Cheshire West & Chester Council

Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy

Consultation Feedback Report

Cheshire West and Chester

Findings of the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy Consultation

Background to the consultation

In 2019 Cheshire West and Chester Council unanimously declared a climate emergency in the borough. The Council's emergency response plan sets out the strategy for supporting the borough to achieve carbon neutrality ("net zero") by 2045.

Transport is recognised as the second-highest carbon emitting sector locally, and decarbonising transport is essential to achieving net zero. To accomplish this, it is recognised that we need to use motorised travel less, sustainably increase our use of public transport and, where car travel is unavoidable, only use fully zero-emission vehicles. This will also bring about significant improvements in air quality, improve residents' health, and make our towns and cities more attractive places to live in, work in and visit.

In addition, the Government has plans to end the sale of petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030, and sales of electric vehicles are already rising rapidly across the borough.

The Council is aware that the availability of public charge point infrastructure is a barrier which could be stopping people from transitioning to electric vehicles. Therefore, an Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy has been developed. The strategy covers the next five years and sets a framework for the Council's role in the long term. It aims to help residents, businesses, and other organisations transition to electric vehicles.

12 core policies were developed which outline the Council's future role in supporting the delivery of electric vehicle charging infrastructure. This consultation invited feedback on those policies as well as providing an opportunity to share ideas about where the strategy could be improved. The consultation also sought to understand information about respondents' habits, practices, and expectations in relation to electric vehicles, and how these vary between different groups.

How the consultation was carried out

The consultation ran for 6 weeks between 1 February and 15 March 2023.

During this period, there were multiple ways in which the public and all interested bodies could provide their views and ensure their voices were heard. These methods included an online survey with paper copies available on request, and the option to respond to the consultation by email, letter, or telephone.

The consultation received 217 survey responses and 8 participants emailed us their views.

Additional consultation publicity

There were several additional communication methods implemented to ensure that key stakeholders were made aware of the consultation and given the opportunity to

have their say. This included press releases, emails to key stakeholder groups, member briefings, social media, and presence of the consultation on the Council website.

Several third-party groups and organisations also posted or shared information about the consultation on their Facebook profiles including Eco Communities, Westminster Park Residents Association and Charge2Access – Campaign for Disabled Access to Public Electric Vehicle Charging.

In addition, paper copies of the consultation materials and survey were circulated to local disabled peoples' groups via the Council's Access Officer, following engagement with the Corporate Disability Access Forum.

Key messages

The key messages to emerge from the consultation process with regards to the proposed actions are as follows.

- There were more respondents who did not own an electric vehicle, compared to those who did and those who owned an electric vehicle were more likely to support the strategy compared to those who do not own an electric vehicle
- The ability to charge an electric vehicle at home, or away from home, were the two most important factors to those considering whether to buy an electric vehicle
- Most respondents did not consider Cheshire West and Chester's existing electric vehicle charging infrastructure to be sufficient to meet existing demand
- Most respondents supported the aims of the strategy, with Policy 6: Electric Vehicle Charging in new development sites, the policy most respondents agreed with
- Just over half of respondents considered that the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy will have very positive/fairly positive impact upon them
- There were many comments submitted about electric vehicle charging more generally, including the need for rapid charging points and accessible charging points

Next steps

The findings from this consultation have helped to shape the final version of Cheshire West and Chester's local Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy ahead of adoption by the Council's Cabinet. The final strategy will be an important guide to support the Council's approach to the roll-out of electric vehicle charging infrastructure over the coming five years.

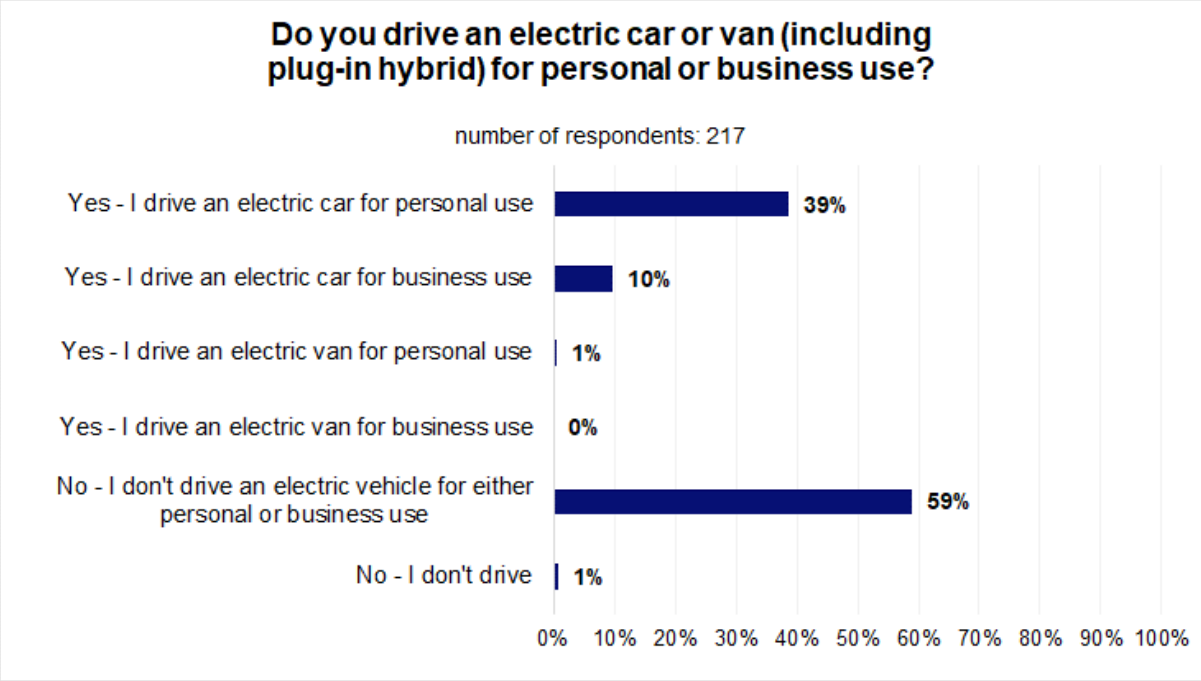
While this strategy covers the next five years, we are aware that technology and trends within the electric vehicle industry are still developing quickly. Through the development of future strategies, including our plans to develop a new Local Transport Plan for the borough, and ongoing monitoring activities, we will assess the need to develop or revise this strategy in line with future developments. There will be further opportunities to get involved in the future, particularly in the prioritisation and

delivery of individual sites, which we will promote to residents, partners, and local businesses in due course as relevant.

Summary of Consultation Findings

Current Electric Vehicle Usage

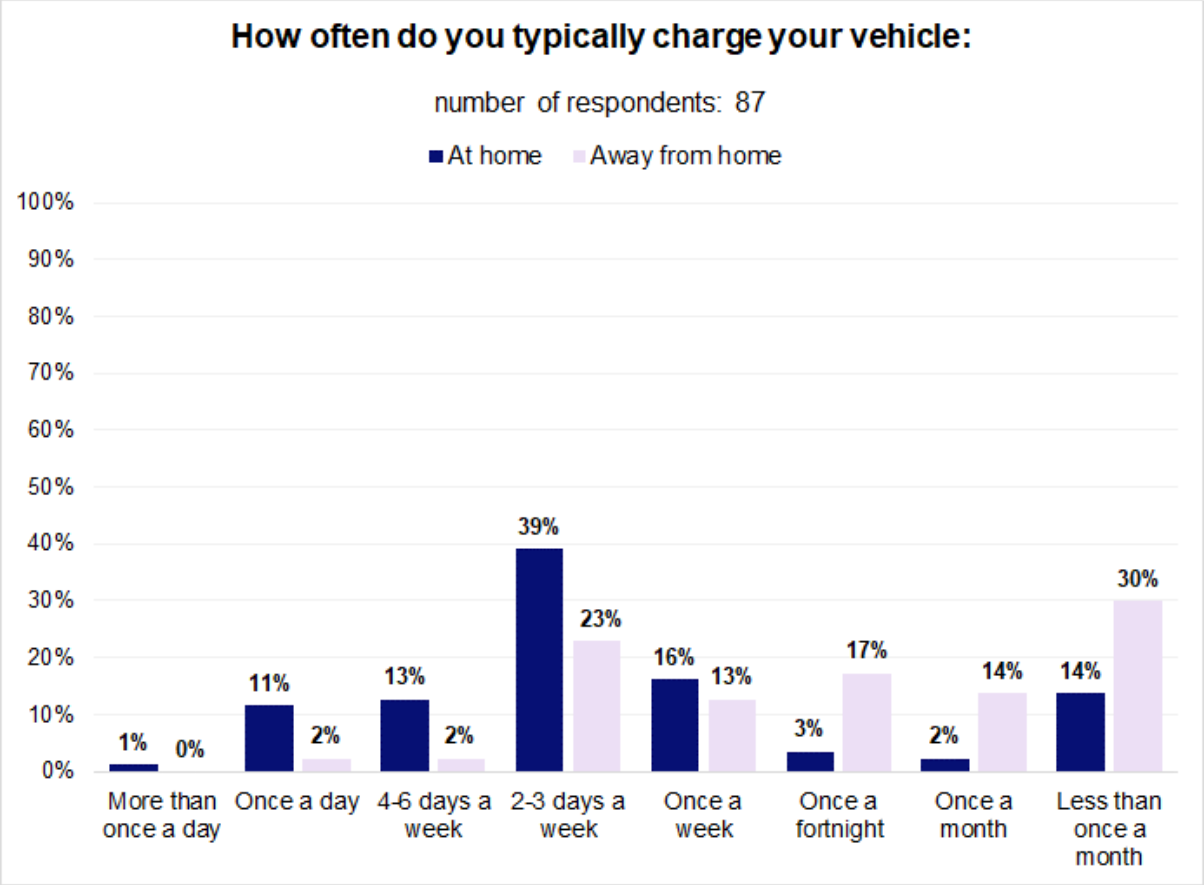
Respondents were asked whether they drive an electric car or van (including a plug-in hybrid) for personal or business use.



The chart above shows that most respondents (59%) do not drive an electric vehicle for either personal or business use. 39% drive an electric car for personal use and 10% drive an electric car for business purposes. No respondents use an electric van for business purposes, and less than 1% drive an electric van for personal use. Less than 1% of respondents stated they do not drive at all. According to the 2021 Census data 17% of Cheshire West and Chester households do not have a car and therefore it is recognised that this group is underrepresented in responding to the consultation.

Of the respondents who declared use of electric vehicles, the majority came from the areas with the highest response rates (Chester and surrounding villages, including Northwich). Although the total number of responses was less than 10, it is worth mentioning that almost all respondents located around Ellesmere Port, and over 50% or respondents from the Frodsham and Helsby area, declared use of electric vehicles.

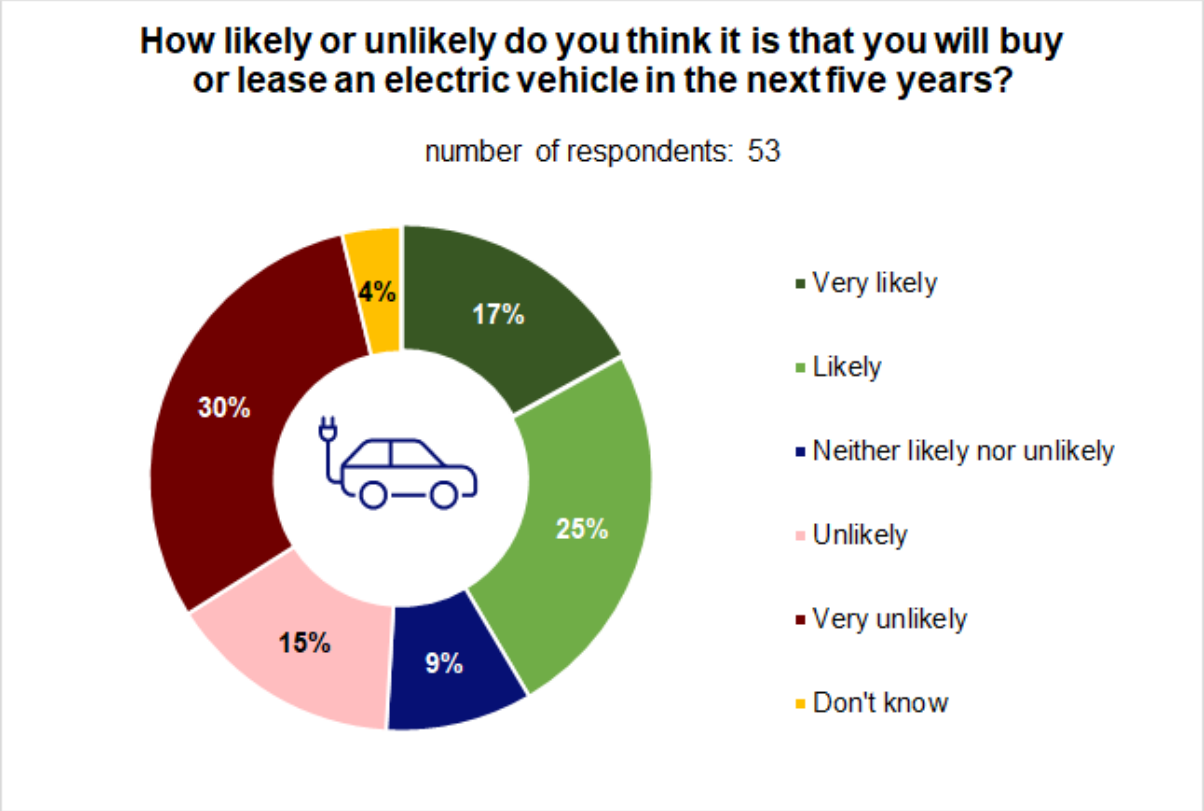
Those who identified themselves as drivers of electric vehicles were asked a further two questions: how often do you typically charge your vehicle at home, and how often do you drive your vehicle away from home?



The above chart shows that around two thirds of respondents who drive electric vehicles charge them at home 2-3 days a week or more (64%) and around three quarters charge them away from home once a week or less (74%).

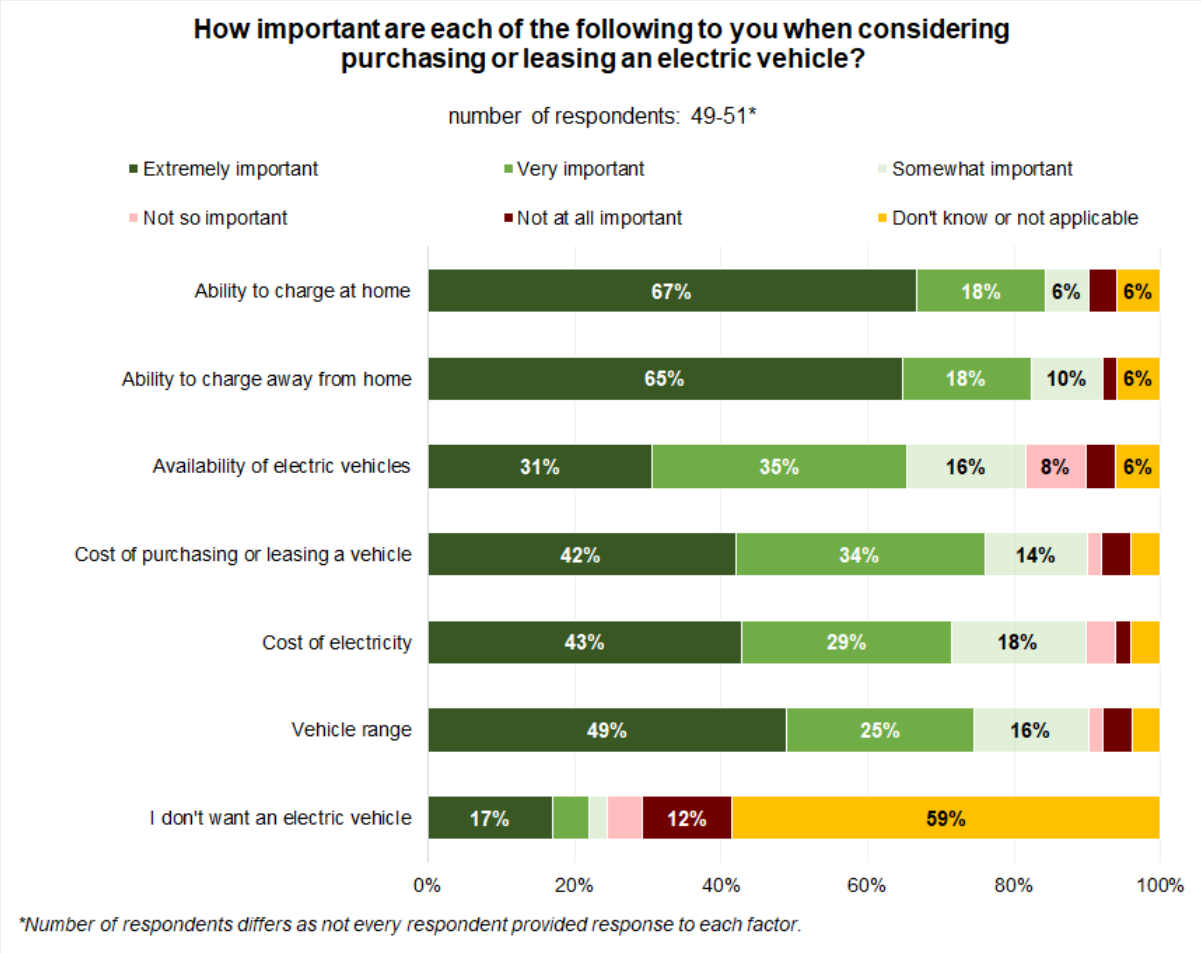
Future Electric Vehicle Usage

Respondents who did not own an electric vehicle were asked about their anticipated future electric vehicle usage.



The above chart shows that of those who answered the question, a similar percentage of respondents (45%) were unlikely to buy or lease an electric vehicle compared to those who said they were likely to do so (42%), indicating mixed views on anticipated future ownership of electric vehicles.

Respondents were also asked how important several factors were when considering buying an electric vehicle.



The above chart shows that the most important factor to respondents was the ability to charge their vehicles either at home (67%) or away from home (65%), followed by vehicle range (49%) and both cost of electricity (43%) and cost of purchasing or leasing a vehicle (42%). The least important factor was the availability of electric vehicles (31%).

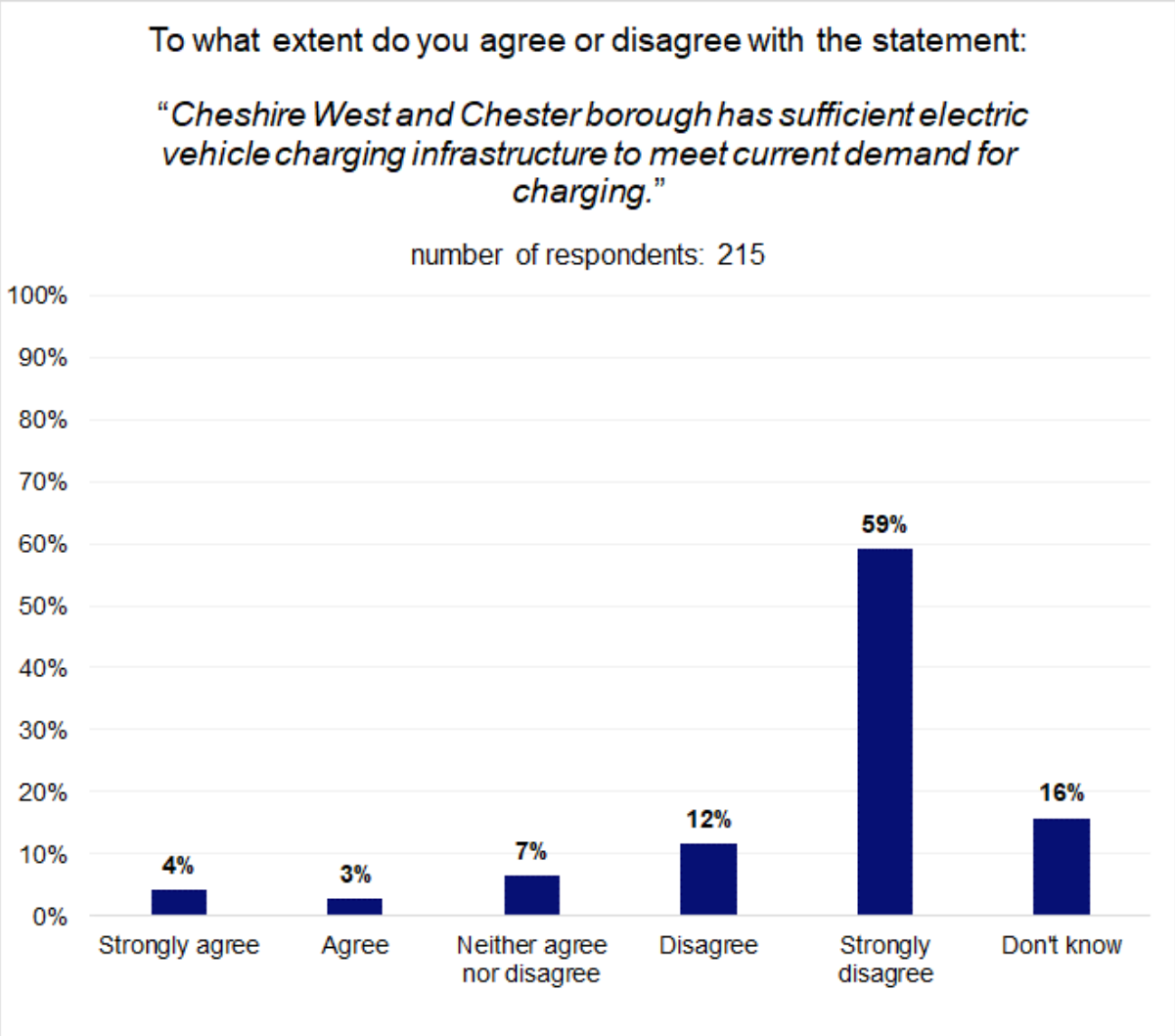
Respondents were also invited to give further comments about additional factors important to them. 11 comments were received and the key messages from these comments were:

- Several respondents stated there is a current lack of electric charging points and suggested more charging points are needed;
- Several respondents expressed concerns over the cost of an electric vehicle and insurance;
- Some respondents expressed the need for electric vehicle infrastructure to be disability friendly;
- Some respondents expressed environmental support for electric vehicles;
- One respondent supported additional on-road charging points elsewhere in the borough for those who don’t have access to a home charging point;

- One respondent expressed concern around the emergency services using electric vehicles due to the anticipated potential of them running out of charge whilst undertaking a job;
- One respondent expressed concerns over conflicts with pedestrian and cyclists.

Perception of electric vehicle charging infrastructure

All respondents (including both electric vehicle drivers and non-electric vehicle drivers) were asked their views on Cheshire West and Chester's existing electric vehicle charging infrastructure.



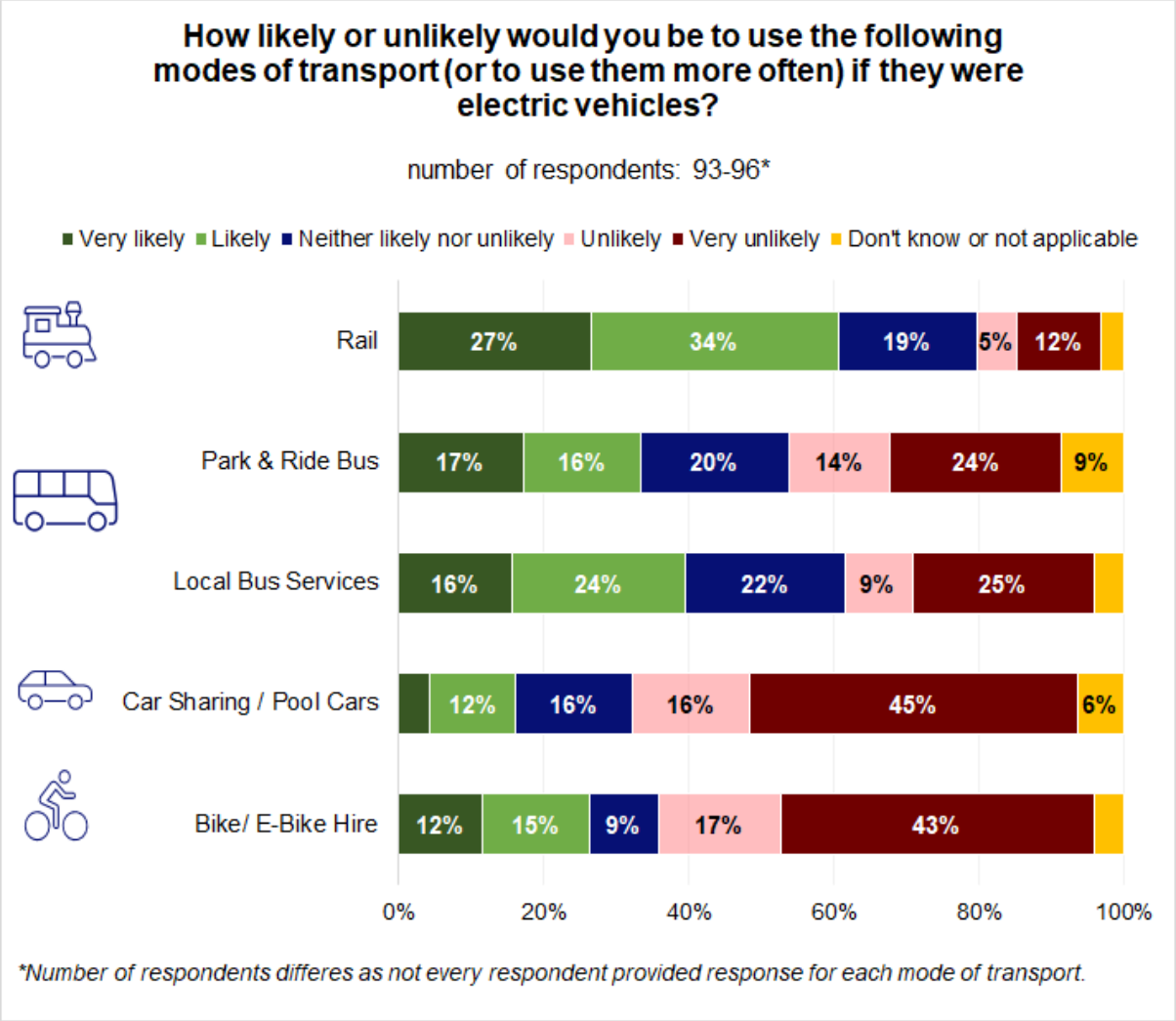
Most respondents (71%) disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that the borough's current electric vehicle charging infrastructure is sufficient to meet the current demand for charging. 7% of respondents suggested the existing infrastructure is sufficient.

Respondents were also invited to share further comments about the current provision of electric vehicle charging infrastructure. In total, 112 respondents answered this question. The key messages from these comments were:

- More than a third of the respondents suggested there is currently a lack of existing electric charging points, and some referred particularly to a need for more rapid chargers;
- Many respondents commented on a perceived lack of information about the location of existing electric charging points;
- A few respondents expressed concern over a perceived lack of electric vehicle charging points for residents without off-street parking/driveway, in rural areas and for tourists;
- Some respondents stated they are concerned around maintenance of charging points, and concern about broken charging points;
- A few respondents expressed general opposition to charging points being funded by the Council;
- A few respondents suggested that additional electric vehicle charging points could influence their decisions about purchasing an electric vehicle, either in past or in future.

Potential future use of electric transport

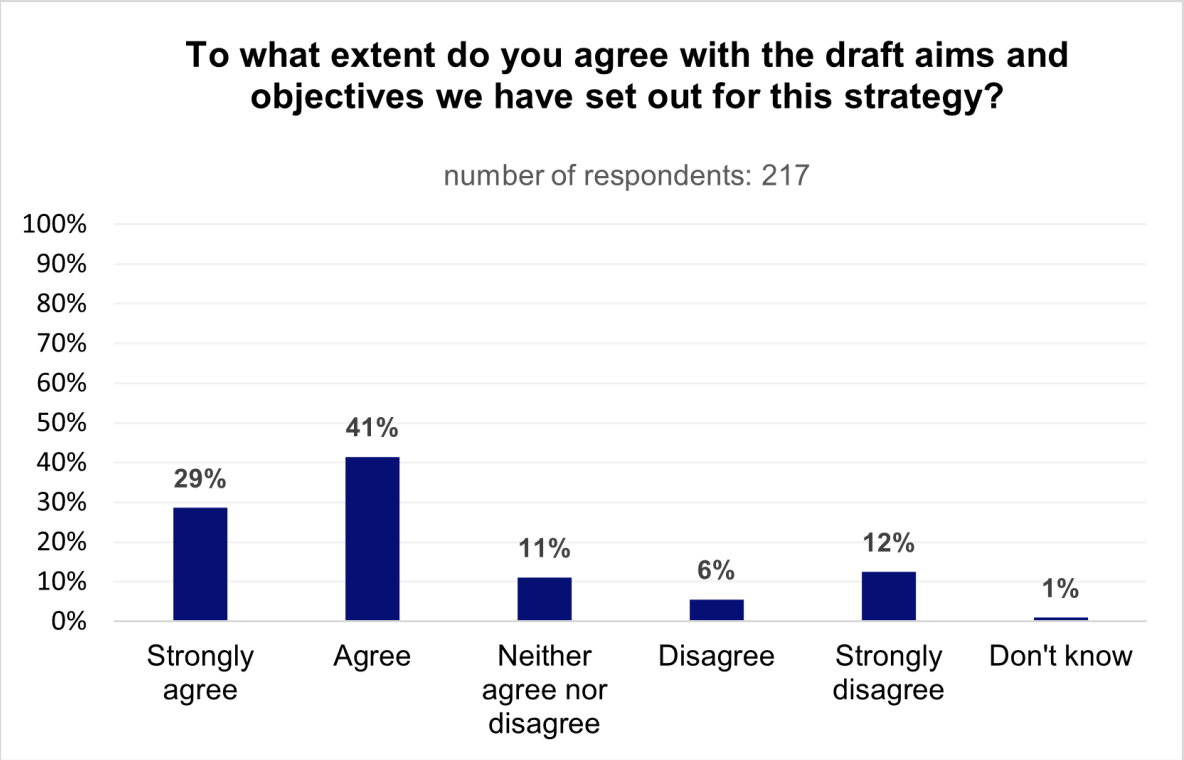
All respondents were also asked about their potential future use of different modes of transport if they were electric vehicles.



The chart above shows that many respondents would be very likely, or likely, to use rail transport if it was electric (61%), followed by local bus services (40%), park and ride buses (33%), and E-bikes (27%). The mode of transport least likely to be used was car sharing/pool cars (16%).

Council's Strategy Aims and Objectives

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the draft aims and objectives the Council set out for strategy.



The chart above shows that most respondents (70.1%) said they agree or strongly agree with the draft aims and objectives set for strategy, with 11.1% neither agreeing nor disagreeing and 17.9% saying they disagree.

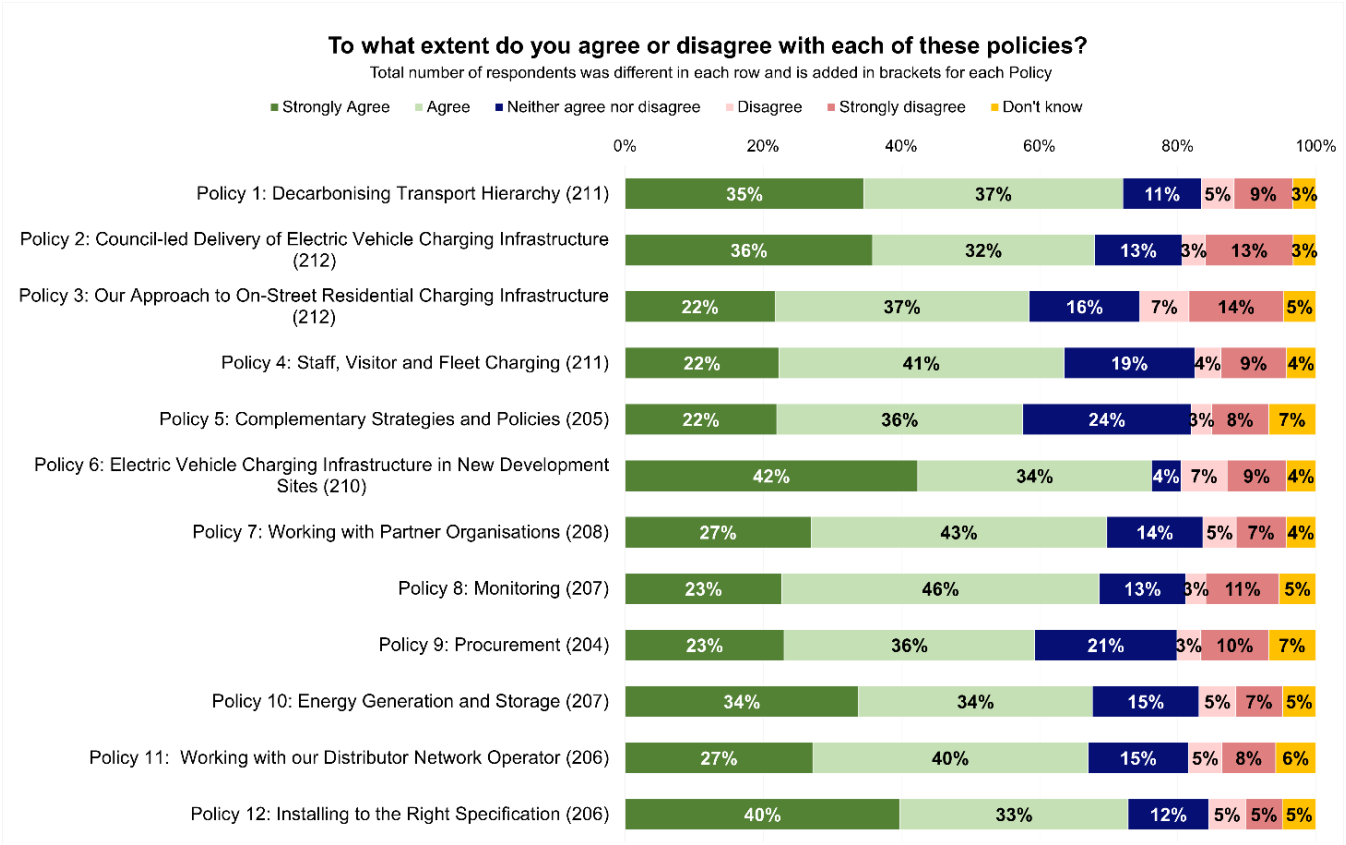
Of those who drive an electric vehicle, 83.7% stated that they agreed with the strategy's aims and objectives, compared with 62% of non-users. Additionally, 9.3% of electric vehicle users disagree, or strongly disagree with the strategy, compared to 25% of non-users. This shows that those who drive electric vehicles are more likely to agree with the aims and objectives for the strategy.

Respondents were also invited to give further comments on the aims and objectives of the draft strategy. In total, 97 respondents provided additional written feedback. The key messages from these comments were:

- Many respondents suggested that the focus should be on electric charging vehicles for residents, as opposed to for visitors and tourists;
- Some respondents used this opportunity to further express their support for on road charging solutions, and rapid chargers;
- Some respondents commented that the document is too general, and more specifics about the deliverables are needed (for example the proposed locations or numbers of planned electric vehicle chargers);

- Several shared support for more public transport, a reduction of private car usage, and the need to promote active travel by improving cycling and walking infrastructure;
- A handful of respondents shared the opinion that the Council should use any money proposed for electric vehicle charging for other current public needs or problems;
- A few respondents commented that electric vehicle charging points should be included in new projects as a part of planning consent, and provided by commercial operators;
- A few respondents also expressed concerns about the cost of electric vehicles.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the policies described in the strategy.



The policy most respondents agreed with was *Policy 6: Electric Vehicle Charging in new development sites.* In total 76.2% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this policy.

Respondents were also invited to give further comments on the policies in the strategy. In total 75 respondents responded with comments.

The key messages from these comments were:

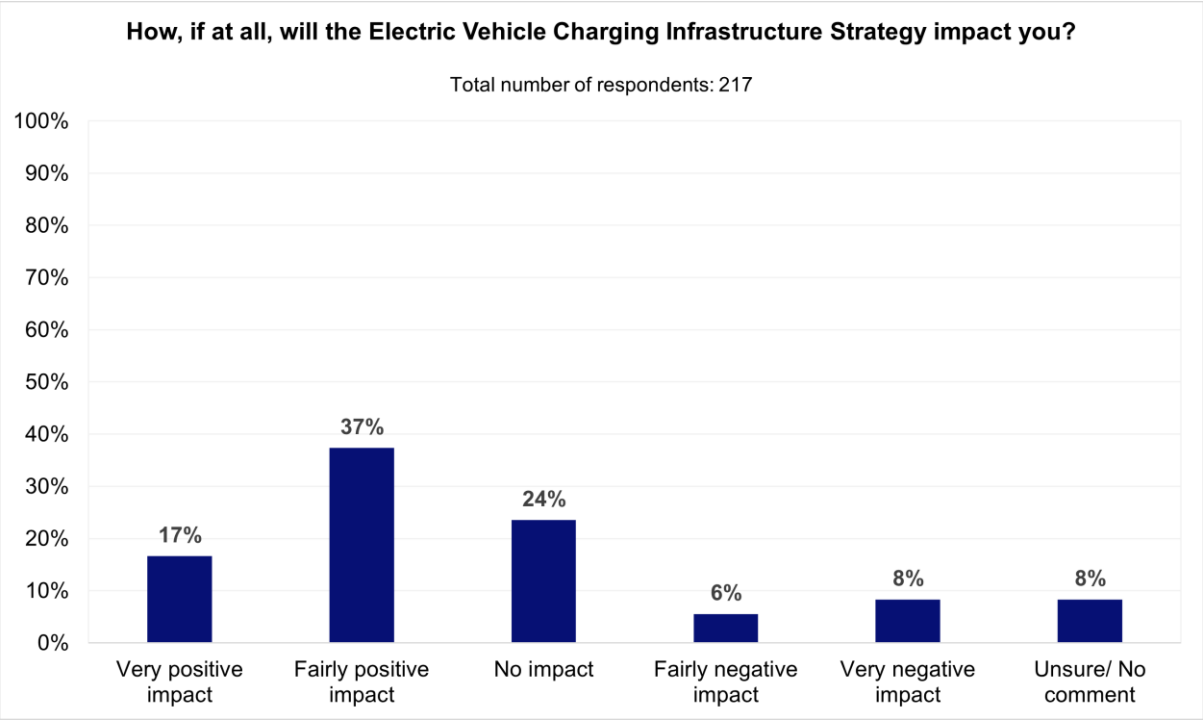
- Overarching comments questioning how the Council will implement the strategy, i.e., consideration if it will be successful, if it will be complementary

with other strategies related to transport, of if it is feasible to implement in borough;

- Some respondents shared good practice or improvement suggestions, for example referencing other local authorities such as Oxford, Manchester, and Liverpool as examples of areas that have trialled implementing or successfully implemented on-road solutions where residents don't have off street parking space;
- Some respondents expressed their support for home charging solutions and on-road charging solutions rather than off-road charging hubs for residents without private chargers;
- There were a handful of comments that suggested electric cars are not a sustainable mode of transport, are not 'green' and that policies should focus on using renewable energy sources;
- A few commented suggesting a need to improve public transport and promote active travel methods such as cycling and walking.

Impact of the Strategy

Respondents were asked how, if at all, will the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy impact them.



The above chart shows that most respondents (53.9%) considered that the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy will have very positive/fairly positive impact upon them. 23.5% of respondents felt it would not impact them and 13.8 % of respondents suggested the strategy will have negative/negative impact.

Respondents who use electric vehicles (either for personal or business use) were more likely to believe that the strategy will impact them in very, or fairly, positive way

(72.4%), and were less likely to consider that strategy will impact them in very or fairly negative way (4.6%).

42.2% of respondents who don't drive an electric vehicle suggested that strategy will impact them in positive way, and 20.0% suggested the impact will be negative.

Respondents were also invited to give further comments. In total 79 respondents provided additional written comment. The key messages were:

- Many respondents agreed that the Strategy will help deliver more charging options for electric vehicles;
- Several supported home charging options, commenting that it is more convenient and reliable way to charge electric vehicle;
- Some respondents stated that they will consider purchasing an electric vehicle if the strategy is implemented;
- Some commented on the costs of network and/or implementing the strategy;
- Some commented on cost of electric vehicles and considered that strategy is not inclusive for low-income residents or should offer support for low-income residents;
- Some shared the opinion that the strategy will enable longer journeys using electric vehicle;
- A few commented that the provision of charging points in rural areas is low, or that rural areas need more public charging points;
- A few comments were made about need to separate charging points/spaces from pedestrians;
- A few shared the opinion that the transition to electric vehicles will improve air quality.

Improvements to the strategy and additional comments

Respondents were provided with the opportunity to make comments on improvements or missing elements they feel should be considered as part of the strategy. 79 respondents provided some additional comments on potential strategy improvements.

At the end of the survey, respondents were also asked to provide any further comments they would like to make about the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy. 49 of them provided additional comment.

Answers to those two questions are combined and presented together. Key messages from the responses submitted are listed below:

- Many comments expressed either direct support or opposition towards the strategy in line with responses to the questions detailed above;
- Some comments suggested the locations of future electric vehicle chargers should be provided, alongside support for more chargers in key destinations such as healthcare, schools, supermarkets;
- Some comments expressed a need for more rapid chargers and increased availability of chargers;
- There were several comments on access and method payments (e.g., no need for app or login) and suggestions that there should be an on online map showing existing electric vehicle charging points and their current availability;
- There were several concerns over the inclusiveness of the strategy in terms of low-income residents and cost of electric vehicles;
- There were some suggestions to focus on alternatives to cars or reducing private cars' usage, such as electric bikes, and support for public transport and active travel investment;
- Few comments showed concerns about the timescales for implementing strategy and doubts as to whether the strategy will be implemented;
- A few requests were made about ensuring the accessibility of electric vehicle charging points, including considering disabled people's needs;
- A few comments suggested the Council should consider approaches taken by other authorities e.g., York and Oxford's on-street charging solutions;
- A few comments were general suggestions about other public issues which need funding from Council, for example about maintenance of roads;
- A couple of comments were made about the maintenance of existing and future electric vehicle charging points;
- A couple of comments were shared highlighting concerns over safety of electric vehicle charging points (e.g., lighting, safety at night);
- One comment expressed a need to consider alignment with the borough's other strategic documents related to climate issues;

Email responses

Residents and other interested parties were also invited to email their views on the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy. In total, eight email responses were received and the key messages are listed below.

- Both support and opposition to the strategy;
- Comments on the length and formatting of the strategy, noting that the strategy should be reformatted to reduce length and improve readability.
- Comments in support of on-route and on-street charging points;
- Concerns over blue badge parking being replaced by electric vehicle parking;
- Concerns over inclusiveness of the strategy for those with low income;
- Suggestion charging points should use renewable energy;
- Comments on the location of charging points and charging points maintenance;
- Concerns that localised constraints on the electricity grid are a key barrier to expanding charging infrastructure in key urban locations.
- Comments on the cost of public charging, payment methods and funding of the strategy;
- Comments in support of delivering charging infrastructure in a way which supports active travel and public transport improvements, including electric bikes and buses comments;
- Comments that delivery of charging infrastructure should also be an opportunity to co-locate space for nature, such as through parklets in urban areas.
- Comments on current and future stakeholder engagement;

Appendix 1: Profile of respondents

Respondents' location

Respondents were asked to provide their postcode, to enable the team to understand which areas of the borough were represented in the feedback submitted.

Most respondents (86.2%) live within the Cheshire West and Chester borough and the most represented postcodes were CH1 (15.2%), CH3 (12.0%), CH4 (12.0%), and CH2 (11.1%) all of which cover Chester town centre, and the immediate surrounding areas.

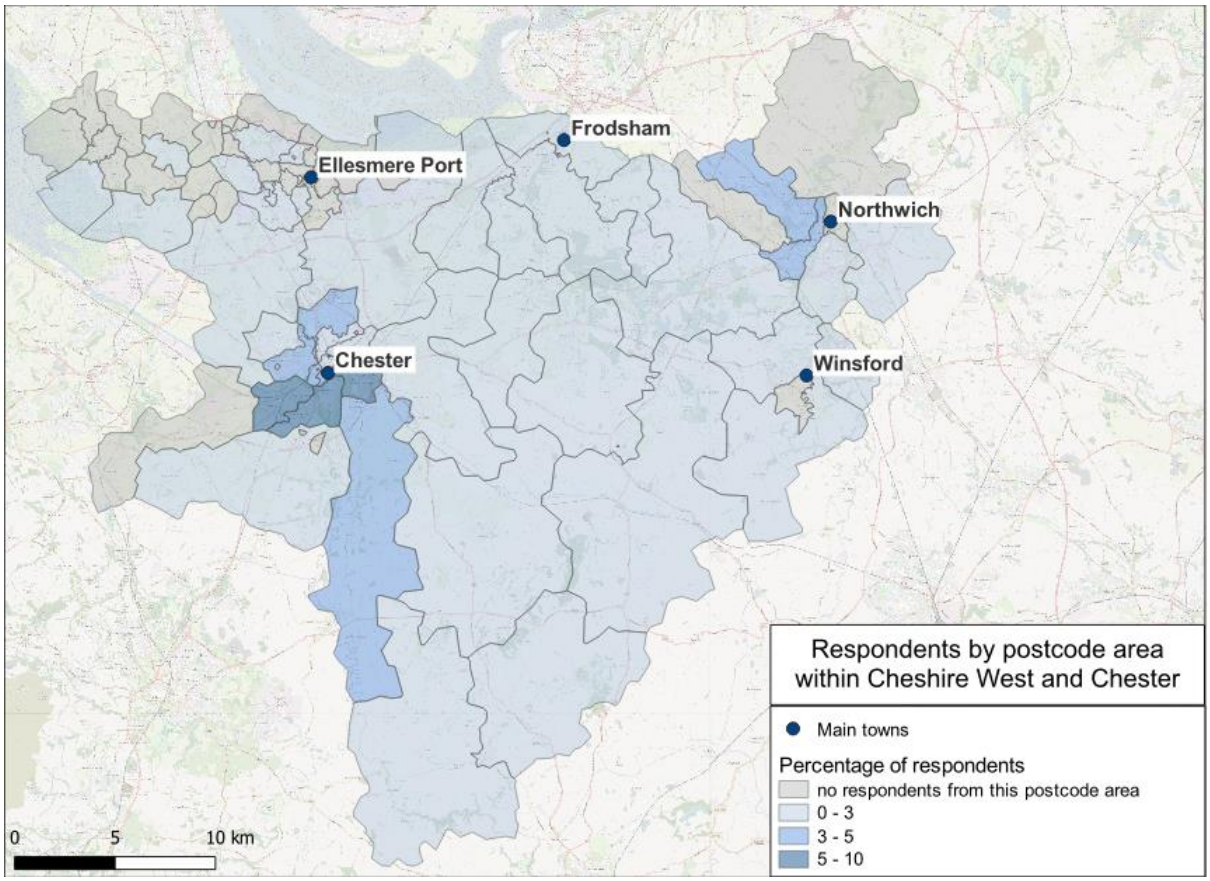
A total of 4.1% of respondents identified themselves as living outside of Cheshire West and Chester and 9.7% of respondents did not provide a postcode.

The table below presents a breakdown of respondents' location by postcode area.

Postcode area	Towns (indicative)	District	Percentage of respondents
CH1	Blacon, Capenhurst, Chester (west), Saughall	Cheshire West and Chester	15
CH2	Chester (north), Elton, Mickle Trafford		11
CH3	Chester (east), Christleton, Farndon, Tarvin, Waverton		12
CH4	Chester (south), Dodleston, Eccleston, Saltney		12
CH64	Neston, Parkgate, Willaston		2
CH65	Ellesmere Port		2
CH66	Great Sutton, Ledsham, Little Sutton,		3
CW6	Bunbury, Kelsall, Tarporley		3
CW7	Wettenhall, Winsford		2
CW8	Acton Bridge, Hartford, Northwich (west), Sandiway, Weaverham		10
CW9	Comberbach, Great Budworth, Lostock Gralam, Northwich (east)		4
SY14	Malpas, Tilston		2
WA6	Frodsham, Helsby, Kingsley, Norley		7
	Cheshire West and Chester		86
CH8		Flintshire	<1
L6		Liverpool	<1
CW1		Cheshire East	<1
SK10			<1
WA16			<1
WA4		Warrington	<1
WA7		Halton	<1
CH63		Wirral	<1
	Outside Cheshire West and Chester		4
	Did not answer		10

The heat map below provides a visual breakdown of respondents' locations within Cheshire West and Chester based on postcode areas. The map below shows where

respondents to the survey live. Most respondents live within the Cheshire West and Chester borough, with many from the Chester area, and some grouped in Frodsham, Helsby and Northwich areas.



Respondent type

Respondent type	Percentage of respondents
A resident of Cheshire West and Chester	87.1
An employee of Cheshire West and Chester Council	1.4
A representative of a local business	2.3
A representative of an electric vehicle supplier or charge point operator	0.0
An elected Member of Cheshire West and Chester Council	0.0
A local Town or Parish Councillor	3.2
A representative of a voluntary or community organisation	0.0
A member of a local group	0.9
Prefer not to say	3.2
Other	1.8

Age

Respondent age	Percentage of respondents
Under 16	0.0
16 - 24	1.8

25 - 34	3.7
35 - 44	13.4
45 - 54	21.7
55 - 64	25.8
65+	27.2
Prefer not to say	4.1
Did not answer	2.3

Long-term illness, health issue or disability

Do you have a long-term illness, health issue or disability that limits your daily activities or the work you can do?	Percentage of respondents
Yes	15.2
No	75.1
Prefer not to say	7.8
Did not answer	1.8

Please indicate which of the following applies to you?	Percentage of respondents
Physical impairment that causes mobility issues, e.g., wheelchair user	27.3
Visual impairment	0.0
Hearing impairment	0.0
Learning disability or difficulty	3.0
Mental Health issue	3.0
Long standing illness or health condition	39.4
Prefer not to say	12.1
Other	15.2

For those who answered ‘yes’ to “Do you have a long-term illness, health issue or disability that limits your daily activities or the work you can do?”:

Are you part of the national Blue Badge scheme?	Percentage of respondents
Yes – I have a Blue Badge	30.3
No – I do not have a Blue Badge	69.7

Gender

Respondent gender	Percentage of respondents
Male	64.1
Female	27.2
Prefer not to say	5.1
Prefer to use own term:	0.5
Did not answer	3.2

Ethnic group

Which of these groups do you consider yourself to belong to?	Percentage of respondents

White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	83.9
White - Irish	1.8
White - Any other White background	1.4
Black or Black British - Caribbean	0.0
Black or Black British - African	0.0
Black or Black British - Any other Black background	0.0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0.9
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0.0
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0.0
Asian or Asian British - Chinese	0.5
Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian background	0.0
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	0.5
Mixed - White and Black African	0.0
Mixed - White and Asian	0.0
Mixed - Any other Mixed background	0.0
Other ethnic group - Arab	0.0
Other ethnic group - Other ethnic group	0.0
Travelling community - Gypsy/Roma	0.0
Travelling community - Traveller of Irish descent	0.0
Travelling community - Other member of the Travelling community	0.0
Prefer not to say	6.5
Other	1.4
Did not answer	3.2