

MOVING FORWARD: A JUST TRANSITION FOR SCOTTISH TRANSPORT

SCOTTISH YOUNG GREENS

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INTRODUCTION

Transport - how we get to and from our home, our school, our friends and family - is a fundamental part of how we interact with society. It is also one of the largest sources of greenhouse gas emissions and a major driving force in the climate crisis. Getting as many people as possible to transition from carbon-intensive personal vehicles to affordable, accessible and sustainable mass transit systems is going to be key to tackling the climate crisis and greening Scotland's economy and society.

But cutting greenhouse gas emissions is not the only potential upside of revolutionising Scotland's transport system. This report will set out the many ways in which our current system is failing some of Scotland's marginalised and under-represented groups: young women, young working class people, and young people in rural areas.

In order to understand the needs and experience of young people in Scotland, the specific issues facing grassroots campaigning organisations, and the demography behind support for Scottish Green Party transport policy, the Scottish Young Greens undertook a large-scale data gathering exercise involving both a Citizens' Assembly and a commissioned representative poll of over 500 Scottish young people.

For the Citizens' Assembly, individual participants' responses were anonymised and so further inference based on demography is not possible here. At this event, we heard expert contributions from transport-related groups and speakers from across Scotland including: Friends of the Earth; Walk, Wheel, Cycle, Vote; Transform Scotland; and Lorna Slater, co-leader of the Scottish Green Party.

INTRODUCTION

Participants were then put into breakout rooms to discuss the issues around transport and put together resolutions, which were then voted on as a group, and approved as resolutions if passed by a 60% majority. Participation in the Citizens' Assembly was open to all, and those who joined were of course self-selecting and therefore not representative of the views of all young people in Scotland, although these contributions were more detailed as a result of the nature of the event. In order to provide more representative data, we then commissioned national polling which could reach a broader range of people than we could at an SYG-run event.

For the nationally representative poll, we worked with Savanta in order to poll 509 people aged 16-30 in Scotland with the following demographics: 57% female, 41% male and 2% people of other genders or who preferred not to say; 44% aged 16-21 years old and 56% aged 22-30 years old (as current policies have a cut-off age of 21); 35% urban, 40% suburban and 25% rural; 41% working class and 59% middle class; and from all eight of Scotland's Holyrood electoral regions. This allowed us to compare different groups' perceptions and experiences of transport.

This report uses the data from the polling and the approved resolutions from the Citizens' Assembly to consider the current state of Scottish transport, including the current barriers people face to using public and active transport options. We also investigated the levels of support for Scottish Greens' transport policies amongst young people, and in this report we consider potential policies and next steps to modernise and green Scotland's transport system.

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY - APPROVED RESOLUTIONS

- Nationalise all public transport in Scotland
- When making transport planning decisions, priority should be given to promoting sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity, and tackling poverty, inequality and isolation
- Everyone in Scotland should have access to high-quality transport
- Scotland needs to invest in implementing and maintaining high-quality transport infrastructure, including prioritising maintaining and improving existing links before building new ones
- Decisions should be made with the involvement of local communities, promoting radical local democracy
- Priority should be given to public and active transport on roads and public spaces, private travel users should respect that, and this can be partly achieved through greater public and active transport usage
- People should feel safe and able to use active travel
- Transport should be accessible to all regardless of gender, race, disability and other characteristics, and decision making processes must include groups who are currently left out of and underrepresented in decision making
- Promote a connected intermodal transport network, with level connections between train stations and bus stations
- Air travel is a necessity for some, especially in rural and island communities
- Changes to planning should be made to make electric car usage more accessible in rural areas, for example electric car pools outside transport hubs
- Public transport being expensive disproportionately disadvantages rural communities, and free public transport would disproportionately benefit rural communities
- All public transport in Scotland should be free at the point of use

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

POLLING

- Q1 – Driving
 - Never – 40%
 - A few times a year – 7%
 - A few times a month – 7%
 - A few times a week – 21%
 - Every day – 25%
- Q2 – Satisfaction with public and active travel (across Scotland)
 - Very satisfied – 20%
 - Somewhat satisfied – 44%
 - Neutral – 25%
 - Somewhat dissatisfied – 8%
 - Very dissatisfied – 3%
- Q3 – Satisfaction with public and active travel (local area)
 - Very satisfied – 21%
 - Somewhat satisfied – 43%
 - Neutral – 22%
 - Somewhat dissatisfied – 9%
 - Very dissatisfied – 4%
- Q4 – benefit from free bus travel for u22s
 - Definitely (49%)
 - Probably (26%)
 - Probably not (14%)
 - Definitely not (7%)
 - Not sure (5%)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

POLLING

- Q5 – increase bus use after free bus travel for u22s
 - Definitely (44%)
 - Probably (30%)
 - Probably not (14%)
 - Definitely not (6%)
 - Not sure (6%)
- Q6 – extending free bus travel to u31s and all students
 - Yes (72%)
 - No (14%)
 - Not sure (14%)
- Q7 – all public transport should be free
 - Yes (49%)
 - No (37%)
- Q8 – safety on public transport
 - Very safe (23%)
 - Somewhat safe (47%)
 - Neutral (20%)
 - Somewhat unsafe (7%)
 - Very unsafe (3%)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

POLLING

- Q9 – safety in active travel
 - Very safe (26%)
 - Somewhat safe (41%)
 - Neutral (20%)
 - Somewhat unsafe (10%)
 - Very unsafe (4%)
- Q10 – barriers to using public transport
 - Cost (51%)
 - Irregular service (37%)
 - Doesn't serve needed routes (29%)
 - Inconvenience (25%)
 - Safety (23%)
 - Other (3%)
 - None of these (9%)
- Q11 – barriers to active travel
 - Weather (44%)
 - Time (42%)
 - Safety (30%)
 - Lack of direct routes (26%)
 - Infrastructure e.g. bikes, bike storage (16%)
 - Other (2%)
 - None of these (11%)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

POLLING

- Q12 – should public transport services be nationalised?
 - Yes (68%)
 - No (11%)
 - Not sure (21%)

- Q13 – do you think better transport infrastructure can help Scotland tackle the climate crisis?
 - Yes (70%)
 - No (13%)
 - Not sure (17%)

ANALYSIS

THE STATE OF TRANSPORT IN SCOTLAND

Our Citizens' Assembly told us that "Everyone in Scotland should have access to high-quality transport". However polling shows that over a third of young people in Scotland (36%) are not satisfied (neutral, somewhat or very dissatisfied) with public and active travel across Scotland. The same number were not satisfied with public and active travel in their local area. Clearly, there is a long way to go until we have truly high-quality transport in Scotland.

How are young people currently getting around Scotland? Currently, young people are most likely to frequent drivers with 46% of respondents driving every day or a few times a week. A further 16% are infrequent drivers, using a car a few times a month or a few times per year. That leaves us with 40% of young people in Scotland never driving. There is a clear need for high-quality public and active travel provision both to meet the needs of those who cannot rely on driving, and to attract those who currently rely on driving to cleaner, greener transport options.

There was a clear consensus from the Citizens' Assembly that public and active travel will not always be suitable for all needs, with this being seen as a particular issue in rural Scotland. Polling showed us that more rural young people were frequent drivers than the national rate (50% compared to 46%). The Citizens' Assembly, while recognising that private transport would still be necessary in some cases, was keen to ensure that private transport was made as green as possible, for example through increasing electric vehicle charging access and encouraging electric vehicle car-pooling. Additionally, there was a recognition that "air travel is a necessity for some, especially in rural and island communities", telling us that while we must make Scotland's transport as effective, accessible and sustainable as possible, care must be taken to ensure this is not done at the expense of certain communities who lack alternatives to private and air travel.

ANALYSIS

THE STATE OF TRANSPORT IN SCOTLAND

While recognising the needs of all, the consensus from the Citizens' Assembly was that priority should be given to public and active transport. Both policy and cultural shifts are required for public and active travel to become accessible for all and to become the 'normal' way of getting about for Scotland's young people.

When asked about the biggest barriers to using public transport, the most commonly cited barriers were cost (51%), irregular service (37%), necessary routes not being served (29%), inconvenience (25%) and safety (23%). With the exception of those aged 16-21 (who will benefit from free bus travel starting this summer) and urban responses, the majority of respondents across all other demographics cited cost as a barrier. Even then, 46% of 16-21 year-olds and 46% of urban respondents still said cost was a barrier. Importantly, 32% of frequent drivers said inconvenience was a barrier to public transport use, compared to 15% of non-drivers saying the same. Additionally, 33% of frequent drivers said that necessary routes not being served by public transport was a barrier to them using it, compared to 22% of non-drivers. Clearly, creating a cheaper, safer and more convenient transport system with more regular services and routes reaching all communities is key to reducing barriers and encouraging more young people to use public transport in Scotland. One specific recommendation from the Citizens' Assembly was to promote a well connected, intermodal transport network where people could easily switch between forms of public and active travel, with suggestions including public transport hubs, accessible links between stations, and increasing active travel infrastructure, e.g. bike storage, on public transport.

ANALYSIS

THE STATE OF TRANSPORT IN SCOTLAND

When asked about the biggest barriers to using active transport, the most commonly cited barriers were weather (44%), time (42%), safety (30%), lack of direct routes (26%) and lack of infrastructure (16%). Some of the suggested changes for an integrated transport network with more bike storage, for example, would reduce these barriers such as increasing the numbers of routes open to active travel and cutting journey times. Additionally more direct routes, and an expansion of current dedicated active travel corridors, would cut journey times, improve feelings of safety and make active travel more accessible and appealing. Although there is not much that can be done at a policy level to change the Scottish weather, there are steps that can be taken to make weather less of a barrier; improved active travel infrastructure, like sheltered and secure bike storage and increased changing facilities in workplaces and other busy sites, could go some way to making all-weather active travel more appealing. The Citizens' Assembly raised the particular issue of safety using active travel, saying that 'people should feel safe and able to use active travel'. Only two-thirds of polling respondents said they felt safe (somewhat or very) using active travel, and with 30% of people citing safety as a barrier to active travel use, there is a lot of work that needs to be done to make Scotland's young people feel safe when walking, wheeling or cycling. That work should start with an integrated transport network where public and active travel has priority over cars on our roads, as our Citizens' Assembly suggests.

ANALYSIS

TACKLING THE CLIMATE CRISIS THROUGH LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND TRANSPORT PLANNING

The most recent data from Transport Scotland tells us that transport currently accounts for 36% of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions at around 14.8 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO₂e). 70% of poll respondents thought that better transport infrastructure could help Scotland tackle the climate crisis, with this going up to 74% of frequent drivers. From this we can see that there is a clear appetite for improvements to be made to Scotland's transport system for the sake of the planet. But the environment is not the only beneficiary of a better transport system in Scotland. Breaking down the polling results by demographics shows that the current system is failing women, working class people, and people living in rural areas in particular.

While helping tackle the climate crisis, the Citizens' Assembly also recognised the potential for an improved, intersectional transport system to bring socio-economic benefits. To achieve this we need to build a system that prioritises "promoting sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity, and tackling poverty, inequality and isolation". The Citizens' Assembly told us that the key to creating a more inclusive transport system and realising the potential socio-economic benefits was better decision-making and more community empowerment.

ANALYSIS

TACKLING THE CLIMATE CRISIS THROUGH LOCAL DEMOCRACY AND TRANSPORT PLANNING

A number of the failings of the current system are a direct result of unrepresentative decision-makers failing to recognise how their decisions will negatively impact marginalised and underrepresented groups. Take for example the case of walkways and lighting, which is mostly in the hands of local councils: 75% of young men feel safe using active travel, but this drops to 62% of young women; meanwhile fewer than one third of [Scotland's councillors](#) are women. In the words of one resolution from the Citizens' Assembly, "decision making processes must include groups who are currently left out of and underrepresented in decision making" if we are to create a truly accessible and inclusive transport system.

It is also essential for local communities to be involved in the transport decisions being made in their area. 29% of respondents cited necessary routes not being served as a barrier to them using public transport, with this going up to 31% in suburban respondents. 36% of people were not satisfied (neutral, somewhat or very dissatisfied) with public and active transport in their local area, and this went up to 47% amongst rural respondents. There is a significant proportion of young people not currently satisfied with local transport and it is a clear barrier to them making the switch towards greener travel options. A better service in local communities is achievable through communities being empowered to shape decisions that affect them, with the promotion of "radical local democracy" as the Citizens' Assembly put it.

ANALYSIS

A FEMINIST TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Scotland's transport network is failing women. Analysis of the polling data tells us that women feel unsafe and underserved by the current systems.

Using both active and public transport, women feel significantly less safe than men when travelling. As said above, only 62% of women feel safe using active travel, compared to 75% of men. 35% of women said safety was a barrier to using active travel, compared to just 23% of men. When it comes to public transport, 66% of women feel safe compared to 76% of men, with 24% of women saying safety was a barrier to public transport usage compared to 20% of men.

As well as not being a safe space for women, public transport routes do not currently meet the needs of women. 42% of women cited irregular service as a barrier to public transport use, compared to 30% of men. This perhaps reflects the fact that women are still underrepresented in decision-making and our transport systems are therefore designed with men, and their patterns of movement, in mind. For instance, women still take on a disproportionate burden of unpaid care work which does not generally revolve around the 9-5 work day and so-called 'peak times' which have more frequent services. More regular public transport services are required to meet the needs of women and to create a more inclusive transport system.

ANALYSIS

A FEMINIST TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Poll responses were taken from people of all genders, however because the responses that came from people of genders other than man or woman accounted for a relatively small proportion of the overall sample size (around 1%) it was unfortunately not possible to draw meaningful conclusions for this group when it comes to a gendered comparison. However, given the patriarchal nature of the current transport decision-making processes, we can assume that the gendered inequalities shown in the data are reflected across all people of marginalised genders, or who are gender non-conforming. It is clear that more work needs to be done to create a transport system that works for people of all genders and none in Scotland.

ANALYSIS

SOCIAL MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

When gathering demographic data from the poll participants, data was gathered on where people fell on the National Readership Survey social grades classification system. This uses occupation as a proxy for class; for our purposes, 'middle class' refers to people who fall into categories ABC1 and 'working class' refers to people who fall into categories C2DE. This is an imperfect system and does not entirely accurately reflect the true impacts of class on people's lives, however it was the most appropriate proxy in the circumstances in which the poll was conducted.

Working class young people are less likely to drive a car, and are less satisfied with their local transport provisions. 48% of working class young people never drive, compared to 34% of middle class young people. From this we can assume that working class young people are going to be more dependent on public and active transport, yet only 58% of working class young people are satisfied with public and active travel in their local area, compared to 68% of middle class young people. Additionally, working class young people felt considerably less safe than middle class young people on public transport (66% to 72%) and active travel (55% to 73%). There is an obvious need to design a safer and more satisfactory transport system that works for all young people in Scotland.

ANALYSIS

SOCIAL MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT

When it comes to public transport, by far the biggest barrier facing working class young people was cost with 53% of respondents calling this a barrier. It is worth noting that a majority of middle class young people consider cost a barrier as well, however to a lesser extent than working class young people at 50%. In the latest Scottish Budget, the Scottish Greens secured free bus travel for young people in Scotland aged 22 and under. When asked if they would benefit from this (if they are 16-21) or would have benefitted from it (when they were under 22), 69% of working class young people said they would benefit from this policy, with 74% saying they would use the bus more as a result of the policy. Working class young people are also more enthusiastic for the free buses policy to be extended, with 76% supporting the policy being extended to all young people (students and people aged 30 and under); this was compared to 70% support amongst middle-class young people.

There is an obvious need to design a safer, more affordable and more satisfactory transport system that works for all young people in Scotland, with the potential to tackle socio-economic inequality and improve young people's life chances, for example making jobs in certain locations more accessible.

ANALYSIS

BRIDGING THE RURAL-URBAN TRANSPORT DIVIDE

Scotland is a very geographically diverse country with equally broad needs when it comes to moving around: whether it's sailing to Shetland, commuting from the suburbs to the cities or trying to cycle around Glasgow, people's transport needs differ depending on geographic location. Our polling participants were well distributed between urban, suburban and rural areas, and between the eight Holyrood electoral regions, which allows us to see how people's experiences of transport vary based on where they live.

As stated above, there is a clear need to build transport networks that really work for the local communities and reflect geographic reality. For instance, public and active travel might not always be perfectly suited to some of Scotland's rural and island communities, so changes must be made to meet local needs while still improving and greening our transport system. This could be achieved through promoting the transition to electric vehicles and making necessary infrastructure changes to support this; or through recognising that air travel will still be necessary for some and not punishing those who rely on it, as the Scottish Greens have done by exempting domestic flights linking the Highlands and Islands to the rest of the country from plans for a frequent flyer levy.

ANALYSIS

BRIDGING THE RURAL-URBAN TRANSPORT DIVIDE

Interestingly, there was a marked geographical difference in how people saw transport in the context of the climate emergency. Whereas 72% of urban respondents and 73% of suburban respondents thought better transport infrastructure could help Scotland tackle the climate crisis, this dropped to 62% amongst rural respondents. Perhaps this reflects the different rates of car usage between the areas - 50% of rural young people are frequent drivers with this dropping to 45% of urban and suburban young people - or the fact that rural areas have historically been underserved by transport infrastructure, particularly active and public transport. Although 63% of both urban and rural respondents were satisfied with public and active transport across Scotland, when asked about satisfaction with transport in their local area, only 59% of rural young people were satisfied compared to 70% of urban young people.

Some of the biggest barriers to use of public transport for rural young people were cost and poor quality services. One of the Citizens' Assembly findings - that public transport being expensive disproportionately disadvantages rural communities - was borne out by the polling results that showed 54% of rural young people cited cost as a barrier to them using public transport compared to an urban figure of 46%. Lack of a regular service was also a major barrier in rural areas, with 42% calling it a barrier compared to 33% in suburban areas and 36% in urban areas. With the majority of rural young people feeling priced out of public transport, more affordable options for young people will be of particular benefit to those in rural areas, opening up opportunities across the majority of Scotland.

ANALYSIS

BRIDGING THE RURAL-URBAN TRANSPORT DIVIDE

Safety concerns are also a barrier for rural young people on both public and active transport, but that is also true for urban young people. Suburban young people felt markedly safer on both public and active transport compared to their urban and rural counterparts. Whether it's trying to get about poorly lit city streets or navigating speeding cars on rural country roads, it is clear that more work needs to be done to make greener travel feel like a safe option for young people across Scotland.

ANALYSIS

TRANSPORT POLICIES TO MOVE SCOTLAND FORWARD

Given the challenges we face when we consider transport in Scotland - dissatisfaction with services, too-high greenhouse gas emissions, too-expensive public transport, unsafe streets and unrepresentative decision-making to name a few - it is clear that there needs to be an ambitious and comprehensive set of policies to change Scotland's transport. Our Citizens' Assembly told us that that needs to start with investing in transport and upgrading our existing system to ensure everyone in Scotland can access high-quality transport and infrastructure.

Some policy progress has been made in recent years, most notably with the Scottish Greens winning £115 million of annual investment in active travel and securing free bus travel for all young people in Scotland aged 22 and under which starts in summer 2021. There is huge public support for Green transport policies, with 75% of young people saying they will or would have benefited from free bus travel for under 22s, and 74% saying they would travel by bus more as a result. The Scottish Greens have said that free bus travel for under 22s is a first step on the path to more ambitious policies - the data shows us that young people support the Greens' plans to expand free public transport. 72% of those polled supported free bus travel being extended to all young people (aged 30 and under, and all students). 49% of young people support the idea that all public transport should be free, going up to 57% support after "not sure"s were excluded. These policies would particularly benefit rural and working class young people with these groups more likely to cite cost as a barrier to public transport use.

ANALYSIS

TRANSPORT POLICIES TO MOVE SCOTLAND FORWARD

On the issue of governance and decision-making, it is clear that our current systems are not designed with all users in mind - a consequence of unrepresentative decision-making and systems being run for profit, not to meet the needs of users. Our Citizens' Assembly told us that transport decisions should be made with the involvement of local communities and those who are currently underrepresented and marginalised in decision making, with decision-making priority given not to profit or shareholder dividends but to promoting sustainability, accessibility and inclusivity and to tackling poverty, inequality and isolation. This tallies with the polling data that shows us a considerable majority (68%) of Scotland's young people support nationalisation of public transport in Scotland. This shows us that Scotland's young people support the policies that the Scottish Greens have been championing for years: a publicly-owned rail company and locally-owned bus companies under local government control, where properly funded transport can be designed with people and the planet in mind. Interestingly more people were unsure than opposed nationalisation, with one in five respondents saying "Not sure". This shows us that more work needs to be done to communicate the arguments around transport ownership to young people.

CONCLUSIONS

- Over a third of young people in Scotland (36%) are not satisfied (neutral, somewhat or very dissatisfied) with public and active travel across Scotland.
- There is a clear need for high-quality public and active travel provision both to meet the needs of those who cannot rely on driving, and to attract those who currently rely on driving to cleaner, greener transport options.
- While we must make Scotland's transport as effective, accessible and sustainable as possible, care must be taken to ensure this is not done at the expense of certain communities who lack alternatives to private and air travel.
- When asked about the biggest barriers to using public transport, the most commonly cited barriers were cost (51%), irregular service (37%), necessary routes not being served (29%), inconvenience (25%) and safety (23%).
- When asked about the biggest barriers to using active transport, the most commonly cited barriers were weather (44%), time (42%), safety (30%), lack of direct routes (26%) and lack of infrastructure (16%).



CONCLUSIONS

- Only two-thirds of polling respondents said they felt safe (somewhat or very) using active travel
- 70% of poll respondents thought that better transport infrastructure could help Scotland tackle the climate crisis
- The current system is failing women, working class people, and people living in rural areas in particular.
- A number of the failings of the current system are a direct result of unrepresentative decision-makers failing to recognise how their decisions will negatively impact marginalised and underrepresented groups.



