Northumbria University
Staff Travel Survey Findings

Updated July 2022

Prepared For: Northumbria University

TPS Transport Consultants Ltd | TPS Business Hub | Stonebridge Court | 151-153 Wakefield Road | Wakefield | WF4 5HQ

tpsconsultants.co.uk info@tpsconsultants.co.uk +44 1924 664638

Registered number: 05973261

Document Record

Project Name	Northumbria University			
Document Ref.	P0723_20220420_Staff Travel Survey Findings			
Date:	20/04/2022			
Prepared by:	JM			
Checked by:	RB			
Authorised by:	RB			

Copyright Statement

1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction

1.1 As part of its Travel Plan Strategy, Northumbria University is committed to reviewing and analysing the travel and transport preferences of its staff and students on a regular basis. Staff and student questionnaire surveys are used to assess both the impacts of measures / activities delivered to date, but also to inform the development of future initiatives, ensuring these are complementary to the Travel Plan objectives and targets.

1.2 The most recent survey was undertaken in March 2022, the methodology and content reflected (for the most part) that in previous years, allowing for a comparison of trends over time. Notably, however, the survey (in 2020) pre-dates the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic; as such the 2022 survey sought to also capture data on how commuting patterns may have changed as a consequence of the pandemic.

1.3 Whilst previous surveys / reporting have included staff and students, collectively, the 2022 survey was focused on staff only, with data on student travel patterns collected via alternative means.

Report Format

1.4 Following this introductory section:

Section 2 outlines the methodology used to carry out the 2022 survey and details response rates, before summarising the key findings.

Section 3 provides a summary and recommendations.

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY & FINDINGS

Introduction

2.1 The methodology for the 2022 surveys replicated that in previous years, ensuring valid comparisons can be made between results over time. The survey was conducted online and covered a range of topic areas to ensure all travel behaviour decisions relating to travel to/from the University were considered.

2.2 This section provides an overview of the findings of the staff travel survey; taking each area in turn. Where it is considered beneficial, cross-tabulation has been undertaken to provide more in-depth analysis.

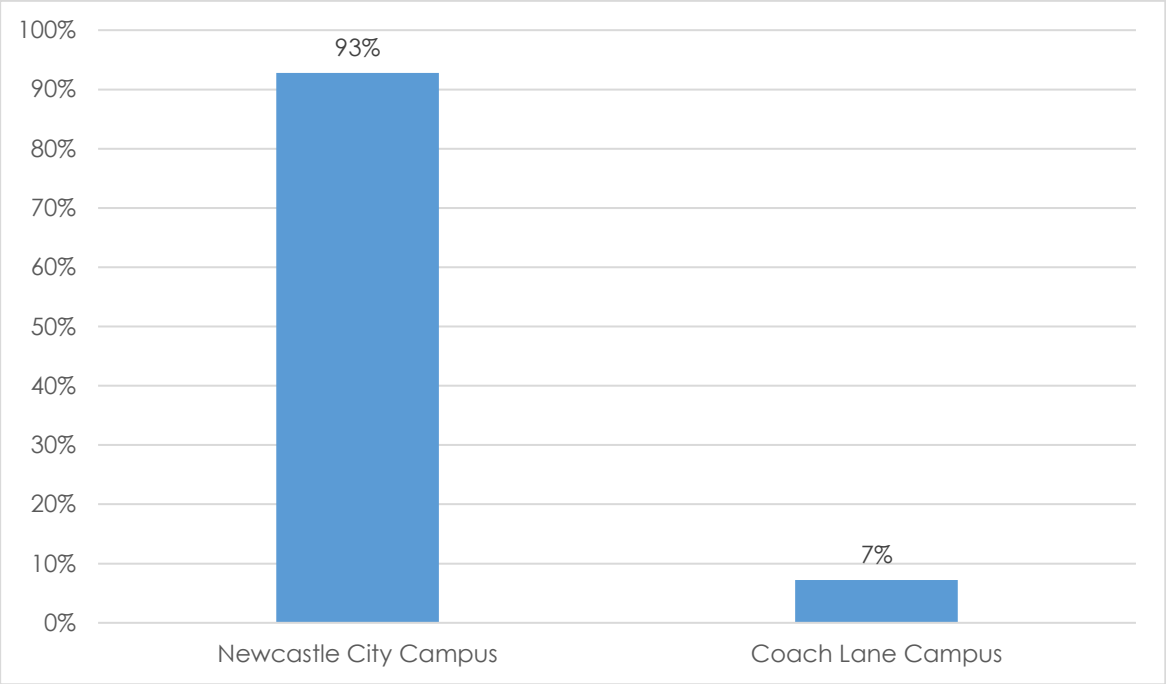
Survey Promotion and Response Rates

2.3 The survey was available online from the 10th March 2022 until 29th March 2022. The survey was completed by 514 people, equating to approximately 17% of the total number of staff at the University

Background Information

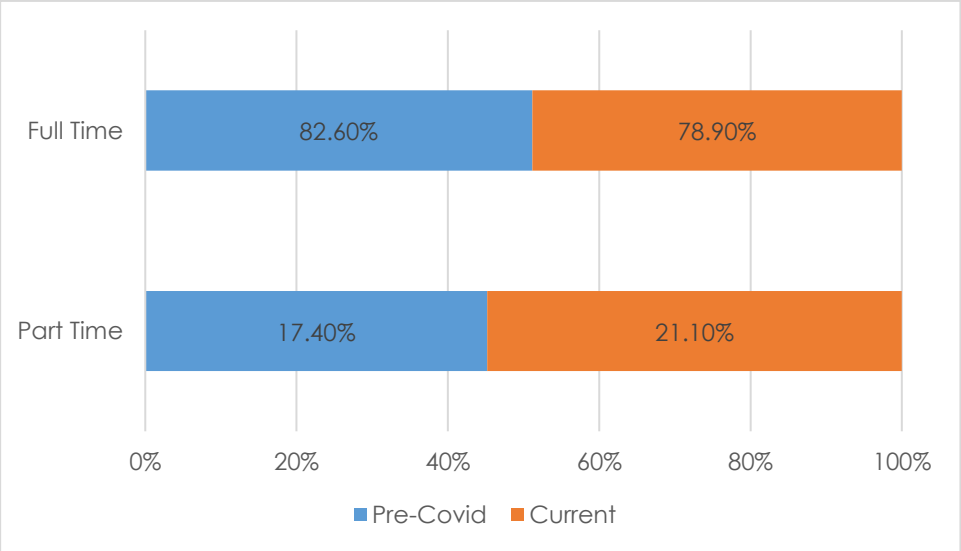
2.4 The survey collected information relating to the participant initially, in terms of where they work at the University and their employment status, in order to provide a picture of the makeup of respondents. A summary of primary / main work location and working hours are shown in **Figure 2.1** and **2.2** below.

Figure 2.1 – What is your primary / main work location? (Respondents: 514)



2.5 **Figure 2.1** demonstrates that 93% of the participants primary work location is the Newcastle City Campus, while 7% of participants are based at Coach Lane Campus.

Figure 2.2 – Do you work full or part time? (Respondents: 505)



2.6 **Figure 2.2** demonstrates that 78.9%% of participants work full time, with the remainder working part time. This is a decrease of 3.7% overall, in part, this is likely to be a result of the

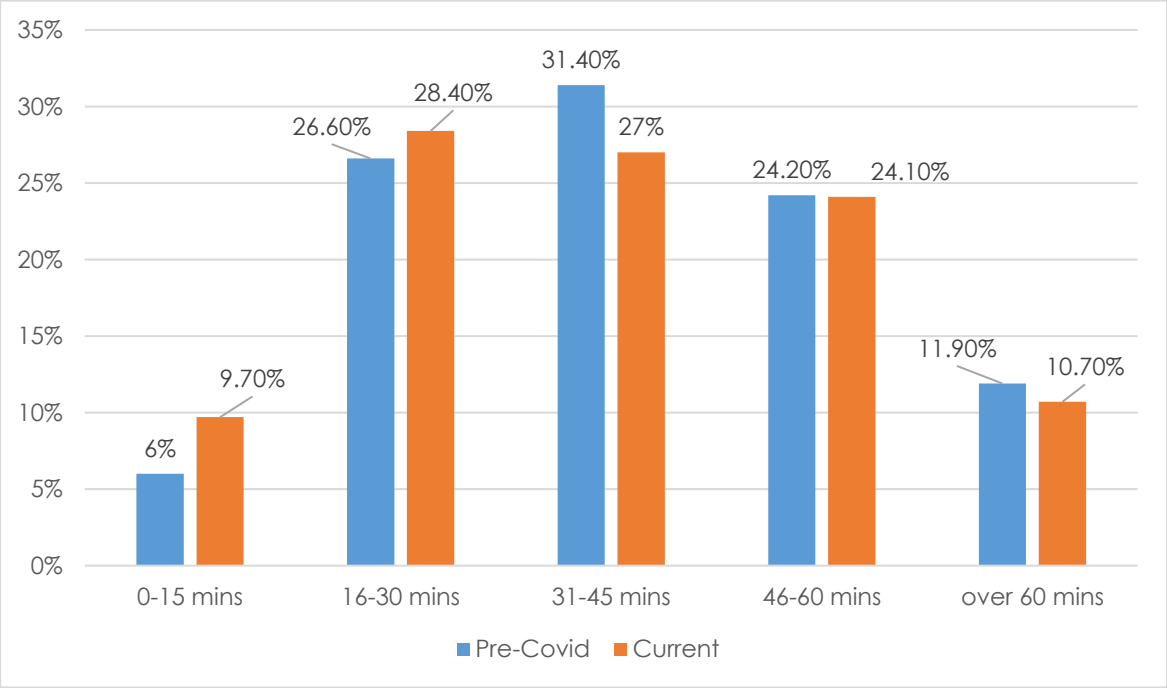
COVID-19 pandemic – although the formal 'work from home' guidance was no longer in place at the time of the survey, many staff have continued to do so on a more frequent basis; this is explored further later in this section.

Travel Patterns – Pre-COVID and Currently

2.7 As part of the survey, participants were asked about their travel patterns currently, in order to understand the impact this has had on commuting, in terms of time, method and frequency of travel. The following section provides a summary of these patterns, pre-Covid (considering previous survey data) and currently.

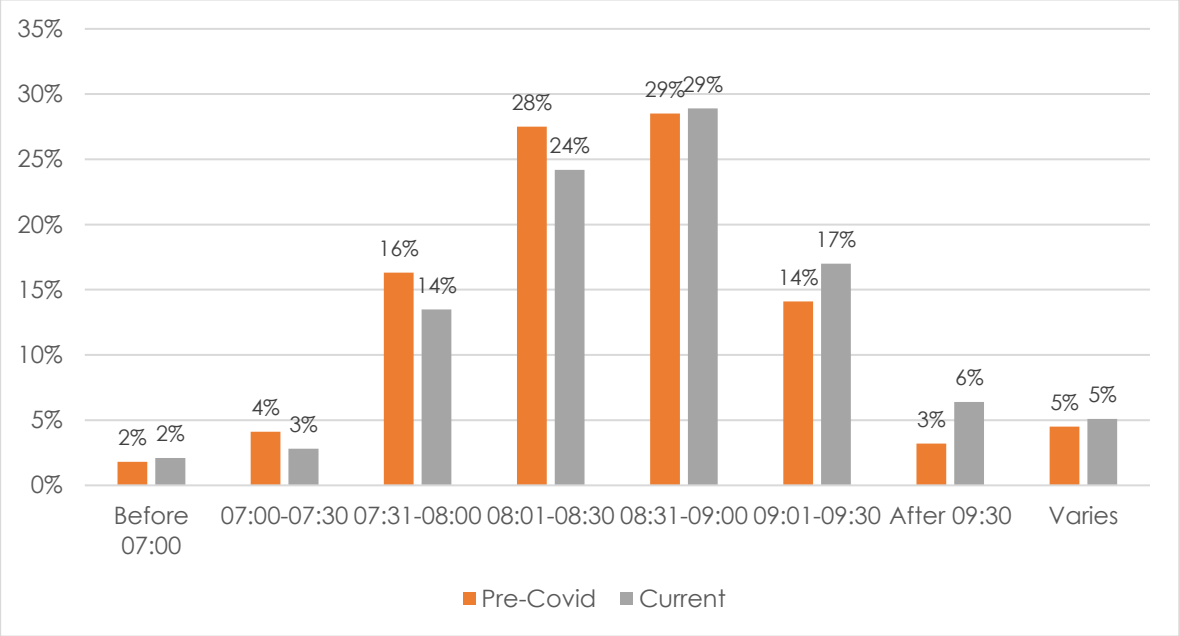
2.8 Respondents were asked how long their commute usually takes. **Figure 2.3** shows that staff journey times vary considerably, with the highest proportion of staff taking 16 – 30 minutes to get to work (28.4%). Encouragingly, over a third of staff currently take less than half an hour to commute (38.1%), however, 10.7% take over an hour; typically the longer the journey time experienced, the fewer sustainable travel options will be available.

Table 2.3: Staff Journey Times (n=513)



2.10 **Figures 2.4** and **Figure 2.5** provide a comparison of how people's working patterns have changed since before the pandemic.

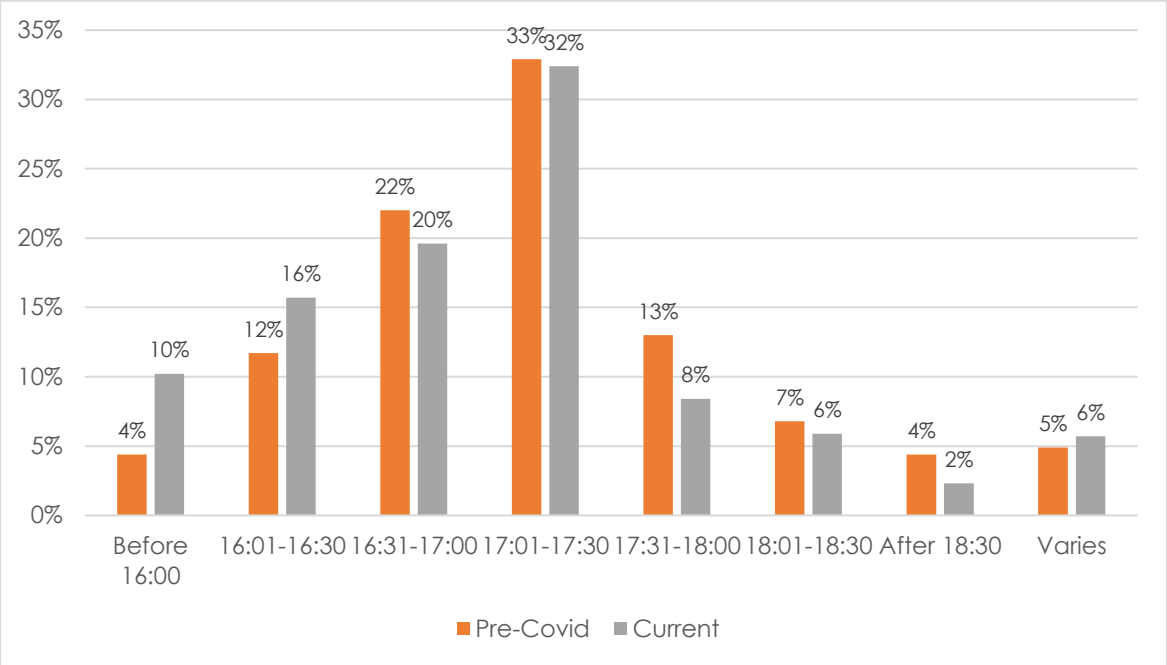
Figure 2.4 – What time do you normally start work? (Respondents: 514)



2.11 **Figure 2.4** demonstrates that the time staff start work is broadly similar now to pre-Covid, however, there has been a modest trend towards respondents starting work later; pre-Covid 50% of respondents started work after 0830. Currently, this is 57%.

2.12 Free text questions at the end of the survey asked respondents to describe how their commuting patterns have changed (if they have) as a consequence of the pandemic. The comments corroborate the above and indicate that a significant number of people have altered their working hours to avoid busy travel periods and take advantage of flexible working.

Figure 2.5 – What time do you normally finish work? (Respondents: 514)

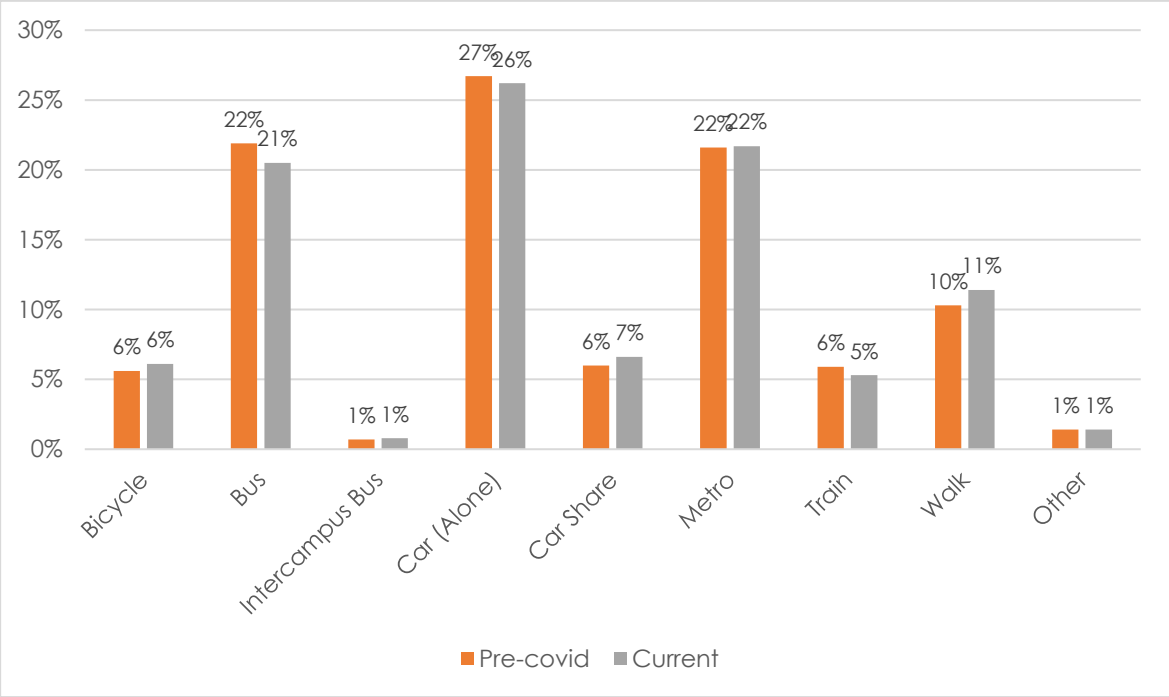


2.13 **Figure 2.5** suggests that the time people finish work has altered most for those finishing before 16:30 with 8% of participants choosing to do so when comparing pre-COVID to current patterns. Consequently, there has been a decrease from 24% to 17% of participants finishing after 17:30.

2.14 The survey went on to establish the main mode of commuting. **Figure 2.6** demonstrates the modal split for participants.

Figure 2.6 – What is your main mode of transport for your commute to and from work?

(Respondents: 514)



2.15 The data in **Figure 2.6** demonstrates that the main mode of transport that participants used for their commute to and from work is broadly similar now to pre-Covid.

2.16 The home postcodes and mode for each member of staff responding to the survey have been mapped to provide a visual representation of how staff are travelling and where from. All postcodes and modes are shown in **Appendix B**. Staff travel in from as far North as Alwick (Car Share) and as far south as Leeds (by Car (Alone)), albeit it is anticipated that these trips are not made on a daily basis.

2.17 Closer to Newcastle it is encouraging to see the obvious concentration of sustainable modes being used, and lower levels of single occupancy car use. The Metro clearly offers a valuable public transport connection to areas to the north east, towards Whitley Bay and south east towards South Shields. Notwithstanding this, there remains a cohort of staff that live in areas well served by sustainable modes (or within walking / cycling distance) that travel by car alone – whilst this could be for a variety of reasons, which are explored later in this section, ensuring this group are aware of their alternatives should remain a key focus for the Travel Plan programme.

2.18 Closer to Newcastle it is encouraging to see the obvious concentration of sustainable modes being used, and lower levels of single occupancy car use. The Metro clearly offers a

valuable public transport connection to areas to the north east, towards Whitley Bay and south east towards South Shields. Notwithstanding this, there remains a cohort of staff that live in areas well served by sustainable modes (or within walking / cycling distance) that travel by car alone – whilst this could be for a variety of reasons, which are explored later in this section, ensuring this group are aware of their alternatives should remain a key focus for the Travel Plan programme

2.19 Whilst the Travel Plan targets are predicated on main mode of travel and, as a consequence, the survey requires respondents to select just one main mode, in reality there are a proportion of staff and students whose mode choices are very fluid, for example someone may usually travel by public transport during the winter months, but often cycle during warmer weather. Similarly, someone may drive three days a week and car share for two days. It is important to be able to capture this information, as encouraging the more sustainable travel behaviour more often offers a 'quick win' in respect of targets for modal shift (as compared to trying to convert habitual car users).

2.20 Firstly, the survey asked staff whether they occasionally travel by alternative modes. **Figure 2.7** illustrates the proportion of staff who travel by alternative modes, both pre-Covid and currently.

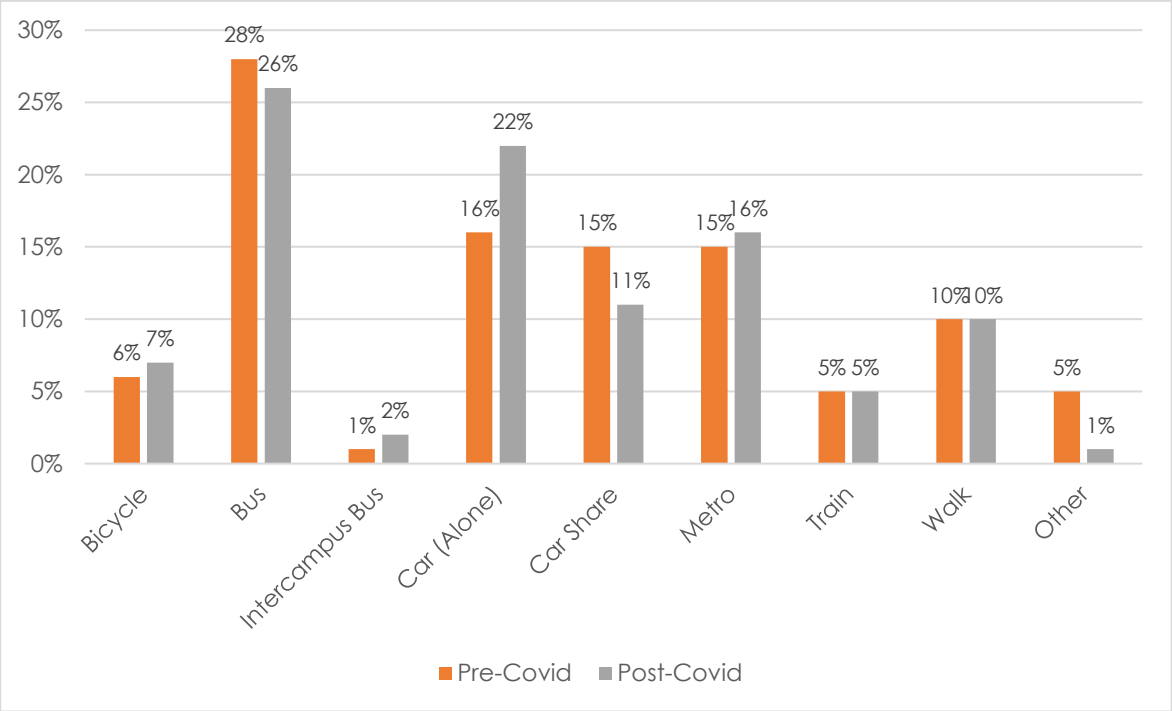
Figure 2.7: Percentage of Staff that Occasionally Travel by Alternative Modes (Respondents: 514)

	Survey Year		
	2020	**2022**	**+/-**
Yes	63%	61.4%	-1.6%
No	37%	38.6%	+1.6%

2.21 **Figure 2.7** reveals that over a third of staff always use the same mode, suggesting a majority of two thirds vary how they travel. This is very positive as encouraging staff to travel by more sustainable modes on just one or a few days a week can make a significant reduction in demand for car parking and on carbon emissions from travel. **Figure 2.8** provides a breakdown of the occasional modes used by staff members. This considers the results both pre-COVID and currently, in order to understand how people's choices may have changed since the pandemic.

Figure 2.8 – Do you sometimes use an alternative mode of travel for your commute?

(Respondents: xx – Pre-Covid alternative, 514 - Current alternative)



2.22 Of the 61.4% of respondents who indicated that they occasionally travel by alternative modes, **Figure 2.8** demonstrates that there has been a modest increase (6%) in the proportion of people who state that they travel by car alone. This is likely to be a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and consequently a reluctance to travel by modes of transport where commuters are in close proximity to others. Similarly, car sharing has reduced by 4%, from 15% to 11%.

2.23 Staff were also asked how frequently they use these occasional modes; the results are summarised in **Figure 2.9**. Of those who do travel by an occasional mode (i.e. after excluding those who do not from the analysis), over two fifths said they only use this mode infrequently (41%). However, a significant 26% travel by their occasional mode once a week or more.

Figure 2.9: Staff Frequency of Occasional Mode (n= 316)

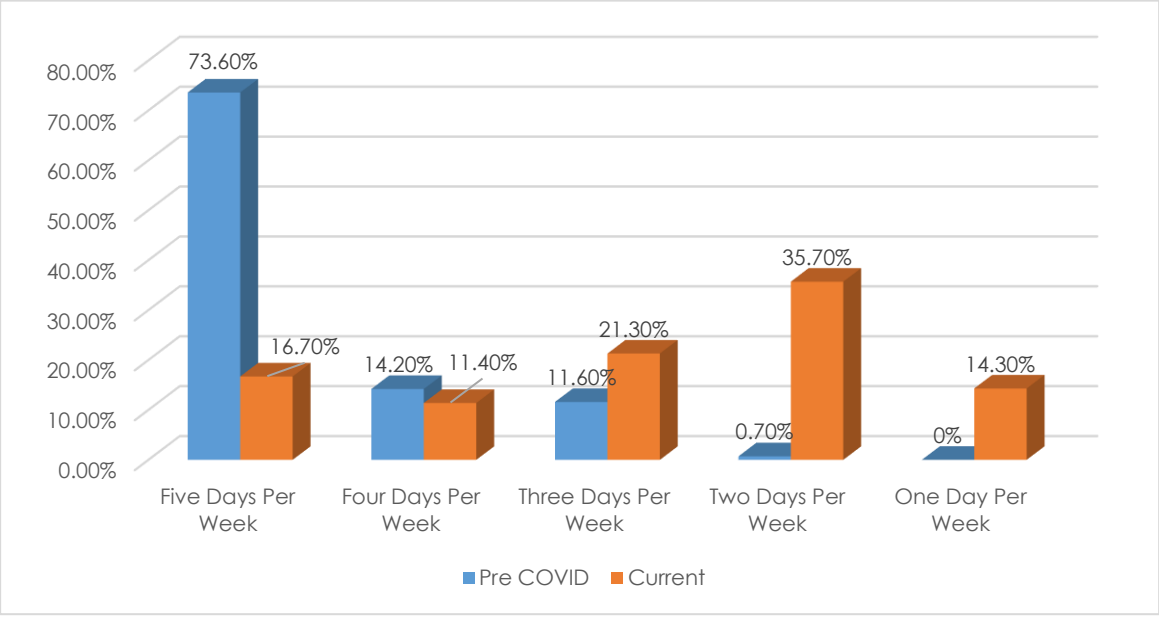
Frequency	%	Count
Infrequently	41%	128
Once a month	11%	35
1-3 times a month	22%	70
Once a week	18%	57
More than once a week	8%	26
Total	100%	316

2.24 Effective travel planning can often involve encouraging those that sometimes use an alternative to do so more often (rather than affecting wholesale change), encouraging those who might have varied the mode they used prior to the pandemic to consider doing so once more should be a key focus moving forwards.

2.25 Understanding the peak periods for staff and students being on campus gives a good insight into demand for facilities such as car and cycle parking. Policies or initiatives that can help spread the arrival and departure times of staff and students can go some way to easing pressure, demand and congestion within the city.

2.26 Furthermore, it is important to understand how the pandemic has affected the number of days that people are travelling to their workplace. **Figure 2.10** summarises the responses received.

Figure 2.10 – Frequency of Commute to Work (Respondents: 514)



2.27 **Figure 2.10** clearly demonstrates that the proportion of people travelling 5 days per week to their place of work has reduced significantly. Pre-Covid, over 73% of staff commuted five days per week. Currently, this has reduced to between 16.7% with the majority of staff now commuting either two or three days per week. This will have a significant impact on the carbon emissions associated with travel.

2.28 Respondents were asked to identify the reason(s) for their current usual mode of travel to work. **Figure 2.11** overleaf, sets out the responses received in relation to this.

Figure 2.11: Primary Reasons for Commuting Mode (Respondents: 133)

Reason	No.	% of respondents
Convenience	242	22%
Quicker	162	15%
Health - personal fitness/exercise	113	10%
Safety/personal security	94	9%
Drop off/collect others before coming to university	87	8%
Cheaper	47	4%
Health - disability/mobility difficulties	35	3%
Personal errands or visits before/during/after university e.g. shopping, gym	37	3%
Not enough information about alternatives	32	3%
Lack of alternatives	29	3%
Difficulty parking	20	2%
Environmental reasons	23	2%
Personal space and comfort	19	2%
Carer responsibilities	13	1%
Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic	7	1%
Carry equipment/books	11	1%
Other	116	11%

2.29 The information above demonstrates that 22% of survey respondents' primary reason for their usual travel mode is out of convenience, with journey time being the second most popular reason given. A journey time assessment has been undertaken to validate this, based on respondents' home postcodes.

2.30 **Figure 2.12** and the mapping at **Appendix A** provide an overview of the results of this exercise (for all valid postcodes). The results are useful in understanding the proportion of staff that are likely to have a viable alternative to driving alone (and can be compared with

the proportion that actually use a more sustainable mode), in order that travel planning can be effectively targeted.

Figure 2.12 – Journey Distance Assessment

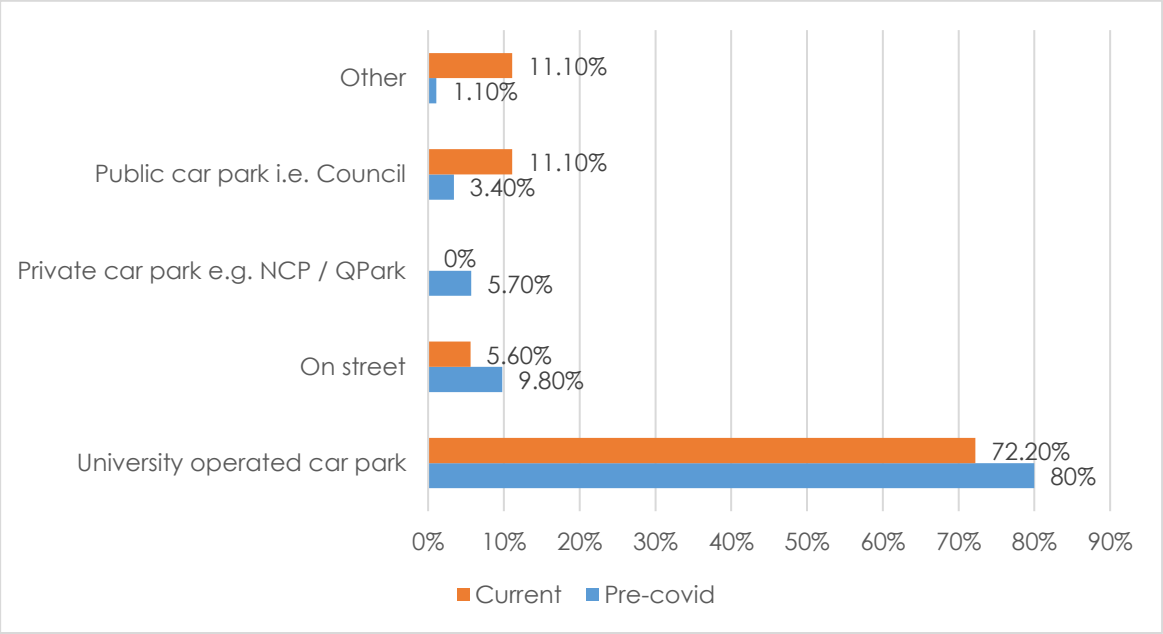
Distance	No.	%
Less than 1km	7	1%
1-2km	25	5%
2-5km	90	18%
5-10km	114	22%
10-15km	94	18%
15-20km	91	18%
More than 20km	90	18%
Total	511	100%

2.31 **Figure 2.12** indicates that less tan one quarter (24%) of respondents live within 5km of the University. Staff who live within this distance band generally have more opportunities to travel by means other than driving alone. The mapping at **Appendix A** also illustrates the spread of staff home postcodes by mode and demonstrates that there is a general dominance of active travel amongst those living within close proximity of the University.

Car Drivers

2.32 Those participants who usually drive to work were asked where they currently park. A comparison is provided with the data collected from the 2020 survey. **Figure 2.13** summarises the responses.

Figure 2.13 – Staff parking location (2022 Respondents: 18; 2020 Respondents: 265)



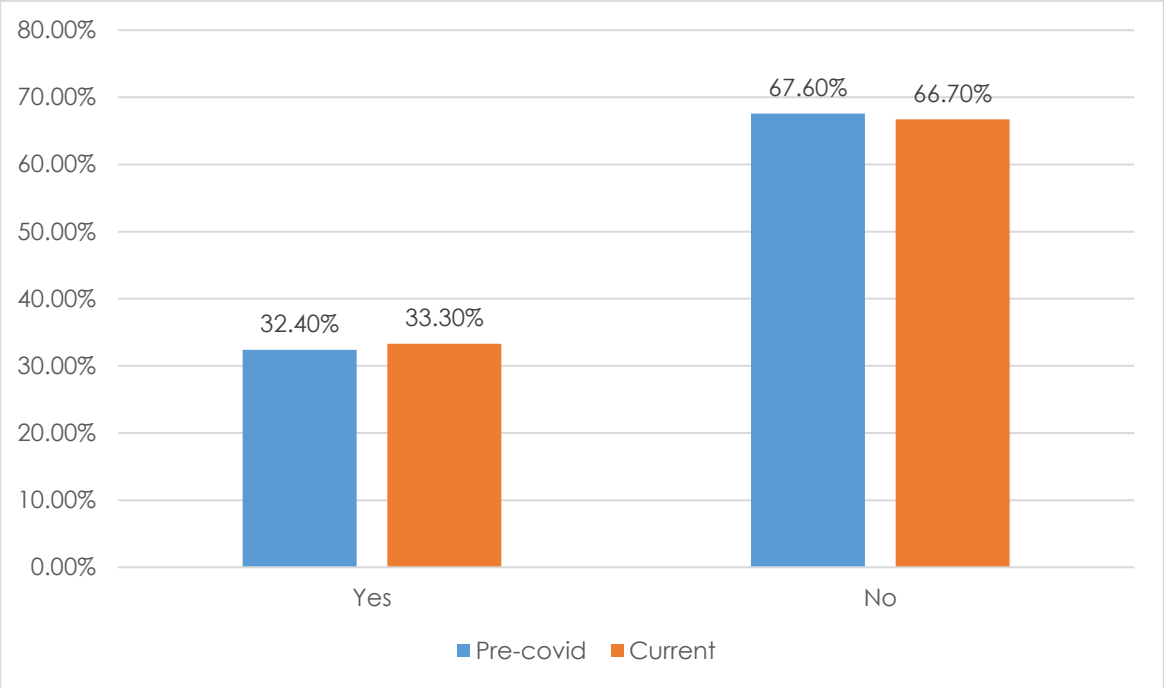
2.33 The responses indicate that the most popular staff parking location continues to be university operated car parks of which there has been an uplift in use, from 72.2% to 80%. It should be noted that the 2020 survey gathered 265 responses, however, the 2022 survey only gathered 18 responses to this question. Nonetheless, the data signifies that the trends are consistent between both surveys.

2.34 In order to gauge the uptake of electric vehicles over time, employees who currently drive were asked to indicate their current vehicle / engine type and whether they are considering changing your car to an electric vehicle in the next 3 years. **Figures 2.14 and 2.15** summarise the responses received, along with the responses from the 2020 survey

Figure 2.14 – Current Vehicle Type, Car Drivers (Respondents: 18)

Engine Type	2020	2022
Petrol	64%	57.1%
Diesel	34%	35.3%
Hybrid	2%	1.5%
Electric	1%	6%

Figure 2.15 – Are you considering changing your car to an electric vehicle in the next 3 years? (Respondents: 15)



2.35 **Figure 2.15** demonstrates that 33.3% are currently considering changing their car to an electric vehicle for their next vehicle in the next three years, which is comparable to the responses from the 2020 survey,

2.36 It is noted that ownership of electric vehicles by staff has increased by 5% from 1% to 6% since the 2020 survey, with petrol vehicle ownership decreasing by 6.9% over the same time period.

Potential For Modal Shift (Car Drivers)

2.37 Car drivers were asked what would encourage them to change their primary mode of travel to/from work to a more sustainable option. **Figures 2.16 and 2.17** summarise the responses.

Figure 2.16: Incentives to Travel by Public Transport

Reason	No.	% of Respondents
Cheaper Fares	152	28%
A more frequent service	117	22%
No	78	14%
Stops closer to my home address	68	13%
More seats available at peak times	34	6%
Other	24	4%
Better quality of vehicle	22	4%
More car parking available at public transport hubs	16	3%
Improved customer service	14	3%
Smart (electronic) ticketing	8	1%
More cycle parking available at public transport hubs	4	1%
More information about which services to use	4	1%

2.38 The results in **Figure 2.16** demonstrate that for the majority of respondents (28%), cheaper fares would encourage them to travel by bus, with a further 22% suggest that a more frequent service would encourage them to change from car driver (alone) to travel by bus.

Figure 2.17: Incentives for Active Travel (Respondents: 220)

Reason	No.	% of Respondents
No	218	60%
Improving shower, locker and changing facilities	30	8%
Support in purchasing an e-Bike	29	8%
Working with the local authority to improve routes to campus	27	7%
Offering more discounts on bikes and accessories	17	5%
Improving bicycle security on campus	7	2%
Adding more sheltered cycle parking on campus (covered metal hoops)	5	1%
Offering more cycle skills training	4	1%
Adding more secure cycle parking on campus (lockable storage)	3	1%
Improving routes through campus	3	1%
Increasing the number of Dr Bike sessions on campus (free bike maintenance)	2	1%
Other	19	5%

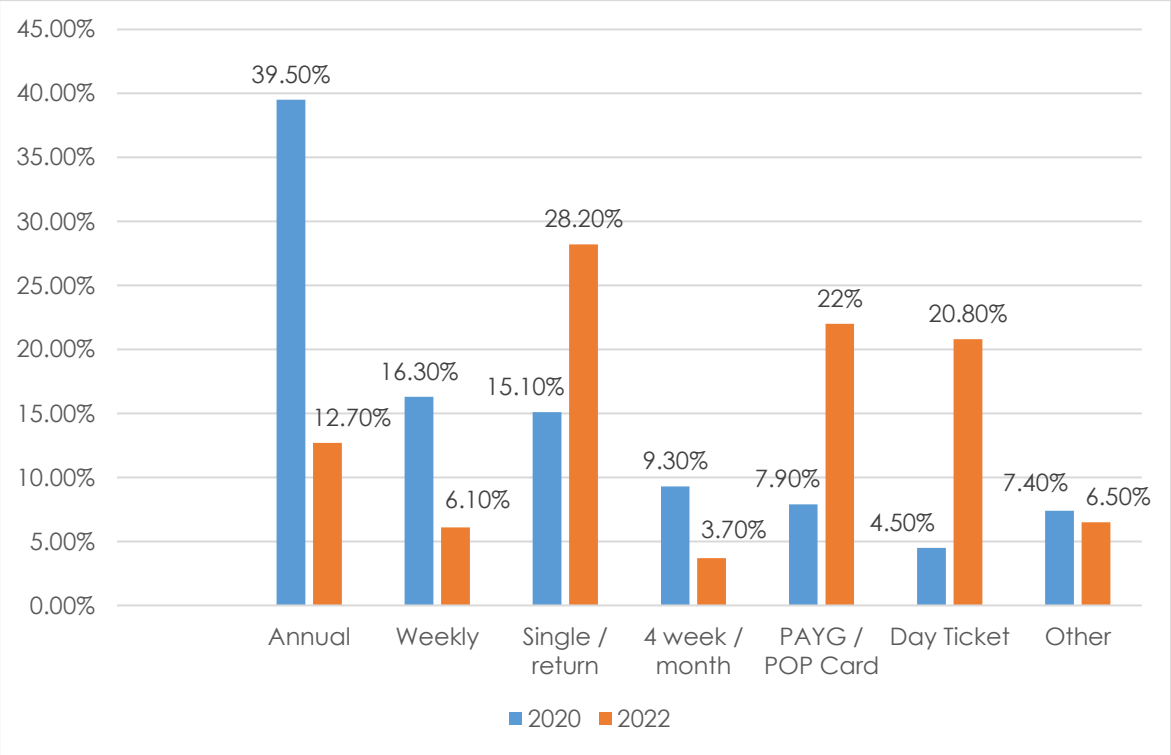
2.39 As **Figure 2.17** shows, the majority of car drivers (60.0%) suggest that nothing would encourage them to switch to a more active mode of travel. 8% of respondents suggest that

improved shower/changing facilities at the University would encourage them to switch to walking or cycling, or support in purchasing an e-bike.

Travel by Public Transport

2.40 Those who selected bus travel as their primary mode of travel were asked what ticket they currently have. **Figure 2.18** summarises the responses, along with those gathered in 20202.

Figure 2.18 – Popularity of Bus Ticket Options (Respondents: 62)



2.41 The information set out in **Figure 2.18** demonstrates that the majority of people who use the bus to travel to work, do so using a standard single/return ticket, PAYG ticket or day ticket, whereas previously, the vast majority of staff used an Annual or Weekly ticket. This again aligns with the infrequent nature of people travelling to work and the prevalence of working from home, since the pandemic. Employees may be unwilling to commit to a longer-term ticket as it is unlikely that they will need to travel every day. Considering the results of the previous survey in 2019, 15.1% of respondents utilised standard single/return tickets and there has thus been a pronounced increase in the number of people utilising this ticket type.

2.42 Amongst those that answered 'other', a number of respondents suggest that they are eligible for the University Corporate Travel Scheme. Respondents also suggest that they purchase Go North East Flexi 5 or use a free concessionary Nexus pass.

Travel by Bike

2.43 Facilities and infrastructure available for cyclists can sometimes be a barrier to cycling to/from work. With this in mind, those who already cycle were asked what the University could do to improve facilities for cyclists, which might help to encourage this mode of travel. The results are set out in **Figure 2.19.**

Figure 2.19 Improvements to Cycle Infrastructure / Facilities

Response	No.	% of Respondents
Adding more secure cycle parking on campus (lockable storage)	14	44%
Improving shower, locker and changing facilities	14	44%
Adding more sheltered cycle parking on campus (covered metal hoops)	12	38%
Improving bicycle security on campus	11	34%
Offering more discounts on bikes and accessories	9	28%
Increasing the number of Dr Bike sessions on campus (free bike maintenance)	6	19%
Offering more cycle skills training	5	16%
Improving routes through campus	4	13%

2.44 Further improvements to the secure cycle parking facilities and improved shower and changing facilities may help to encourage more people to cycle – both of which were the most popular answer (44% of respondents), followed by more sheltered cycle parking on campus.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Reflecting the results of the 2022 travel survey, summarised in the preceding section, the following offers a list of recommendations that the University may want to give further consideration to:

- Travel patterns, in terms of the hours people work have changed since Pre-covid, with a number of people altering their working patterns to avoid busy travel periods and taking advantage of flexible working. Future initiatives and surveys should take account of the increase in 'hybrid working' and what this means for travel patterns; e.g. Access to flexible parking permits, ability to share parking permit with colleagues who work on opposite days, discounts on flexible ticket options for Public Transport use;
- Based on the likely projected increase in electric vehicle lease / purchase amongst staff, the University should consider its approach / strategy around additional electric vehicle charging capacity throughout the campus;
- In addition to the above, the University should consider how best to enhance information provision on electric vehicles, particularly for those that travel significant distances to work. EV leasing through salary sacrifice may be something that the University wishes to give further consideration to;
- The University should look at how best to offer value for money tickets on public transport, in order to incentivise the use of public transport instead of the car, reflecting a hybrid approach to working (and thus more flexible travel requirements);
- In order to encourage greater levels of cycling, consider improved / more cycle parking facilities (with a focus on security). In addition, shower/changing facilities for staff to utilise across the campus could be improved.
- Any new cycle parking should be future proofed to provide facilities for e-bike charging, given the likely increase in the use of e-bikes for commuting. This will avoid the need for employees to charge batteries in their workplace.

Appendix A

Current Main Mode of Travel Maps