

Travel to Work Survey 2026: Comments analysis

Each year, we ask respondents to the Travel to Work Survey, "do you have any other comments on your travel to and from work?". We received 8,022 responses to this question in the 2026 survey.

Analysis of comments over the last five survey years (2022–2026) shows a high level of consistency in the **five most common themes**, which are:

- Transport and traffic policy, planning and management
- Location and organisation specific issues
- Travel choices: influences and considerations
- Bus-related comments
- Cycling-related comments

While these five themes have remained broadly consistent over time, their relative importance varies across the local authorities. In Bristol, location and organisation-specific comments were the most common theme (41%), narrowly ahead of transport and traffic policy (40%); in Bath and North East Somerset and South Gloucestershire, transport and traffic policy led instead (45% and 64% respectively). Bus-related comments also feature more heavily among respondents who work in Bristol than among those who work in the other two areas.

In 2026, as in previous years, respondents who work predominantly from home and those who work mainly in a workplace raised broadly similar issues in their responses to the open question.

The first section of analysis focuses on key comment themes and suggested improvements relating to different modes of travel: car, cycling, bus, train, walking and running. It also includes a section on micromobility. The final section explores wider themes relating to transport and traffic policy, planning and management, and travel choices.

CAR TRAVEL

Parking

- Parking remains by far the most significant car-related theme in terms of volume of comments. Beyond the direct frustrations of availability, cost and restrictions, difficulties are frequently linked to wider concerns about wellbeing, childcare, shift working, safety, and perceptions of organisational support and fairness.
- Availability was the most consistently raised concern, particularly around hospitals, schools, Park & Ride sites and major employment sites. Respondents described struggling to find spaces, needing to arrive significantly earlier, or being forced to park long distances from work, with poor provision at these sites also affecting wider accessibility to services and workplaces.
- Permits and restrictions were a recurring frustration. Concerns included being unable to obtain permits despite needing to drive for work or caring responsibilities, and overspill parking into residential streets creating tension with local residents.
- Cost was significant, with charges described as excessive or financially unsustainable for regular commuting, sometimes compounded by the added cost of fuel or public transport.

- Respondents described building substantial extra time into journeys to search for parking and raised safety concerns when walking long distances to parked vehicles, particularly at night.

Essential car usage

- Many respondents described their car as essential for work because their role involves travelling between multiple locations, visiting clients or sites, or responding flexibly throughout the day. Respondents felt that public transport cannot realistically accommodate the flexibility and efficiency their wider working day requires.
- Shift patterns, unsociable working hours and on-call responsibilities were recurring reasons respondents felt dependent on car travel, with buses or trains either not operating at suitable times or unable to provide the reliability required for time-sensitive work.
- Respondents working in healthcare, community services and field-based roles frequently explained that they need to transport equipment, uniforms, clinical supplies or personal belongings that make walking, cycling or public transport impractical.
- Some respondents expressed frustration that transport policy discussions can overlook workers whose jobs genuinely require car access, with concerns that restrictions on parking, road access or car use disproportionately affect people with practical or operational travel needs.

Car sharing

- Many respondents expressed interest in car sharing in principle but felt it is difficult to arrange and sustain in practice. Barriers included incompatible schedules, shift work, flexible or hybrid working, variable office attendance, and irregular start times or changing rotas, with some respondents describing arrangements they'd tried unsuccessfully due to dependence on another person's schedule, difficulty staying late, or reduced flexibility for childcare and personal commitments.
- Respondents frequently highlighted the lack of formal support, communication or matching systems to facilitate car sharing, suggesting employers or local authorities could play a greater role in connecting colleagues with similar routes and working patterns.
- Some respondents nevertheless described successful or partial car sharing arrangements, particularly where colleagues live nearby or work fixed schedules, and suggested that better coordination, incentives or dedicated infrastructure could encourage greater uptake.

School traffic

- School-run traffic was frequently described as a major contributor to congestion and delays during peak commuting periods, with some respondents frustrated that local road networks become heavily disrupted for relatively short periods each morning and afternoon.
- Parking and road safety around schools were common concerns. Respondents highlighted dangerous parking behaviour, blocked roads, unsafe crossings and congestion caused by parents stopping or parking inconsiderately during drop-off and pick-up periods.
- Many respondents described adjusting their commuting patterns specifically to avoid school traffic, referring to leaving home earlier, delaying journeys or choosing alternative routes to avoid severe congestion linked to school runs.
- Some respondents highlighted the wider impact school traffic has on buses and public transport reliability, suggesting congestion around schools can significantly delay already pressured commuter routes.

- Suggestions included greater enforcement, improved school travel planning, or stronger encouragement of walking and cycling to school.

Commuting concerns

- Many respondents expressed frustration that car travel appears to be increasingly de-prioritised within transport planning, feeling that policies are making driving more difficult without providing sufficient realistic public transport alternatives. Respondents felt that transport planning should better recognise the practical necessity of car travel for many people given work patterns, public transport limitations or family responsibilities.
- Respondents criticised the reallocation of road space towards bus lanes, cycle infrastructure or low-traffic measures where they felt this had reduced road capacity or increased congestion for drivers, arguing that policy is overly focused on discouraging car use rather than improving movement for all users.
- There was support for measures aimed at improving traffic flow, including additional road capacity, better road maintenance, fewer roadworks and more coordinated traffic management, with congestion often attributed to road layout changes and increasing restrictions on vehicle movement.
- A smaller number of comments called for higher speed limits, improved road design or greater investment in roads rather than restrictions.

CYCLING

Network and infrastructure

- Respondents commonly described the cycling network as fragmented, inconsistent and difficult to use for complete journeys, with cycle lanes ending abruptly, failing to connect properly, or forcing cyclists back into busy traffic at key points, particularly at junctions, roundabouts and other transition points, where journeys often became unsafe or stressful even where infrastructure otherwise existed.
- Lack of safe cross-city connectivity was a concern, with many respondents highlighting difficulties travelling between residential areas, employment sites and the city centre due to missing links and the absence of continuous protected routes.
- Provision was seen as uneven across Bristol and the surrounding area, concentrated in certain corridors while large areas remain poorly connected or inaccessible for safer cycling.
- Many respondents suggested they would cycle more often if the network felt complete and continuous, arguing that isolated sections of infrastructure are of limited use unless supported by connected end-to-end routes.

Safety concerns

- Safety concerns were one of the most significant barriers to cycling raised in comments. Respondents frequently described feeling unsafe cycling alongside fast-moving traffic, particularly on major commuter roads, narrow streets and routes without protected cycling infrastructure.
- Driver behaviour was a key concern throughout the comments, with references to close passing, speeding, aggressive overtaking, poor awareness of cyclists and drivers failing to give way at junctions or crossings, all contributing to anxiety and lack of confidence when cycling.

- Junctions, roundabouts and areas where cycle lanes end or merge into traffic were repeatedly identified as particularly dangerous, with journeys quickly becoming unsafe at transition points

even where sections of protected infrastructure exist.

- Personal safety concerns were also raised in relation to isolated or poorly lit routes, particularly during winter commuting hours, including concerns about anti-social behaviour, crime or feeling unsafe using traffic-free paths in darkness.
- Many respondents suggested they would cycle more often if they felt safer, highlighting the need for continuous segregated routes, safer junction design and stronger protection from traffic to make cycling feel realistic and accessible for a wider range of people.

Path condition and maintenance

- Poor surfaces, potholes, cracks and uneven cycle paths were the most common issues raised, with respondents describing routes as uncomfortable, hazardous or unsafe, particularly where damaged surfaces force cyclists into traffic.
- Debris and lack of routine maintenance were mentioned, including broken glass, gravel, leaves, mud, tree debris and poorly swept paths, which several respondents linked directly to punctures, falls or reduced confidence using cycle routes.
- Lighting, gritting and winter safety were also frequently mentioned, with dark, unlit or icy routes prompting some respondents to avoid cycle paths in winter due to reduced visibility or slippery surfaces.
- Several comments focused on poor design or incomplete maintenance following new infrastructure works, including confusing layouts, worn markings, temporary signs left in cycle paths, and surfaces viewed as slippery or unsuitable.
- Overall, poor maintenance was seen to undermine otherwise positive cycling infrastructure — respondents often wanted to cycle more, but deteriorating paths and unresolved hazards made cycling feel less safe or practical.

Potential and barriers

- Many respondents expressed a clear desire or willingness to cycle more often, particularly for commuting, but explained that practical barriers currently prevent them from doing so regularly, most often safety concerns, poor infrastructure and lack of connected routes.
- Distance, hills, fitness and physical effort were also cited as barriers, particularly for those travelling longer distances or commuting across hilly parts of Bristol and the surrounding area, with several respondents suggesting electric bikes could make cycling more realistic or sustainable for them.
- Workplace facilities and supporting infrastructure were frequently mentioned, including the need for secure bike storage, showers, changing facilities and safer places to leave bikes during the working day.
- Weather, seasonal conditions and carrying responsibilities were recurring practical constraints, with several respondents explaining that cycling becomes less realistic during winter months, poor weather or when transporting equipment, shopping or children.
- Overall, many respondents saw cycling as a positive, healthy and potentially attractive mode of transport if conditions improve, with safer routes, better infrastructure and stronger practical support seen as likely to encourage greater uptake.

Geography

- Bristol's hilly geography was often described as a significant barrier to cycling, particularly for less confident cyclists, older respondents or those travelling longer commuting distances, with steep climbs making cycling feel physically demanding or unrealistic for everyday commuting.
- Some respondents reflected this as a wider issue limiting cycling participation across parts of the population, particularly compared with flatter cities where cycling is perceived as more accessible.
- Hills were commonly seen as a greater issue when combined with other barriers such as poor weather, long distances, carrying equipment or concerns about arriving at work sweaty or exhausted.
- Electric bikes were repeatedly mentioned as potentially helping to overcome the challenge of hills, with several respondents explaining that e-bikes have made cycling more achievable or attractive for them, while others suggested wider support for e-bike uptake could encourage more people to cycle regularly.

BUS TRAVEL

Reliability

- Reliability and unpredictability were among the most dominant concerns raised throughout the comments, with respondents describing buses arriving late, failing to arrive altogether, being cancelled at short notice or disappearing from tracking systems — all making buses difficult to rely on for commuting and appointments.
- Many respondents described the stress and disruption caused by unreliable services, particularly where delays affect work start times, childcare arrangements, healthcare appointments or shift-based employment, with several needing to leave early or build large time buffers into journeys as a result.
- "Ghost buses" and inaccurate live information were another frustration, with buses appearing on apps or display boards before disappearing without explanation, leading to confusion, long waits and uncertainty around journey planning.
- Poor reliability was frequently linked to overcrowding and inconsistent service operation, including buses arriving in groups after long delays or passing stops already full, with several respondents frustrated that these problems persist despite repeated timetable changes or service reviews.
- Many respondents said they would use buses more frequently if services became genuinely dependable, citing cities seen as having more reliable public transport and arguing that reliability must improve before meaningful reductions in car use can occur.

Accessibility

- Respondents frequently described difficulties accessing workplaces by bus due to indirect routes, limited route coverage and the need to make multiple changes, including journeys requiring travel into the city centre before backtracking out again. Poor cross-city connectivity meant some had no direct route to their workplace, even where the physical distance travelled by car was relatively short.

- Long walks to and from bus stops were often mentioned, particularly for respondents working at hospitals, business parks or employment sites on the outskirts of towns and cities, with several comments highlighting the additional difficulty this creates for disabled respondents, shift workers, parents and those carrying equipment or travelling in poor weather.
- Respondents also highlighted accessibility issues linked to service timings and network design, particularly where buses do not align with shift patterns, early starts or evening working hours, with several suggesting available services are designed around city centre travel rather than real commuter needs.
- Many respondents said they would use buses more often if routes were more direct, better connected and physically easier to access, emphasising that improving practical accessibility is essential if public transport is to become a realistic alternative to driving.

Frequency

- Infrequent bus services were one of the most common frustrations raised, with respondents describing buses running only every 30 minutes or hourly, making services impractical for commuting, particularly where a missed or cancelled bus creates long delays.
- Limited evening, early morning and weekend frequencies were also raised, with respondents explaining that services do not run often enough for shift work, healthcare roles or standard commuting patterns, and some routes finishing too early or reducing significantly outside peak hours.
- Overcrowding was another common concern, particularly on busy commuter routes, with buses arriving already full, passengers unable to board, and multiple services arriving together after long waits.
- Some respondents suggested bus frequencies have reduced over time despite increasing demand or population growth, citing timetable changes, route reductions or less frequent services as making bus travel less viable than previously.
- Many respondents argued that more frequent "turn up and go" services would significantly increase public transport use, frequently drawing comparisons with London and other cities where buses are perceived to operate more regularly and reliably throughout the day.

Journey time

- Many respondents felt that bus journeys took significantly longer than necessary and substantially longer than driving, particularly for cross-city journeys, orbital routes and travel between outer residential areas and major employment sites, often due to extended or circuitous routes, frequent stops or congestion.
- Indirect routing and multiple interchanges were also mentioned, with respondents explaining that bus journeys often require travelling into the city centre before backtracking out again, making relatively short journeys feel excessively time-consuming.
- Congestion and roadworks were repeatedly linked to excessive bus journey times, with buses becoming trapped in the same traffic as cars, and several respondents highlighting the lack of continuous bus lanes or effective bus priority measures.
- Respondents commonly referred to the wider personal impact of lengthy bus journeys, including needing to leave home very early, getting home much later than expected and losing personal or family time, particularly significant for shift workers, parents and those with caring responsibilities.

- Many respondents said they would be willing to use buses more often if journeys were faster more direct and more competitive with driving times, with several comparing Bristol negatively to cities where public transport is perceived to be quicker and better prioritised.

Affordability

- Respondents frequently described bus travel as too expensive relative to the quality, reliability or convenience of the service provided, with many arguing that fares have increased substantially in recent years without corresponding improvements in service.
- Many comments pointed to driving being perceived as cheaper or better value than bus travel, particularly for people commuting regularly, travelling longer distances or travelling with family members or colleagues.
- Respondents expressed frustration with fare structures, including the cost of return tickets, paying separately for connecting journeys and the lack of integrated ticketing across operators or transport modes, with some comparing Bristol negatively to London or European cities where fares were seen as simpler or better value.
- The cumulative cost of commuting by bus was commonly raised, especially by respondents travelling daily into Bristol or combining bus travel with park and ride, train or other transport costs, with several suggesting fares discourage people from switching away from car use.
- Respondents suggested more could be done to develop a pricing strategy that encourages uptake, for example, cheaper fares, integrated ticketing and more flexible pricing structures to make public transport feel more accessible and realistic for everyday commuting.

Usability

- Overcrowding and passenger comfort were major concerns, particularly during peak commuting periods, with buses described as full, standing-room-only, poorly ventilated, dirty or unpleasant to travel on, especially on heavily used commuter routes.
- Problems with apps, live tracking and ticketing systems were also frequently mentioned, including references to "ghost buses", inaccurate app information, ticketing errors and confusion around fares or discount systems, making journeys difficult to plan confidently.
- Bus stop infrastructure and waiting environments were also criticised, with respondents citing a lack of seating, shelter or adequate waiting facilities, particularly where long waits are common or large numbers of passengers use the same stops.
- Operational issues affecting usability were raised repeatedly, including slow boarding, driver changeovers, unsuitable bus types on busy routes and poor timetable coordination, with comments suggesting the system feels poorly designed around real commuter experiences.
- Overall, using the bus was often described as stressful, inconvenient or uncomfortable compared with driving, with cleaner buses, better ventilation, clearer information and improved passenger facilities seen as likely to encourage greater use.

Bus lanes

- Many respondents called for more continuous bus lanes or stronger bus priority, particularly on congested routes where buses currently get stuck in the same traffic as cars, with some linking better bus lanes directly to shorter journey times, more reliable services and greater willingness to use buses instead of driving.

- There were also comments about specific gaps in, or poor placement of, bus lanes, including routes where priority exists in one direction but not the other, or where buses lose time at junctions and roundabouts.
- Criticisms of bus lanes sometimes related to a feeling that they were underused, poorly timed with reduced bus services, or contributing to congestion for other road users.
- Comments also referenced operational issues, including cars parked in bus lanes, buses not using available bus lanes, or bus stops blocking traffic where there is no lay-by.

TRAIN TRAVEL

Affordability

- Comments on affordability came from both current train users and non-users. Non-users cited cost as a barrier preventing them from switching to rail, while current users expressed frustration at the cost of journeys they were already making. A common view across both groups was that train travel is simply too expensive for regular commuting, particularly for those travelling into Bristol several days a week, or where rail costs combine with parking, bus fares or other onward travel expenses.
- Unfavourable comparisons were often made between train costs and driving, particularly where fuel, parking or car sharing were perceived to offer better overall value. Respondents acknowledged that while trains may be quicker or more convenient, cost makes regular rail commuting unrealistic.
- The cumulative cost of rail commuting was sometimes referenced, including peak fares, station parking charges and limited savings from railcards or flexible ticketing, with some comments suggesting train prices have increased beyond what feels reasonable for everyday commuting.
- Affordability was seen to directly affect commuting behaviour and office attendance, with some respondents explaining that they only travel into work occasionally, drive instead of taking the train, or avoid rail travel entirely because of cost.
- Many suggested that lower fares, more flexible season ticket options and better integrated ticketing across transport modes would encourage greater train use, with comments often highlighting an apparent contradiction between encouraging sustainable travel while rail commuting remains financially inaccessible.

Reliability

- Reliability and unpredictability were among the most significant concerns raised about train travel, with respondents describing trains running late, being cancelled at short notice or experiencing frequent service disruption, making rail travel difficult to rely upon for daily commuting.
- Comments also highlighted the wider personal and professional impact of unreliable services, including missed connections, difficulties reaching work on time, childcare pressures and uncertainty around getting home reliably after work.
- Delays and cancellations were sometimes said to occur with little warning or poor communication, with even relatively small disruptions creating major problems where journeys involve multiple trains or onward transport connections.

- Poor reliability was frequently linked to reduced willingness to use rail travel regularly, with many respondents explaining they now drive instead, limit office attendance or avoid public transport altogether because of repeated disruption and lack of confidence in services.
- Some comments also highlighted the cumulative frustration of high ticket prices alongside poor reliability, questioning the value of rail travel where delays, cancellations and inconsistent service quality are perceived to be common.

Accessibility

- Limited access to railway stations was a major barrier to train use, encompassing long walks, poor connecting bus services, lack of parking, and difficulty reaching stations from suburban, rural or semi-rural areas.
- Respondents frequently described the difficulty of completing the "first and last mile" of journeys, particularly where onward buses are unreliable, infrequent or poorly coordinated with train arrival times. Even where train travel itself is attractive, the absence of nearby stations or suitable local stopping services makes rail commuting impractical for some.
- As in previous years, overcrowding and limited capacity were another key source of frustration, with respondents referring to trains being too full, too few carriages being provided, or local stopping services operating too infrequently to support practical commuter travel.
- Many respondents said they would be willing to use trains more often if stations, local services and connecting transport were more accessible and better integrated, highlighting the importance of local rail investment and improved regional connectivity to reduce reliance on cars.

Journey time

- Respondents often described train travel as too slow or inefficient compared with driving, particularly once walking time, station access, changes and onward journeys are included, with the train itself sometimes viable in principle, but the full door-to-door journey becoming too long once station parking, walking, bus links or workplace distance from the station are factored in.
- Comments referred to indirect routes and poor connections, including extended waits at Temple Meads, changes between trains, or lack of direct services adding significant time to the commute.
- Delays, cancellations and missed connections were also raised as journey-time problems, particularly where one disruption can add long waits or make the overall commute unpredictable.
- Many comments concluded that faster, more direct and better-connected train services would make rail travel more realistic, especially for longer-distance commuters who would prefer not to drive.

Frequency

- Train frequency was especially relevant and frustrating for those travelling from smaller stations, suburban areas or routes outside the main intercity corridors, with many comments referring to trains operating only hourly, making commuting inflexible and difficult to rely upon.

- Respondents also highlighted the disproportionate impact of delays or cancellations where services are infrequent, explaining that missing one train can add substantial time onto journeys, particularly during evenings or on routes with limited alternative services.
- Limited peak-time capacity and timetable gaps were highlighted, with respondents describing trains as too infrequent to accommodate growing passenger demand, particularly on commuter routes into Bristol during busy periods.
- Comments also commonly highlighted the interaction between train frequency and wider transport connections, with poor alignment between train times, buses and onward travel options significantly increasing overall commuting time and inconvenience.
- Many respondents, both current train users and those using alternative means of travel, felt that more frequent and better coordinated rail services would make train commuting substantially more attractive and practical, with several suggesting this could reduce dependence on cars and ease road congestion.

Usability

- Overcrowding and lack of capacity were the most common usability concerns, with respondents frequently referring to short trains, limited carriages, standing-room-only journeys and insufficient seating at peak times.
- Limited bike provision on trains was also raised as a significant concern, including difficulties taking bikes onboard, poorly designed bike spaces and insufficient capacity for combined cycle-train commuting.
- Comfort and onboard conditions were also raised, including dirty trains, poor ventilation, lack of air conditioning, cramped conditions and uncomfortable standing during busy journeys.
- Some respondents highlighted station and ticketing usability issues, including barriers not accepting travel passes, poor station facilities, excessive ticket checks, platform changes and inadequate waiting environments.
- Overall, respondents often felt that train travel could be a good commuting option, but poor capacity, comfort and practical usability issues made the experience stressful, unreliable or unattractive.

WALKING & RUNNING

Benefits

- Many respondents described the benefits they believe they enjoy from walking or running to and from work. Commonly they spoke of benefiting from a "reset" at the start of the day or the opportunity to wind down once the workday was over. Others commented on the simple pleasures of being outside, observing wildlife or the changing seasons.

Infrastructure

- A range of infrastructure-related issues was highlighted, including poorly maintained or poorly draining surfaces, narrow or obstructed pavements, and crossings that felt unsafe, too slow, or inconsistently placed.
- Some respondents shared concerns about fast-moving traffic, inconsiderate driver behaviour, and sharing paths with cyclists or e-scooter riders.

- Environmental factors such as pollution, litter, poor lighting and antisocial behaviour along key walking routes were mentioned as deterrents or sources of discomfort.

Barriers

- A number of respondents said they would like to walk or run more often but faced barriers such as long distances, lack of workplace facilities (e.g. showers), or caring responsibilities that made travel without other transport impractical. Others indicated they would prefer to have public transport options available and only walk because other options are lacking.
- Some described adapting their travel routine to incorporate walking part of the way, for example, parking outside city centres or clean air zones, while others noted that future housing or job changes might affect their ability to continue walking to work.

MICROMOBILITY

- Availability of rental schemes, safe cycle routes and supporting infrastructure was seen as critical to enabling greater micromobility use, though concerns were raised about inadequate bike storage, lack of charging facilities, theft, and infrastructure not designed with e-bikes and scooters in mind.
- Some respondents felt current legislation around private e-scooters is outdated and inconsistent with how widely they are already being used, calling for clearer regulation, legalisation of private scooters, and stronger enforcement to create a fairer system between rental users and those using illegal private scooters.
- Views on rental e-scooters were mixed. While some respondents valued Dott services highly, others criticised rising prices, reduced flexibility compared with previous providers, and a perceived monopoly position in Bristol following the loss of Tier and Voi.
- Safety concerns were also commonly raised, including dangerous riding behaviour, lack of helmet use, near misses and weak enforcement of unsafe scooter use.

TRANSPORT AND TRAFFIC POLICY, PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Congestion

- Congestion once again emerged as one of the most prominent themes this year. 1,686 comments referenced congestion, making it the most frequently applied individual response code in the survey, second only to the general "location specific" tag. In 2025, there were 1,861 comments about congestion.
- As in previous years, comments about congestion were most likely to come from those who commute by car alone. This year, 30% of lone car drivers commented on congestion and this group accounted for 71% of all comments coded to the congestion category.
- Congestion and traffic delays were the dominant issue across comments, with numerous references to heavy traffic build-up, gridlock and slow-moving journeys across Bristol, Bath and surrounding commuter routes, with many reporting that relatively short journeys could regularly double or triple in length during peak periods.
- Peak-time congestion was particularly associated with major routes, motorway junctions, ring roads and city centre approaches, including the M32, M4/M5 junctions, the A4174 ring road and key routes into Bath and Bristol, with traffic conditions often described as unpredictable and worsening over time.

- Respondents highlighted that roadworks, temporary traffic lights, bridge closures and diversions often lengthened delays and disrupted journey flow, with many feeling multiple road schemes were poorly coordinated, creating simultaneous congestion across several routes and forcing additional traffic onto already busy roads.
- Traffic flow issues were also linked to parked vehicles, lane restrictions, bus lanes, bottlenecks and poor junction design, with some respondents describing aggressive lane changing, blocked roads and inefficient traffic light sequencing as adding to congestion and driver frustration.

The table below summarises the 15 most-mentioned locations in 2026 where congestion was referenced and the number of separate comments per location.

Congestion hotspots (2026)		
Location	2026 comments	Congestion referenced
Bristol Central/ Park Street/ Baldwin Street/ Centre/ Clifton/ St James Barton/ Anchor Road/ Downs/ Hotwells/ Coldharbour Lane/ Cabot etc.	479	75
Bath (and vicinity)	447	95
Filton (including Filton Road and Filton Avenue, junctions and roundabouts)	244	70
A38	205	66
M4 (including junctions)	202	111
A4174/ Ring-road	190	95
M5 (including junctions, Avonmouth Bridge)	191	110
MOD/ Abbeywood/ UWE/ Frenchay/ Parkway	172	46
A4/ Temple Meads/ Redcliffe/ Wells Road/ Totterdown/ Old Market/ Wapping Wharf	168	35
M32	162	93
Hambrook/ Bradley Stoke/ Patchway/ Stoke Gifford/ Little Stoke/ Concorde Way/ Brabazon	146	45
Gloucestershire (including Gloucester, Cheltenham, Forest of Dean etc.)	141	45
Wales/ Severn Bridge/ Newport etc.	120	57
Southmead (including hospital and vicinity)	117	25
Yate/ Chipping Sodbury/ Pucklechurch/ Frampton Cotterell	110	28
Avonmouth (and vicinity)	109	28
Keynsham/ Wellsway	104	8
Fishponds/ A432/ Glenside/ Blackberry Hill/ Downend/ Bromley Heath	96	27
Gloucester Road/ Stokes Croft	91	24
Thornbury/ Almondsbury/ Alveston/ Catbrain	73	23
Aztec West	70	29
Bedminster/ Ashton Gate/ Southville (and vicinity)	65	17
A420/ Two-Mile Hill/ Kingswood/ Warmley/ Hanham/ Longwell Green	56	11
Eastville/ Muller Road (and vicinity)	54	21
Badminton Road	54	11

Bath Road/ Brislington	51	15
South Gloucestershire (other/general)	51	11
Portishead/ Pill etc.	50	16

- Road traffic accidents and incidents on major roads and motorways were reported to have significant knock-on effects across the wider network, often causing severe delays on surrounding local roads as traffic diverted or backed up.
- The impact of congestion was described as both practical and emotional, with respondents referring to longer working days, stress, frustration, unpredictability and reduced quality of life. Many stated they deliberately travel earlier or later to avoid peak-time traffic, while others felt there are currently no realistic alternatives due to limitations in public transport or cycling infrastructure.

Highway Maintenance

- Poor road condition and maintenance emerged as a major frustration across journeys, with repeated references to potholes, damaged road surfaces, uneven carriageways and deteriorating infrastructure. There was a strong perception that repairs are reactive, inconsistent and poorly executed, with potholes repeatedly reappearing after repairs, faded or unclear road markings, and infrastructure upgrades seen as taking priority over maintaining existing roads and pavements.
- Potholes were consistently described as dangerous for cyclists and motorcyclists, with respondents highlighting risks of punctures, loss of control, near misses and accidents when swerving to avoid damage, alongside reports of vehicle damage including blown tyres, wheel damage and increased maintenance costs.
- Respondents often criticised the scale, duration and coordination of roadworks, feeling that multiple schemes are carried out simultaneously with little consideration of wider disruption. Temporary traffic lights, lane restrictions, bridge closures and diversions were often described as poorly managed and a major contributor to congestion and longer commute times.
- Cycling and walking routes attracted particular criticism around maintenance and safety, including broken glass, slippery or uneven surfaces, overgrown vegetation, poor lighting, obstructed pavements and temporary works that fail to properly accommodate cyclists and pedestrians, with some feeling cycling infrastructure was fragmented, poorly designed or unsafe during roadworks.
- Overall, respondents felt highways management and infrastructure planning lack coordination and long-term thinking, with excessive roadworks, poor communication, prolonged temporary measures and inadequate maintenance seen as increasing congestion, stress, journey times and safety risks across the network.

Lack of options

- A dominant theme was the lack of practical alternatives to driving, particularly for respondents living in rural areas, villages or locations poorly connected to Bristol, Bath and major employment sites, with many stating there are simply no direct public transport routes between home and work.
- Public transport was frequently described as too slow and indirect to be realistic, with journeys by bus or train commonly reported as taking two to four times longer than by car, often

requiring multiple buses, train changes, long walks or travel into the city centre before travelling back out again.

- Reliability was also a key concern, with repeated references to cancelled buses, infrequent services, delays, overcrowding and timetables misaligned with working patterns. Many felt they could not risk relying on public transport for time-sensitive work, shift patterns, childcare responsibilities or essential frontline roles.
- Cost was another significant barrier, with train fares and multi-stage bus journeys frequently described as prohibitively expensive compared with driving, particularly where parking or fuel costs were lower than the total cost of commuting by public transport.
- Many respondents indicated they would willingly use public transport, cycling or Park & Ride if services were faster, cheaper, more reliable and better connected, with repeated calls for more direct routes, improved rail links, more frequent buses and better integration between transport modes.
- Overall, many respondents felt "forced" into car dependency despite frustrations with congestion, roadworks and parking. For some, driving was not a preference but the only viable option given current infrastructure, work demands, caring responsibilities, accessibility needs or the absence of realistic alternatives.

Road safety concerns

- Concerns around road safety and conflict between different road users were widespread, particularly between drivers, cyclists, pedestrians and e-scooter users, with many describing commuting as stressful or dangerous due to aggressive driving, close overtaking, speeding, poor awareness of vulnerable road users and increasing tension between modes.
- Cycling safety was a particularly important theme, with respondents reporting near misses, dangerous overtaking, vehicles blocking cycle lanes, poor junction design and inconsistent infrastructure. Many felt current road layouts force cyclists into conflict with cars, pedestrians or buses, with aggressive driver behaviour and lack of adherence to the Highway Code seen as major risks.
- Pedestrians raised concerns around unsafe crossings, vehicles failing to stop, poor visibility at junctions, cars parked on pavements, and conflict with cyclists and e-scooters on shared paths or pavements, with shared spaces seen as poorly designed or insufficiently marked, increasing confusion and the likelihood of accidents or near misses.
- Poor road condition and infrastructure maintenance were repeatedly linked to safety concerns, with potholes, faded road markings, slippery or uneven surfaces, blocked visibility, inadequate lighting and poorly managed roadworks all described as creating additional hazards for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians alike.
- Many felt there is insufficient enforcement and education around safe road use, citing drivers using phones, speeding and dangerous parking, alongside cyclists or e-scooter users ignoring traffic lights, and a wider perception that road users are increasingly failing to follow rules or show consideration for others. Several called for clearer signage, better enforcement, more segregated infrastructure and public education campaigns to reduce conflict between modes.

Traffic Management

- Respondents frequently described the road network as poorly configured to manage existing traffic volumes, particularly around motorway junctions, ring roads, roundabouts and key

commuter corridors, with congestion and delays linked to bottlenecks, insufficient capacity, merging traffic and layouts felt to no longer reflect current travel demand or housing growth.

- Concerns also extended to junction design, lane management and layout more broadly — including difficult motorway access, dangerous merge points, confusing lane priorities, underperforming 2+ lanes, poorly functioning roundabouts and inadequate filter lanes — with several feeling current layouts actively worsen congestion and safety risks through last-minute lane changes and traffic weaving.
- Traffic light sequencing and signal management emerged as a major frustration, with many feeling lights are poorly timed, out of sync or unresponsive to actual traffic conditions, resulting in unnecessary queues, blocked junctions and inconsistent journey times. There were

repeated calls for smarter, adaptive traffic management systems and better prioritisation of peak traffic flows.

- Signage, speed management and traffic controls were also criticised as inconsistent or ineffective, with references to unclear road markings, confusing signposting, poorly communicated lane changes, under-enforced bus and 2+ lanes, and speed restrictions felt to slow traffic without improving safety. Some suggested improved smart motorway features, signal-controlled junctions and clearer driver guidance to reduce congestion and conflict between users.
- Many respondents called for more strategic investment in infrastructure and traffic flow, including new junctions, additional lanes, improved motorway access, better link roads, smarter crossings and more coordinated traffic management systems, reflecting a clear perception that current infrastructure is struggling to cope with rising commuter volumes and changing travel patterns.

Strategic Planning

- Respondents cited the perception that there is a lack of coordination and joined-up thinking across roadworks, transport schemes and infrastructure changes, describing situations where multiple roadworks, closures or traffic restrictions were implemented simultaneously on connected routes, creating gridlock and leaving few viable diversion options.
- There was also a view that transport authorities, councils and highways agencies are poor at planning works strategically or communicating with one another, with poor project sequencing, prolonged works with little visible progress, and neighbouring authorities or utilities carrying out disruptive schemes at the same time, apparently without considering cumulative impacts on commuters.
- Timing and operational management emerged as major frustrations, with many respondents questioning why roadworks, refuse collections and temporary traffic controls are routinely scheduled during rush hour, school run periods or other peak travel times. Many also felt roadworks take unnecessarily long to complete, citing inactive sites, temporary lights remaining in place and limited overnight working.
- Liveable Neighbourhoods, cycle schemes, bus gates and wider transport interventions generated mixed but often negative feedback in relation to wider network planning, with some respondents feeling these schemes displaced congestion onto neighbouring roads, increased journey times and created new bottlenecks without sufficient assessment of knock-on effects for surrounding communities or alternative routes.
- Overall, respondents called for more holistic and long-term transport planning, that better balances housing growth, road capacity, public transport, active travel and commuter demand.

There was a view that current interventions are reactive, fragmented and implemented without a clear strategic vision for how the wider transport network should function in future.

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT CHOICES – INFLUENCES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Multi-modal use

- Many respondents described using multiple modes of transport within a single journey, commonly combining walking, driving, trains, buses, cycling, e-bikes or employer shuttle services. Journeys typically involve several stages, such as driving to a station or Park & Ride, taking a train or bus, and then walking or cycling the final part of the journey.
- Respondents often reported adapting their mode of travel depending on weather, traffic, cost, reliability, childcare responsibilities, safety or work commitments, with walking, cycling and e-bike use more common in summer or good weather, and driving more frequent in winter, poor weather, or when carrying equipment or travelling to multiple sites.
- Another recurring theme was that existing surveys and transport planning do not adequately capture the reality of "hybrid" or multimodal commuting, with many respondents feeling forced to select a single travel mode despite regularly mixing several forms of transport across the same journey or varying their approach across the week.
- Some respondents described actively trying to reduce car use by combining public transport with cycling, Park & Ride, walking or micromobility, though many highlighted that this adds significant complexity, cost, waiting time and coordination challenges, particularly where train and bus timetables do not align or services are unreliable.
- There was also evidence of respondents planning or hoping to shift modes in future, particularly towards cycling, e-bikes, trains or mixed-mode journeys if infrastructure, costs, reliability and facilities improved, with better integration between transport modes, safer cycling infrastructure and improved public transport connectivity commonly seen as key enablers of further modal shift.

Family commitments and considerations

- Caring responsibilities were a major influence on commuting behaviour, with many respondents explaining that school runs, nursery drop-offs, after-school collections and wider family commitments shape both their travel mode and journey timing. Commuting decisions were often driven less by personal preference and more by the need to reliably coordinate childcare alongside work schedules.
- Respondents frequently stated that public transport is incompatible with family commitments due to unreliable services, indirect routes, infrequent timetables and significantly longer journey times, with many feeling buses and trains simply do not operate at the times needed to accommodate school or nursery drop-offs while still arriving at work on time.
- Car use was commonly described as essential because it provides the flexibility and reliability needed to manage childcare, caring responsibilities for elderly relatives, multiple drop-offs, emergency situations and onward journeys after work. However, some respondents made clear they would prefer to use public transport, walk or cycle if practical alternatives existed that worked alongside family responsibilities.
- Many respondents described adapting or combining journeys to balance work and family life, including multimodal travel, lift sharing with partners or children, using cargo bikes or bike trailers, parking part-way through journeys, or changing work patterns to avoid peak traffic and childcare pressures. However, respondents often felt current transport infrastructure and

employer expectations fail to adequately recognise the realities of caring responsibilities and family logistics.

The weather

- Weather was a major factor influencing both travel mode and journey experience, with many respondents describing switching between walking, cycling, buses and driving depending on rain, cold, darkness, wind, snow or icy conditions. Cycling and walking were far more common during lighter and drier months.
- Poor weather conditions were often linked to safety concerns, particularly for cyclists and pedestrians, with respondents highlighting slippery cycle paths, black ice, flooding, potholes hidden by rainwater, muddy footpaths, poor drainage and inadequate winter gritting as major hazards, especially during darker winter months.
- Lack of lighting and personal safety concerns during winter travel were also commonly mentioned, with many respondents describing feeling unsafe walking or cycling in the dark due to unlit cycle paths, isolated routes, poor street lighting and concerns about antisocial behaviour or visibility around vehicles and crossings.
- Weather-related disruption also exposed wider weaknesses in transport infrastructure and public transport reliability, with respondents often stating they would prefer to use buses or trains during bad weather, but unreliable, overcrowded or infrequent services frequently forced them back into car use or longer, more difficult journeys.

Change to travel times

- Many respondents described actively changing their travel times, working hours or routes to avoid peak congestion, school traffic, motorway bottlenecks and known pinch points, with leaving significantly earlier or later than preferred often seen as the only way of keeping journey times manageable and avoiding severe delays.
- Flexible and hybrid working arrangements were widely viewed as critical enablers of more manageable commuting, with respondents frequently highlighting the benefits of flexitime, working from home for part of the day, compressed office attendance, or adjusting office days around traffic conditions, parking availability and childcare responsibilities.
- Many respondents described carefully timing journeys around specific congestion triggers, including rush hour, school runs, roadworks, road closures and motorway incidents, with several noting that even small changes in departure time could dramatically increase or double commute duration.
- Respondents also reported adapting routes and travel behaviour to reduce stress and unpredictability, including using back roads, avoiding motorways or city centres, or combining commuting with gym visits or working from home before travelling. However, many felt these adaptations lengthen the working day, reduce personal time and reflect a wider failure of the transport network to cope with current demand.

Electric vehicles / Electric cycles

- Respondents expressed mixed views towards electric vehicles and wider electric transport. While many were already using or considering EVs, hybrids, e-bikes or electric scooters for commuting, adoption was often constrained by affordability, charging access, range concerns, childcare responsibilities, rural travel needs and the practical realities of long-distance or multi-site work.
- Employer salary sacrifice schemes, workplace charging and secure charging/storage facilities were often seen as important enablers of uptake.

- Charging infrastructure emerged as one of the key barriers to wider EV adoption. Respondents repeatedly highlighted the lack of reliable public charging, limited workplace chargers, inability to charge at rented properties or flats, concerns about charging costs, and difficulties for people without driveways or guaranteed parking. Several also described frustration that policy expectations around EV uptake are moving faster than the supporting infrastructure required to make ownership practical.
- Many respondents also questioned whether electric vehicles represent a complete or sustainable long-term solution, citing concerns about battery manufacturing and disposal, the

environmental impact of lithium extraction, vehicle range, towing capability, depreciation, repair costs and perceived policy inconsistency. While some viewed EVs positively as a cleaner and cheaper commuting option, others felt alternative technologies such as hybrids or hydrogen vehicles may ultimately prove more practical or environmentally sustainable.

Health and wellbeing

- Respondents often described commuting as a significant source of stress, anxiety and mental fatigue. Congestion, unreliable public transport, long journey times, cancellations, overcrowding and ongoing roadworks were all commonly linked to frustration, exhaustion and a negative start or end to the working day, with many describing commuting as the "worst" or most stressful part of their day.
- Long and unpredictable commutes were widely perceived as having a detrimental impact on work–life balance, family time, productivity and overall wellbeing. Respondents commented that commuting consumes time that could otherwise be spent resting, exercising, socialising, caring for family or working more productively from home, with some describing considering changing jobs, moving house or retiring early because commuting had become unsustainable.
- Physical health and accessibility issues influenced travel choices for many respondents, with health conditions, disabilities, injuries, chronic pain, fatigue, pregnancy and mobility issues often limiting people's ability to walk, cycle or use public transport, increasing reliance on cars, lifts, taxis or home working. Respondents also highlighted how unreliable or inaccessible transport systems can worsen existing physical and mental health challenges.
- Despite the challenges, many respondents described walking and cycling positively in relation to physical and mental wellbeing, with active travel commonly associated with exercise, fresh air, relaxation, "head space", improved mood and a better work–life balance. However, respondents also noted that poor infrastructure, unsafe roads, pollution, aggressive driving and difficult weather conditions can undermine these benefits and make active travel stressful or unsafe.

Working patterns and working from home

- Flexible and hybrid working patterns were widely described as having a major influence on commuting behaviour and travel choices. Many respondents explained that flexible start and finish times, home working, compressed hours and occasional office attendance help them avoid peak congestion, reduce stress, improve work–life balance and make long-distance commuting more manageable.
- At the same time, variable and unsociable working patterns often created significant barriers to using public transport or car sharing. Shift work, unpredictable finishing times, rotating work locations, cross-site responsibilities and evening or weekend working frequently made buses, trains and lift sharing impractical or impossible, increasing reliance on private cars.

- Many respondents also described how modern working arrangements including hybrid working, hot-desking, multi-site roles and location-based working create more complex and less predictable travel patterns than traditional "single commute" journeys. Several felt current transport systems fail to reflect the reality of travelling between multiple workplaces, adapting journeys day-to-day, or combining office attendance with wider caring and operational responsibilities.

Cost

- Cost was a major factor shaping commuting behaviour and transport decisions. In relation to private car travel, respondents often referred to rising fuel prices, parking charges,

congestion, tolls and vehicle wear and tear, but nevertheless concluded that driving remains the cheaper, faster or more practical option compared with public transport, with many feeling forced into difficult trade-offs between affordability, convenience, sustainability and reliability.

- Public transport costs were widely criticised as disproportionately high relative to driving, particularly where journeys required multiple buses, train connections or daily commuting. Many respondents said they would consider buses or trains more often if fares were cheaper, services more reliable, or employer subsidies and discounts available, with some also highlighting wider cost-of-living pressures affecting their ability to work from the office regularly.
- Respondents frequently expressed frustration about the financial barriers to cleaner or more sustainable travel. While many supported electric vehicles, e-bikes or hybrid travel in principle, high purchase costs, charging infrastructure limitations, parking constraints and lack of employer support often made these options feel unaffordable or impractical. Clean Air Zone charges and parking costs were also commonly viewed as disproportionately affecting lower earners and those without realistic alternative transport options.

Anti traffic measures

- Many respondents felt that measures intended to prioritise buses, cycling or traffic reduction — including 2+ lanes, bus lanes, cycle lanes, bus gates and 20mph zones — have worsened congestion, increased journey times and reduced overall road capacity, with a particularly strong theme of frustration that large sections of road space appear underused while general traffic queues increase significantly. Many felt these measures disproportionately disadvantage drivers who have no practical alternative to car travel due to work location, caring responsibilities or poor public transport connectivity.
- 2+ lanes attracted especially strong criticism, with respondents frequently describing them as ineffective, poorly enforced and disruptive to traffic flow. Many felt they create dangerous lane weaving, bottlenecks and merging conflicts around junctions and motorway access points, while failing to meaningfully encourage car sharing. Several argued these lanes would be better used as general traffic or filter lanes.