unhappy with the service experienced on Education and Library Board buses or those operated by private companies. The vast majority stated that they were, indeed, happy with these experiences (73.7% of ELB bus users and 72.7% of private coach or minibus users). The experience of travelling by taxi, although in small numbers, is a much more satisfactory one. Children in special education indicated those things they do and do not like about their journeys by ELB and private minibus. The responses are contained in table 7.23 and 7.24 below. A large proportion (26%) of children stated that they do not like the colour of the ELB yellow buses.

**Table 7.23 Positive elements of travel by school bus (ELB and Private Operators) – Special Education Pupils**

	Number of responses (Special School Pupils: n=50)	Percent
its free	10	20.0%
good fun	8	16.0%
good friends	27	54.0%
looking out the window	5	10.0%

**Table 7.24 Negative elements of travel by school bus (ELB and Private Operators) – Special Education Pupils**

	Number of responses (Special School Pupils: n=50)	Percent
Bad behaviour	9	18.0%
get up early, bus late	8	16.0%
noisy	7	14.0%
don't like escort/driver	3	6.0%
music too loud	1	2.0%
sometimes doesn't come	2	4.0%
long journey	7	14.0%
colour of bus - yellow	13	26.0%

An issue closely related to concerns expressed about travelling on school buses is the location pupils choose to sit and the reasons for sitting there. Table 7.25 below shows the proportions of pupils who stated they sit on their own, have to share a seat or are normally required to stand. As age increases, many pupils are stating that they have to share a seat or are standing on a regular basis. The overall proportion of those in lower secondary/grammar school who recorded that they have to stand frequently is not great, with just 24.1% of 11 year olds, 9% of 12 year olds, 11.3% of 13 year olds, and 17.2% of 14 year olds. No pupils over the age of 11 stated that they ever sit on their own or, indeed, get a seat of their own on a school bus.

The oldest groups of young people stated that standing is a regular feature of travel by bus for journeys to and/or from school. A total of 35.7% of 15 year olds stated this was the case for them on most occasions, while 40.5% of 16 year olds detailed standing as a frequent occurrence and half of all 17 year olds said that they often have to stand for lengthy parts of their journeys. It is evident that there is no scope for having a seat on the bus to one's self for many pupils – this is taken to refer to the standard bench type seats found on many Translink (mainly Ulsterbus vehicles) which sit two people (or three in the case of the use of the 3 for 2 rule). Standing is a regular and significant feature of school bus travel as highlighted by the proportions of pupils who do so, and is recognised as such by Translink. These figures do not refer to sitting or standing at all times, but instead are a record of sitting or standing on a bus on a regular basis.

**Table 7.25 Seating and standing on the bus by age group**

		seat or stand (n=745)		
		seat on own	have to share seat	stand
age	5 - 8 (n=22)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	9 (n=36)	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	10 (n=31)	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%
	11 (n=47)	0.0%	75.9%	24.1%
	12 (n=109)	0.0%	91.0%	9.0%
	13 (n=147)	0.0%	88.7%	11.3%
	14 (n=189)	0.0%	82.8%	17.2%
	15 (n=121)	0.0%	64.4%	35.7%
	16 (n=40)	0.0%	59.5%	40.5%
17 (n=3)	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	

**Table 7.26 Seating and standing on the bus by pass holder**

		seat or stand		
		seat on own	have to share seat	stand
bus pass?	yes	39.6%	43.3%	17.1%
	no	63.8%	36.3%	0.0%

The information contained in table 7.26 shows that, unusually 63.8% of those who do not hold bus passes regularly get a seat on their own, with just 39.6% of those who do have sessional tickets also getting seats alone. No bus users who do not hold passes stated that they regularly have to stand onboard a bus.

**Table 7.27 Seating and standing on the bus by operator**

		seat or stand		
		seat on own	have to share seat	stand
bus service used	Ulsterbus public (n=247)	0.0%	56.1%	43.9%
	Ulsterbus schools (n=184)	0.0%	78.3%	21.7%
	Metro in Belfast (n=84)	0.0%	67.4%	32.6%
	Education & Library Boards (n=130)	20.2%	79.8%	0.0%
	Other operators (n=100)	15.7%	84.3%	0.0%

When pupils are able to obtain seating on the bus, table 7.28 indicates their choice of seating by operator, and table 7.29 shows their seating preferences by age. Primary school aged children all recorded that they sit towards the front of the bus with their friends. Pupils in the post-primary school sector tend less so to sit towards the front of the vehicle and many stated they sit where they can (84.6% of 12 year olds, 79.2% of 13 year olds and 55% of 14 year olds).

**Table 7.28 Seating location on the bus by operator**

		sit where				
		front on own	front with friends	back on own	back with friends	wherever
bus service used	Ulsterbus public (n=247)	0.0%	22.7%	0.0%	53.8%	23.5%
	Ulsterbus schools (n=184)	0.0%	8.7%	0.0%	86.4%	4.9%
	Metro in Belfast (n=84)	0.0%	22.2%	0.0%	77.8%	0.0%
	Education & Library Boards (n=130)	0.0%	42.1%	0.0%	57.9%	0.0%
	Other operators (n=100)	0.0%	18.2%	0.0%	77.3%	4.5%

As age groups increase, pupils tend to move away from sitting at the front of the bus. A total of 67.5% of 15 year olds, 89.5% of 16 year olds and 66.7% of 17 year olds sit at the back of the bus with friends at all times when they are able to avail of a seat. No pupils sit on their own either at the front or the back of the school bus,

presumably as sitting with friends and the social aspect of bus travel are overriding factors in making the journey more pleasurable.

The reasons for sitting in these particular locations can be further identified by three broad categories – friends keeping seats, don't like behaviour at the back and that they don't want to stand. A majority of all pupils suggested that their seating location on the bus is due to the fact that friends keep them a space. Some of the younger secondary/grammar school pupils suggested that they do not like the behaviour at the back of the bus and stated this as the main reason for largely sitting wherever they can or towards the front with their friends.

**Table 7.29 Seating location on the bus by varying age groups**

		sit where (n=745)				
		front on own	front with friends	back on own	back with friends	wherever
age	5 - 8 (n=22)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	9 (n=36)	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	10 (n=31)	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	11 (n=47)	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	12 (n=109)	0.0%	9.0%	0.0%	6.4%	84.6%
	13 (n=147)	0.0%	11.3%	0.0%	9.4%	79.2%
	14 (n=189)	0.0%	22.5%	0.0%	18.5%	55.0%
	15 (n=121)	0.0%	15.7%	0.0%	67.5%	16.9%
	16 (n=40)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	89.5%	10.5%
	17 (n=3)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%

**Table 7.30 Reasons stated for this seating location on the bus by operator**

		why sit here		
		friend keeps seat	don't like behaviour at back	don't want to stand
bus service used	Ulsterbus public (n=247)	51.6%	26.5%	21.9%
	Ulsterbus schools (n=184)	86.4%	7.1%	6.5%
	Metro in Belfast (n=84)	77.8%	22.2%	0.0%
	Education & Library Boards (n=130)	57.9%	42.1%	0.0%
	Other operators (n=100)	78.2%	21.8%	0.0%

**Table 7.31 Reasons stated for this seating location on the bus by varying age groups**

		why sit here (n=745)		
		friend keeps seat	don't like behaviour at back	don't want to stand
age	5-10 (n=0)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	11 (n=47)	53.7%	24.1%	7.4%
	12 (n=109)	84.6%	9.0%	6.4%
	13 (n=147)	74.3%	11.4%	5.7%
	14 (n=189)	51.7%	19.2%	19.2%
	15 (n=121)	67.5%	15.7%	16.9%
	16 (n=40)	89.5%	10.5%	0.0%
	17 (n=3)	66.7%	0.0%	33.3%

#### 7.4 Travelling to and from school by train

Despite carrying out surveys in schools close to railway stations (namely Dalriada School, Ballymoney; Cambridge House Grammar School, Ballymena; St Anne's Primary School, Dunmurry; Fullerton House Preparatory School; Bangor Integrated Primary School; Glenlola Collegiate Prep; Oakgrove Integrated Primary School, L/Derry; for pupil surveys and Methodist College for parental surveys) no respondents stated that they use the train for trips to and/or from school at any time.

**Table 7.32 Use of train**

	Number recorded by pupil surveys	Percent of total pupil respondents	Number recorded by parental surveys	Percent of total parent respondents
never	933	100.0%	271	100.0%

No response – 461 pupils, 22 parents

Train use does not feature in the daily journeys of any pupils covered by this survey. Many did, however, indicate precise reasons for not using the train, with the vast majority (68.5%) stating that there is no train station or railway station close to their home. Many also indicated that they would not use the railway because they simply don't want to (23.5%), others highlighted cost as major factors in their choosing not to travel by train (8.0%). The pattern of responses amongst parents for their children not using the railway are broadly the same, with an overwhelming 94.8% stating there is no train station or service close to their house (see table 7.34 below).

**Table 7.33 Reasons stated by pupils for not using the train**

	Frequency	Percent of those who don't use train	Percent of total respondents
don't want to	219	23.5%	18.4%
too expensive	74	8.0%	0.6%
no train station	640	68.5%	48.0%
Total	933	100%	67.0%

**Table 7.34 Reasons stated by parents for not using the train**

	Frequency	Percent of those who don't use train	Percent of total respondents
He/she doesn't want to	6	2.2%	2.0%
too expensive	8	3.0%	2.7%
no train station	257	94.8%	87.7%
Total	271	100%	92.4%

## 7.5 Travelling to and from school by taxi

Just 26 pupils stated that they use taxis for journeys to and/or from school every day of the week, while no parents stated this is a mode that their children use. The 26 pupils account for just 1.9% of the total respondents, while 2.3% of those pupils use taxis for both the forward and return trips daily.

**Table 7.35 Use of taxi**

	Number recorded by pupil surveys	Percent of total pupil respondents	Number recorded by parental surveys	Percent of total parent respondents
to school only	4	0.5%	0	0.0%
to and from school	22	2.3%	0	0.0%
never	931	97.2%	271	100.0%

No response – 437 pupils, 22 parents

When disaggregated into age groups, no children of primary school age recorded use of a taxi. The youngest children recording use of a taxi were aged 12 and this accounted for trips to school in the mornings only. Overall, only 8.2% of 13, 14 and 16 year olds recorded trips by taxi in both the mornings and afternoons (table 7.37). Moreover, table 7.38 highlights the fact that no girls used taxis for any trips, while 0.2% of all boys who responded travel to school by taxi and 1.1% of boys use taxis for all school journeys.

**Table 7.37 Use of taxi by age**

		when use taxi (n=26 responses)		
		to school only	to and from school	never
age	12 (n=4)	0.9%	0.0%	99.1%
	13 (n=2)	0.0%	0.7%	99.3%
	14 (n=11)	0.0%	5.2%	94.8%
	16 (n=9)	0.0%	2.3%	97.7%

**Table 7.38 Use of taxi by gender**

		when use taxi (n=26 responses)		
		to school only	to and from school	never
gender	Girl (n=0)	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Boy (n=26)	0.2%	1.1%	98.7%

The main reasons amongst pupil respondents (table 7.39) for not using taxis were cited as no taxi service near or readily available to their place of residence (46.1%) with slightly less (40.6%) stating that they simply don't want to use a taxi. Just 9.5% cited cost as a factor. Parental responses (table 7.40), however, recorded that the main reason for not sending their children to and/or from school by taxi was that the pupils don't want to do so (82.7%). Other reasons included that there is no taxi service readily available in the locality of their home (11.8%).

**Table 7.39 Reasons stated by pupils for not using taxis**

	Frequency	Percent of those who don't use taxis	Percent of total respondents
don't want to	378	40.6%	23.8%
don't like it	8	0.9%	0.8%
not reliable	27	2.9%	3.8%
too expensive	88	9.5%	7.3%
no service near	430	46.1%	32.1%
Total	931	100%	67.8%

**Table 7.40 Reasons stated by parents for not using taxis**

	Frequency	Percent of those who don't use taxis	Percent of total respondents
He/she doesn't want to	224	82.7%	76.5%
not reliable	7	2.6%	2.4%
too expensive	8	3.0%	2.7%
no service near	32	11.8%	10.9%
Total	271	100%	92.5%

The overwhelming majority of younger primary school children stated that they would not use the taxi because they don't want to or that they don't like it. Many of the older pupil respondents stated there is no service near their home while a significant proportion of 12 to 14 year olds stated that they would have concerns about the costs of travelling by taxi and would, therefore, not do so by choice on a regular basis. Reliability was much less of a factor in influencing the choice of many pupils not to use taxis across all age groups.

**Table 7.41 Reasons for not using taxis by age**

		why never use taxi (n=931 responses)				
		don't want to	don't like it	not reliable	too expensive	no service near
age	5 - 7 (n=7)	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	8 (n=17)	90.5%	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	4.8%
	9 (n=115)	92.3%	1.7%	0.9%	0.9%	2.6%
	10 (n=94)	85.1%	1.4%	5.4%	2.7%	4.1%
	11 (n=100)	55.1%	0.0%	2.8%	0.9%	41.1%
	12 (n=150)	8.2%	0.0%	0.0%	19.4%	72.4%
	13 (n=101)	26.7%	0.0%	2.7%	15.3%	55.3%
	14 (n=190)	22.7%	2.0%	3.0%	15.3%	51.2%
	15 (n=111)	28.1%	0.0%	7.4%	5.8%	58.7%
	16 (n=43)	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	9.5%	88.1%
17 (n=3)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	

The reasons acknowledged for choosing to travel by taxis were only indicated by pupils, with safety and convenience featuring on the list of considerations leading to their choice of this mode. There were no other factors selected regarding the use of a taxi for trips to and from school

**Table 7.42 Reasons for using taxis**

	Number recorded by pupil surveys	Percent of total pupil respondents	Number recorded by parental surveys	Percent of total parent respondents
safest way	4	0.3%	0	0.0%
convenient	5	0.4%	0	0.0%

No response – 1385 pupils, 293 parents

## 7.6 Travelling to and from school on foot

The pattern of walking recorded by the survey responses shows that just 34.4% of pupils who responded walk for some or all journeys to and/or from school. Just 28% of parents stated that they allow their children to walk to and/or from school. Interestingly, no parents allow their children only to walk to school. It seems that the majority of those who do permit their children to walk do so for both the outgoing and return trips. The majority of pupils who stated that they walk do so both to and from school on a regular basis. Again, the increased proportion of pupils who walk home

from school reflects the fact that many parents take children to school by car on their way to work in the morning, and as they are working when the school day finishes, their children are required to make alternative arrangements for the homeward trip. 28% of pupil respondents walk to and/or from school five days a week. The majority walk both to and from school (18.2%) while small numbers only walk for the forward (morning) journey (4.7%) and more walk home in the afternoons (11.5%), partly for the reasons highlighted elsewhere in this chapter about getting lifts to school with parents on their way to work.

**Table 7.43 Walking**

	Number recorded by pupil surveys	Percent of total pupil respondents	Number recorded by parental surveys	Percent of total parent respondents
to school only	66	6.2%	0	0.0%
from school only	161	15.0%	15	5.6%
to and from school	254	23.7%	67	24.7%
never	591	55.1%	189	69.7%

No response – 322 pupils, 22 parents

Children from the youngest age groups do not tend to walk to and from school. This is, perhaps, unsurprising as many parents chose to escort their children (especially those of a young age) due to safety concerns and fears as well as the fact that many consider it irresponsible to let children of such a young age out on their own. Again, as pupil age increases through primary school, the proportion of those who walk does so also. Many primary school children live closer to their school and, therefore, from the age of 8 upwards, this pattern is reflected by the larger proportion of walkers.

As pupils enter secondary and grammar schools, distances tend to increase and the numbers of pupils walking decreases as alternative modes such as the school bus are required. Some pupils do still live close to the school and this is also indicated by the slight increases in walking to and from school from around 13 years of age. These increases are offset by the fact that older pupils, particularly those studying A-level courses travel further a field, again, to grammar schools, for which transport by bus is required. The differences in the proportion of male and female pupils who walk to and/or from school are marginal. This is shown in table 7.45 below with just over one quarter of both girls (27.8%) and boys (26.2%) making journeys both to and from school on foot.

**Table 7.44 Walking by age**

		when walk (n=481)			
		to school only	from school only	to and from school	never
age	5 - 7 (n=220)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	8 (n=22)	0.0%	0.0%	45.5%	54.5%
	9 (n=38)	0.0%	0.0%	38.5%	61.5%
	10 (n=49)	2.6%	0.0%	36.4%	61.0%
	11 (n=46)	0.0%	0.0%	19.8%	80.2%
	12 (n=49)	0.0%	19.2%	9.1%	71.7%
	13 (n=47)	0.0%	16.8%	20.1%	63.1%
	14 (n=33)	0.0%	16.3%	33.0%	50.7%
	15 (n=22)	0.0%	13.1%	29.5%	57.4%
	16 (n=24)	0.0%	6.7%	17.8%	75.6%
	17 (n=3)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

**Table 7.45 Walking by gender**

		when walk (n=481)			
		to school only	from school only	to and from school	never
gender	Girl (n=257)	0.5%	10.6%	27.8%	61.1%
	Boy (n=224)	0.0%	9.8%	26.2%	64.0%

The length of journeys on foot were cited by the majority of pupils who choose not to walk to and/or from school (88.8%) This was also cited by 100% of parents for not permitting their children to walk. Despite safety fears expressed by both parents and pupils in chapters 4 and 5 about walking to and from school, these do not feature prominently as reasons for preventing or prohibiting walking to and from school with just 4.4% stating that safety fears and 6.6% stating that having to cross busy and potentially dangerous roads were factors in influencing their decisions not to walk. It would seem that, despite these fears, many pupils continue to walk to and from school regularly.

Understandably, safety fears are the prevalent reason why the youngest respondents do not walk to and/or from school. This is shown in table 7.46 below. From the age of 8 upwards, the main reason for not walking were cited as the length of the journey and the fact that they live too far away resulting in a walk that would take too long. The majority of respondents from all age groups from age 8 upwards cited this as the reason they choose not to walk (table 7.49). Safety fears and the fact that many pupils have to cross busy roads were not major reasons among any age groups pointing towards their choice not to walk.

**Table 7.46 Reasons stated by pupils for not walking**

	Frequency	Percent of those who don't walk	Percent of total respondents
cross busy roads	39	6.6%	2.8%
don't like it	1	0.2%	0.1%
takes too long	525	88.8%	37.7%
safety fears	26	4.4%	1.8%
Total	591	100%	42.4%

**Table 7.47 Reasons stated by parents for not walking**

	Frequency	Percent of those who don't walk	Percent of total respondents
takes too long	189	100%	64.5%
Total	189	100%	64.5%

**Table 7.48 Reasons for not walking by bus pass holders**

		why never walk (n=591)			
		cross busy roads	don't like it	takes too long	Safety fears
bus pass?	yes	5.6%	0.0%	87.6%	6.7%
	no	7.8%	0.4%	91.4%	0.4%

This begs the question as to childrens' awareness of the safety factors of walking to and from school or whether they just prefer the comfort and convenience of alternative modes that do not require as much physical effort. It would seem that these concerns are not uppermost in many pupils' minds when deciding not to walk, rather the ability to do so in as short a time as possible makes the choice to travel by another mode for them.

**Table 7.49 Reasons for not walking by age**

		why never walk (n=591)			
		cross busy roads	don't like it	takes too long	safety fears
age	5 - 7 (n=11)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	8 (n=12)	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%	0.0%
	9 (n=50)	16.7%	0.0%	83.3%	0.0%
	10 (n=47)	4.3%	0.0%	93.6%	2.1%
	11 (n=76)	10.5%	1.2%	87.2%	1.2%
	12 (n=71)	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
	13 (n=99)	13.4%	0.0%	78.4%	8.2%
	14 (n=118)	0.0%	0.0%	85.3%	14.7%
	15 (n=70)	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
	16 (n=34)	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
17 (n=3)	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	

Amongst those pupils who walk and those parents who send or take their children to school on foot, a majority stated that this was because they want to (49.96% of pupils and 89.5% of parents), see table 7.50. On the back of this, just 0.5% of pupils suggested that they do so to keep healthy, followed by 20.1% of pupils who said that their friends walk with them and 3.6% of parents citing this as a reason encouraging them to let their children walk regularly. As seen elsewhere in this chapter, the main reason for not walking was due to the long distance to be covered. The opposite reason for walking, namely that there is just a short distance to be covered was acknowledged by only 2% of pupils and no parents. For those who have not choice, 27.5% of pupils stated that they felt this was the case.

**Table 7.50 Reasons for walking**

	Number recorded by pupil surveys	Percent of total pupil respondents	Number recorded by parental surveys	Percent of total parent respondents
want to	176	49.9%	68	89.5%
no choice	97	27.5%	6	6.9%
to be healthy	2	0.5%	0	0.0%
friends walk with me	71	20.1%	8	3.6%
short distance	7	2.0%	0	0.0%

No response – 1041 pupils, 211 parents

Despite the fact, shown in table 7.51 below, that many pupils (34.1%) and parents (36.2%) feel unhappy about busy traffic close to schools while walking to/from home or to/from a lift, the proportion of those pupils who travel to and from school by car and the proportion of parents who insist on escorting their children in this way is on the increase. Virtually no respondents to either questionnaire stated that they are happy about the levels of traffic

**Table 7.51 Feel about busy traffic close to schools while walking**

	Responses from pupils' surveys (n=727)	Percent of pupils	Responses from parental surveys (n=182)	Percent of parents
happy	4	0.6%	0	0.0%
ok	248	34.1%	76	41.8%
unhappy	475	65.3%	106	58.2%

No response – 667 pupils, 111 parents

**Table 7.52 Feel about parked cars near schools while walking**

	Responses from pupils' surveys (n=704)	Percent of pupils	Responses from parental surveys (n=82)	Percent of parents
happy	33	4.7%	0	%
ok	280	39.8%	74	90.2%
unhappy	391	55.5%	8	9.8%

No response – 690 pupils, 211 parents

The concerns expressed about parked cars are reinforced by concerns about crossing roads while walking, with 55.5% of pupils and 90.2% of parents stating that they are, indeed, unhappy with this. Small numbers of respondents to both surveys stated that they are happy about the crossing of busy and potentially dangerous roads, especially where there is no crossing patrol or pedestrian crossing facility.

**Table 7.53 Feel about crossing roads while walking**

	Responses from pupils' surveys (n=704)	Percent of pupils	Responses from parental surveys (n=82)	Percent of parents
happy	53	7.5%	8	9.8%
ok	277	39.5%	6	7.3%
unhappy	394	53.0%	68	82.9%

No response – 690 pupils, 211 parents

The availability and condition of many footpaths was an issue of concern expressed by respondents in chapters 4 and 5. The pupils and parents surveys highlight the fact that 25.8% of young people are unhappy and 45% of parents feel 'ok' about the state of and availability of safe footpaths for those who walk for some of or all of their journey to and/or from school. This is not to say that, in some areas respondents expressed the fact that they are happy with the condition and availability of such sidewalks (16% of pupils and 20.8% of parents).

**Table 7.48 Feel about number of footpaths available**

	Responses from pupils' surveys (n=1394)	Percent of pupils	Responses from parental surveys (n=293)	Percent of parents
happy	223	16.0%	61	20.8%
ok	122	8.8%	132	45.0%
unhappy	360	25.8%	0	0.0%
no response	689	49.4%	100	34.1%

## 7.7 The impact of traffic movement on different aspects of the street environment

The movement of traffic when congestion is not an issue was also expressed as a concern – relating to the noise and speed of vehicles in many areas. Only pupils responded to the questions on traffic speed and traffic noise, as shown in tables 7.54 and 7.55 below. The majority of those who responded stated that they feel ‘ok’ about traffic noise and that they feel unhappy about traffic speeds. There is less concern, therefore about the noise of traffic than the speed of vehicles. A very small proportion of pupils stated that they feel happy or that they don’t worry about traffic speeds. While small numbers of the total pupil respondents stated they are unhappy or feel ‘ok’ about traffic noise an even smaller proportion stated that they are happy with traffic noise. The lack of overall response to the question on traffic noise suggests a level of indifference towards this issue, while just under half of the respondents seem to show a similar indifference to the issue of traffic speeds close to schools, despite the concerns raised in chapters 4 and 5.

**Table 7.54 Feel about traffic noise while walking**

	Responses from pupils' surveys (n=606)	Percent of pupils
happy	112	18.5%
ok	262	43.2%
unhappy	232	38.3%

No response – 788 pupils, 293 parents

**Table 7.55 Feel about traffic speeds while walking**

	Responses from pupils' surveys (n=764)	Percent of pupils
happy	101	13.2%
ok	255	33.4%
unhappy	408	53.4%

No response – 630 pupils, 293 parents

The loading and unloading of trucks was highlighted as an issue that may make children concerned or may even scare some smaller children while walking close to school or enroute to or from school. Just 14.2% indicated this was not an issue of worry for them, while 42.2% of respondents suggested that they are unhappy with the activity. Parents did not respond to this question, but more than half of all pupils had thoughts and feelings about this issue. The fact that 43.6% of pupils stated that they feel ‘ok’ suggests that there is a level of discomfort when trucks are encountered, but that this does not make them feel unhappy or concerned.

A large proportion of young people stated that they feel unhappy about parked cars near schools, while a similar proportion of parents stated that they feel ‘ok’ about this, as shown in table 7.52. Many young people feel this makes for an unsafe

environment and can lead to problems when attempting to cross roads and for visibility, both on the part of pedestrians and drivers of passing cars who may not easily see a child between a parked car.

**Table 7.56 Feel about trucks unloading while walking**

	Responses from pupils' surveys (n=769)	Percent of pupils
happy	109	14.2%
ok	335	43.6%
unhappy	325	42.2%

No response – 625 pupils, 293 parents

The issue of the behaviour of other young people is evidently an issue causing much concern amongst both pupils and parents - 69.9% of parents stated that they are unhappy, while 66.7% of pupils also stated that they are unhappy. The proportion of non-responses in this instance is low, while just 20% of pupils and 22.4% of parents stated that they feel happy about behaviour issues.

**Table 7.57 Feel about the behaviour of other young people while walking**

	Responses from pupils' surveys (n=1046)	Percent of pupils	Responses from parental surveys (n=272)	Percent of parents
happy	209	20.0%	61	22.4%
ok	139	13.3%	21	7.7%
unhappy	698	66.7%	190	69.9%

No response – 348 pupils, 21 parents

Parents have many more issues about behaviour and bullying issues than the pupils and a higher proportion of respondents replied to the question than in any of the other questions about feelings and experiences of the school journey. Behaviour issues were also highlighted as elements of serious concern, especially amongst parents and younger children in chapters 4 and 5

## 7.8 Travelling to and from school on a bicycle

The proportion of pupils who stated that they cycle to and/or from school is remarkably small. Just 13 pupils of the total recorded this as a means by which they get to and/or from school on a regular basis. This is despite cycling proficiency programmes run by many, especially primary schools. No parents stated that their children cycle to or from school at any time.

**Table 7.58 Cycling**

	Number recorded by pupil surveys	Percent of total pupil respondents	Number recorded by parental surveys	Percent of total parent respondents
to school only	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
from school only	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
to and from school	13	1.5%	0	0.0%
never	856	98.5%	265	100.0%

No response – 525 pupils, 28 parents

The age groups where cycling is recorded highlight the fact that many cycling proficiency schemes are run for children in year 7 (the final year of primary school) at age 11. As illustrated in table 7.59 a total of 1.3% of 11 year olds stated that they cycle both to and from school regularly. A further 1.1% of 12 year olds stated that they cycle to and from school and 1.3% of 16 year olds stated that they do so also. All those who do cycle do so for both the forward and return journeys to school.

**Table 7.59 Cycling by age**

		when cycle (n=13)			
		to school only	from school only	to and from school	never
age	5 to 10 (n=4)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	11 (n=3)	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%	98.7%
	12 (n=2)	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%	98.9%
	13 (n=1)	0.7%	0.0%	0.0%	99.3%
	16 (n=3)	10.0%	0.0%	1.3%	98.7%

No girls stated that they cycle to and from school. The reasons for not cycling are explored later in this chapter. Again, with regard to cycling, the main factor stated among pupils for not doing so was the fact that it takes too long (61.2%). Concerns about safety and cycling on busy roads were not the major factors in mode choice here. Many pupils stated that they simply do not like cycling and, therefore, will not take a bike to school (25.9%). Moreover a number of pupil respondents stated that cycling is not practical in school uniform, presumably with regard to girls wearing skirts and the need to wear blazers and coats as part of the dress code at many schools. This was an issue highlighted in chapter 4.

**Table 7.60 Reasons stated by pupils for not cycling**

	Frequency	Percent of those who don't cycle	Percent of total respondents
cycle on busy roads	80	9.3%	5.7%
don't like it	221	25.9%	15.9%
takes too long	524	61.2%	37.6%
not practical in uniform	31	3.6%	2.2%
Total	856	100%	61.4%

**Table 7.61 Reasons stated by parents for not cycling**

	Frequency	Percent of those who don't cycle	Percent of total respondents
cycle on busy roads	7	2.6%	2.4%
He/she doesn't like it	69	26.0%	23.5%
takes too long	189	71.4%	64.5%
Total	265	100%	90.4%

Parental concerns did not centre largely on safety or the fact that their children would have to cycle on busy roads either. From table 7.61, the majority (71.4%) stated that their children do not cycle to and/or from school, again, because it takes too long. Just 2.6% stated concerns about cycling on busy roads as factors in influencing the decision not to let their sons or daughters take a bike to school. A significant proportion of parents also stated that their children simply do not want to travel to and from school by bike (26%).

Of the 13 pupils (0.9% of the total respondents) who cycle to and from school frequently, just one stated a reason why they choose to do so. This was as simple as just wanting to do so as shown in table 7.63 below.

**Table 7.62 Reasons for not cycling by age**

		why never cycle (n=856)			
		cycle on busy roads	don't like it	takes too long	not practical in uniform
age	5 - 7 (n=6)	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	8 (n=21)	14.3%	47.6%	38.1%	0.0%
	9 (n=109)	13.0%	38.3%	48.7%	0.0%
	10 (n=76)	15.8%	34.2%	47.4%	2.6%
	11 (n=94)	9.6%	9.6%	77.7%	3.2%
	12 (n=91)	0.0%	22.0%	78.0%	0.0%
	13 (n=137)	12.4%	25.5%	56.9%	5.1%
	14 (n=174)	8.6%	25.9%	54.6%	10.9%
	15 (n=108)	8.3%	26.9%	64.8%	0.0%
	16 (n=37)	0.0%	8.1%	91.9%	0.0%
	17 (n=3)	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Total		9.3%	25.8%	61.2%	3.6%

**Table 7.63 Reasons for cycling**

	Number recorded by pupil surveys	Number recorded by parental surveys	Percent of total pupil respondents	Percent of total parent respondents
want to	1	0	0.1%	0.0%
no response	1393	0	99.9%	0.0%

## 7.9 Making school travel safer and better

Parents and pupils were also asked to indicate measures they felt would make the school journey safer and improve the experience generally. The responses are contained in table 7.64, 7.65 and 7.66 below and relate to the school bus, walking and cycling – identified as key areas where there were concerns. These suggestions relate to safety, supervision, bus capacity and seating, crossing points, footpaths and traffic levels.

In terms of travel by bus, the majority of pupils (68.6%) and parents (69.1%) stated that they want to see an end to standing onboard. A high proportion of parents (66.4%) reinforced this by suggesting more available seats on buses and 52.1% wanted to see the provision of seatbelts. The proportion of pupils asking for seatbelts in the context of this research (seen also in chapters 4 and 5 where concerns were raised about the practicalities and consequences of less capacity) is much less – just 18.2%. There is, therefore, a strong desire shown among parents for these to be made available, but not with pupils – the actual users of the bus services. High numbers of pupils are also asking for more buses and more seats (44.4% and 42.8% respectively), while 20.3% want better seats. The issue of supervision is closely aligned to concerns about behaviour (more concerns expressed by parents than pupils as seen in table 7.64 below). This concern is shown by 55.7% of parents who suggested supervision on board buses would be beneficial, while just 25.5% of pupils felt the same way. This is unsurprising, given the perceptions held by many parents about bullying, teasing and poor behaviour onboard buses and given the fact that young people do not want to be watched.

**Table 7.64 Suggested measures to make school buses safer**

	Pupils (n=1394)	Parents (n=293)
Supervision onboard	25.5%	55.7%
More buses	44.4%	5.9%
More seats	42.8%	66.4%
Seatbelts on buses	18.2%	52.1%
Better seats	20.3%	5.5%
No standing	68.6%	69.1%
Newer buses	20.2%	44.4%

The majority of both pupil (59%) and parent (68%) respondents suggested extra crossings should be made available to aid safe walking to and from school. This corresponds with the concerns about walking highlighted elsewhere in this chapter. Issues about the provision and maintenance of footpaths, also highlighted elsewhere in this chapter and in chapters 4 and 5, are further augmented by the responses where 42.1% of pupils and 55% of parents want to see wider and better footpaths provided and maintained. Guard rails at kerb sides did not receive overwhelming backing from either group, while reductions in traffic and parking were felt to make for an improved walking experience by 37.7% of pupils and 38.9% of parents and it was suggested are measures that should be implemented to ensure increased safety.

**Table 7.65 Suggested measures to make walking safer**

n=1394	Pupils (n=1394)	Parents (n=293)
Guard rails at kerbs	20.2%	24.1%
Extra crossings	59.0%	68.0%
Less traffic and parking	37.7%	38.9%
Wider and better footpaths	42.1%	55.0%

100% of all respondents stated that the one key measure to make cycling safer would be to have more and better segregated cycle lanes and associated facilities. This, it was felt would unequivocally improve the safety and enjoyment of using this mode for the school journey and would, undoubtedly result in greater numbers cycling regularly.

**Table 7.66 Suggested measures to make cycling safer**

n=1394	Pupils (n=1394)	Parents (n=293)
More and better cycle lanes	100%	100%

## 7.10 Issues of key concern and worries

The key concerns of parents and pupils can be summarised in six ways. The main concerns for parents are the behaviour of young people and fear of strangers (71.7% of all parents stated these are the issues that worry them most). Compared to the proportion of pupils who stated concerns, less than half highlighted behaviour of other young people and a fear of strangers as being uppermost in their mind while making the journey to and from school. The issues of more concern to young people relate to road safety (57.1%) and general safety issues on public transport (52.1%). Worries about public transport safety were also expressed in large numbers by parents (63.2%). Journey times feature on the list of concerns of much fewer pupils and parents, but safety issues in some areas were highlighted by 22% of pupils and 38.9% of parents. The evidence indicates that parents have more concerns or that more parents have concerns about these issues than young people.

**Table 7.67 Key Concerns highlighted about the journey to and from school by pupils and parents**

	Pupils (n=1394)	Parents (n=293)
Road safety	57.1%	66.1%
Behaviour of other young people	35.0%	71.7%
Fear of strangers	32.8%	71.7%
Safety in some areas	22.0%	38.9%
Journey times	13.6%	18.8%
Safety on public transport	52.1%	63.2%

The age group disaggregation shows that the majority of younger pupils did not state what their key concerns are, while older primary school pupils stated concerns about

road safety (20.8% of 9 year olds and 22.9% of 10 year olds). Moreover, a fear of strangers was highlighted by a majority of 9 year olds (56.3%). As age increase into secondary/grammar school behaviour concerns and issues of safety on public transport are uppermost in the minds of many pupils. This is seen by the fact that 19.8% of 11 year olds and 18.8% of 12 year olds have indicated this as a key concern. The proportion of pupils for whom behaviour is a concern is much greater in the secondary/grammar school age groups. Safety in some areas was an issue cited by many 13 and 14 year olds as something which worries them. Furthermore, concerns about the length of journey times are highlighted by many older pupils (30% of 13 year olds and 70% of 14 year olds) as is the issue of safety on public transport vehicles (21.7% of 11 year olds, 13% of 12 year olds, 34.8% of 13 year olds and 13% of 14 year olds). This corresponds with worries felt by many younger pupils travelling on the school bus with the presence of many older pupils, and that these concerns appear to be reduced again as they get older and more used to this mode.

**Table 7.68 Key concerns highlighted about the journey to and from school by pupil age groups**

		worries about journeys (n=1394 responses)						
		road safety	behaviour	fear of strangers	safety in some areas	journey times	safety on public transport	nothing
age	5 - 6 yrs (n=82)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	7 yrs (n=138)	0.0%	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	8 yrs (n=103)	5.2%	2.0%	18.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.5%
	9 yrs (n=136)	20.8%	6.1%	56.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	13.6%
	10 yrs (n=96)	22.9%	2.0%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	12.1%
	11 yrs (n=126)	5.2%	19.8%	18.8%	0.0%	0.0%	21.7%	7.1%
	12 yrs (n=125)	7.3%	18.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	13.0%	8.1%
	13 yrs (n=172)	11.5%	11.2%	0.0%	9.1%	30.0%	34.8%	15.7%
	14 yrs (n=233)	15.6%	14.7%	0.0%	90.9%	70.0%	13.0%	24.2%
	15 yrs (n=140)	7.3%	15.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.7%	9.6%
	16 yrs (n=48)	4.2%	5.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	8.7%	5.1%
17 yrs (n=3)	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	

## 7.11 Summary and Conclusions

The data presented in this chapter provides information on the travel patterns of pupils and the choices made by both them and parents as summarised below as well as the reasons for travelling by a particular mode and the reasons influencing decisions not to use particular modes. Comparisons are offered between the responses of parents and young people across different age groups and school sectors.

66.2% of all pupil respondents use the car for some or all journeys to school and stated that the main reasons they use the car are that they want to, parents want

them to, it's a fast and comfortable way to travel and it's considered the safest way possible. Some pupils also highlighted the fact that they have no alternative to the car and have to use it to get either to and/or from school or that public transport (mainly bus) services are not suitable, viable or reliable alternatives. Moreover, the main reasons for not using the car were cited as not wanting to, parents not wanting their children to or that they don't have access to a car in their household. 53.5% of all pupil respondents use the bus for some or all journeys to school and highlighted a number of reasons for using the bus service provided. These reasons included that many pupils simply want to travel by bus as they often see their friends onboard and consider it to be a good social outlet. Many pupils suggested that their parents want them to use the bus or that they have free school sessional tickets (bus pass) for school travel. A number also stated that they have no other option. Reasons for not using the bus were summarised by pupils who stated that they don't want to do so, they don't like it, it is a mode not considered reliable by many, it tends to be overcrowded or they don't think its safe enough. 34.4% of all pupil respondents walk for some or all journeys to school and suggested a number of reasons for walking. These include being healthy, they want to, their friends walk with them, it's a short distance and that some have no choice or alternative. Main reasons for not walking to and from school were identified as having to cross busy roads in dangerous locations, the journey takes too long and is too far on foot and that some pupils simply don't like walking. Just 0.9% of all pupil respondents cycle for some or all journeys to school. The only reasons cited for cycling were that the pupils who do so simply want to. Reasons for not cycling included having to cycle on busy and dangerous roads, some pupils don't like cycling, it takes too long in some cases and a number stated that going by bike is not practical in school uniform and with school bags etc.

The main concerns that continue to be highlighted by pupils in all schools included overcrowding of buses and general behaviour issues. Congestion was, again, also raised on a number of occasions as were issues of footpaths, cycle lanes and walking or cycling through certain areas. The key issues of concern have been shown to be the same across all age groups, school types and locations, while parents seem to be more concerned about many issues than pupils. Suggestions to improve the travel experience on journeys to and from school were highlighted by both parents and pupils and these included more buses, better seating on public transport vehicles, seatbelts on buses, reliable services, supervision. The key concerns expressed by young people and parents through the questionnaire surveys are;

- Road safety – traffic levels and speeds, crossing roads and using footpaths safely (parking and unloading activities make this problematic)
- Congestion
- Behaviour of other young people
- Fear of strangers
- Safety in some areas
- Journey times and distances to be travelled
- Perceived safety on public transport – supervision, overcrowding, standing and seating arrangements, behaviour and the age of vehicles

The evidence contained in this chapter from the parents' and pupils' questionnaires show that there are many reasons why particular modes are chosen for journeys to and/or from school. The reasons stated are all legitimate ones but some emanate from perceptions about other modes of transport and concerns about safety and security which form many of these perceptions. This chapter highlights these concerns about safety and security from a representative sample of the school population in Northern Ireland and a complimenting proportion of parental surveys. The data obtained gives a detailed account of the perceptions people hold about modes of transport through the reasons stated for not using the bus, train, taxi, walking and cycling. The reasons for using the car also provide detailed information as to how this is perceived as the safest way in which parents can and do take their children to and from school in large numbers.

**Table 7.69 Summary of Key Issues**

Issue	Parents	Young People
Congestion		Y
Provision of footpaths	Y	Y
Condition of footpaths	Y	Y
Crossing roads	Y	Y
Safety concerns while walking	Y	Y
Provision of cycle lanes	Y	Y
Parking at schools	Y	Y
Drop off and collecting arrangements	Y	Y
Seatbelts on buses	Y	
Standing on buses	Y	Y
Overcrowding on buses	Y	Y
Reliability of buses	Y	Y
Behaviour of other young people	Y	Y