

April 2018

Insight

Safety on school transport



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Safety on School Transport

1. Executive Summary

A new law will be enacted in Scotland later in 2018 requiring seat belts to be fitted on all dedicated school transport. This covers vehicles used for home-to-school journeys and for excursions. The legislation does not include public buses.

The law is about the fitting of seat belts rather than the wearing of them. Transport Scotland believes that this presents a great opportunity to encourage users to buckle-up and to promote safety on school journeys. Thanks to national guidance and the publicity accompanying the law, Transport Scotland think this will encourage people to use seat belts and build positive lifelong habits that will help keep people safe.

Between 5th March and 4th April 2018, Young Scot worked with Transport Scotland to gather insight into young people's thoughts and experiences of seat belts on school transport via a survey and open letter. Both activities were hosted on the Young Scot Rewards platform using Young Scot's preferred third-party tool Survey Gizmo.

Safety on School Transport Survey

1. The survey received 646 fully completed responses. Ninety one percent of respondents were currently in school.
2. Almost a third (32%) of respondents stated that seat belts *weren't fitted* on a school bus or coach when they were at school. Of those who do remember seat belts being fitted, the most commonly selected statement was *they were fitted and I wore them* (33%).
3. Most respondents (79%) either *strongly agree* or *agree* that wearing a seat belt on a school bus or coach helps to keep young passengers safe.
4. The most commonly selected reason that young people may not wear seat belts was *they think it is uncomfortable or too much hassle* (63%). Just over half (54%) selected that *they think it is uncool in front of their friends or peers*.
5. Half of the survey respondents stated that the best messaging to encourage seat belt use in young people was *outlining the discipline or punishment for not wearing* a seat belt. The least commonly selected message for encouraging seat belt use was *giving positive messages about the safe practices and behaviours* (selected by 32% of respondents).
6. Half of respondents either *strongly agree* or *agree* that ensuring young people wear seat belts on a school bus or coach can help improve the atmosphere and reduce incidents of misbehaviour.
7. Two thirds of respondents think that the best method to promote wearing of seat belts to young people is the use of *social media*.
8. When asked if they had any further thoughts, 189 individuals typed a response. These responses were categorised into six key themes: Suggestions, Reasons young people don't use seat belts, Safety, Opinion on new law, Availability of seat belts and Driver responsibility.

Safety on School Transport Letters

9. Completed open letters were received from 132 individuals.

10. Letters were categorised into nine key themes:

- Reasons young people don't wear seat belts
- Availability of seat belts
- Safety
- Suggestions
- Responsibility
- Individual behaviour
- Opinion on new law
- Other
- Personal story

2. Safety on School Transport Survey Responses

There were 646 completed responses to the survey, with 91% stating that they are currently at school.

2.1 Which statement best reflects your memory of the issue of seat belts on a school bus or coach while you were at school?

Fifty-nine respondents answered this question, with 587 leaving this question blank.

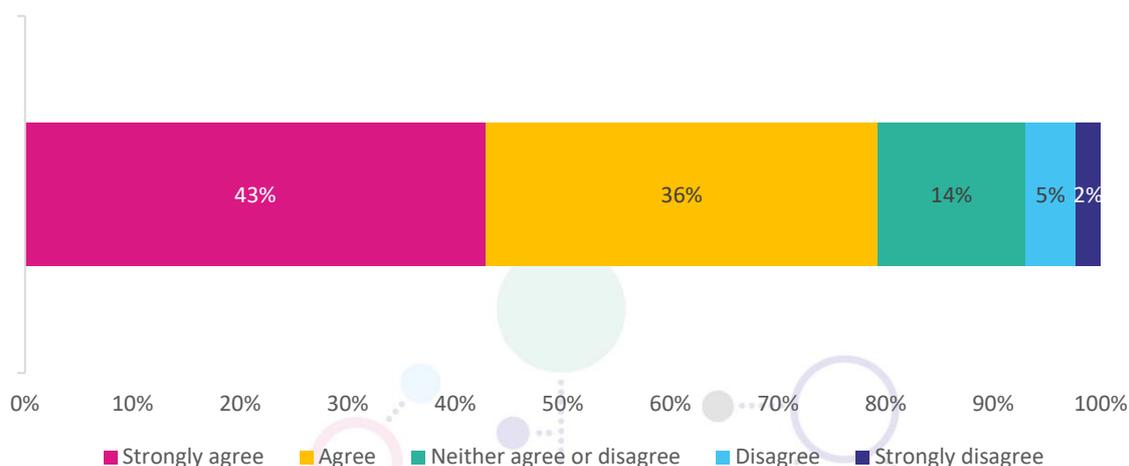
Almost a third (32%) of respondents stated that seat belts *weren't fitted* on a school bus or coach when they were at school. Of those who do remember seat belts being fitted, the most commonly selected statement was *they were fitted and I wore them* (33%).



2.2 Do you think that wearing a seat belt on a school bus or coach helps to keep young passengers safe?

All 646 respondents answered this question.

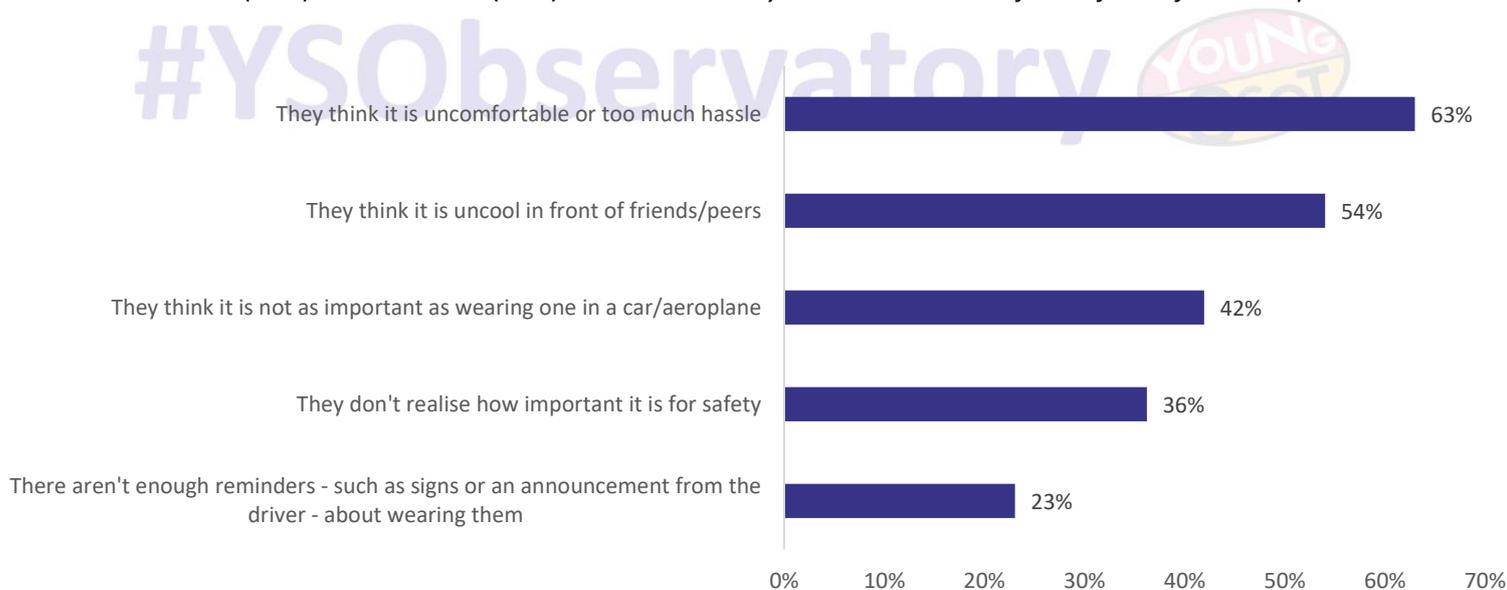
Most respondents (79%) either *strongly agree* or *agree* that wearing a seat belt on a school bus or coach helps to keep young passengers safe.



2.3 Seat belts are generally worn by passengers in aeroplanes or cars. What reasons do you think cause young passengers not to wear seat belts in school buses or coaches when they are fitted?

All 646 respondents answered this question.

The most commonly selected reason that young people may not wear seat belts was *they think it is uncomfortable or too much hassle* (63%). Just over half (54%) selected that *they think it is uncool in front of their friends or peers*.

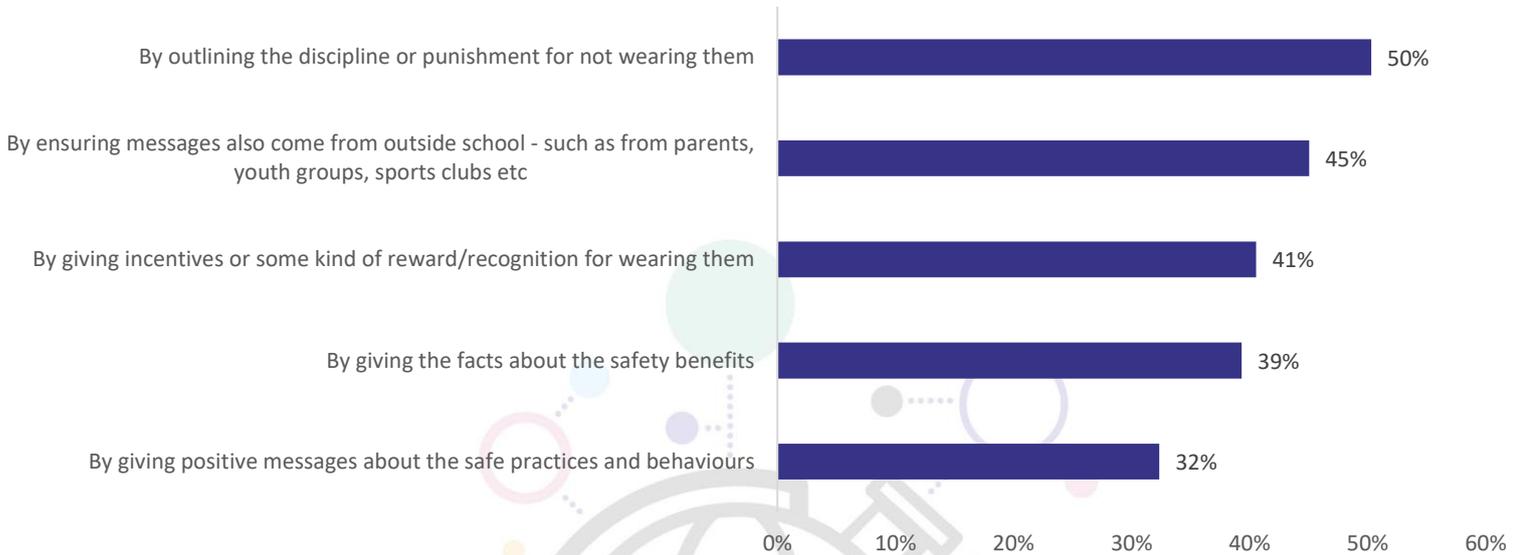


Numbers do not add up to 100% as respondents were asked to *Select all that apply*

2.4 What kind of messages would best encourage you to wear a seat belt?

All 646 respondents answered this question.

Apart from *giving positive messages about the safe practices and behaviours* (selected by 32% of respondents) other messages about how to encourage people to wear seat belts had similar response rates. The most commonly selected message for encouraging seat belt use was *outlining the discipline or punishment for not wearing a seat belt* (selected by half of the respondents) closely followed by *ensuring messages also come from outside of school*.

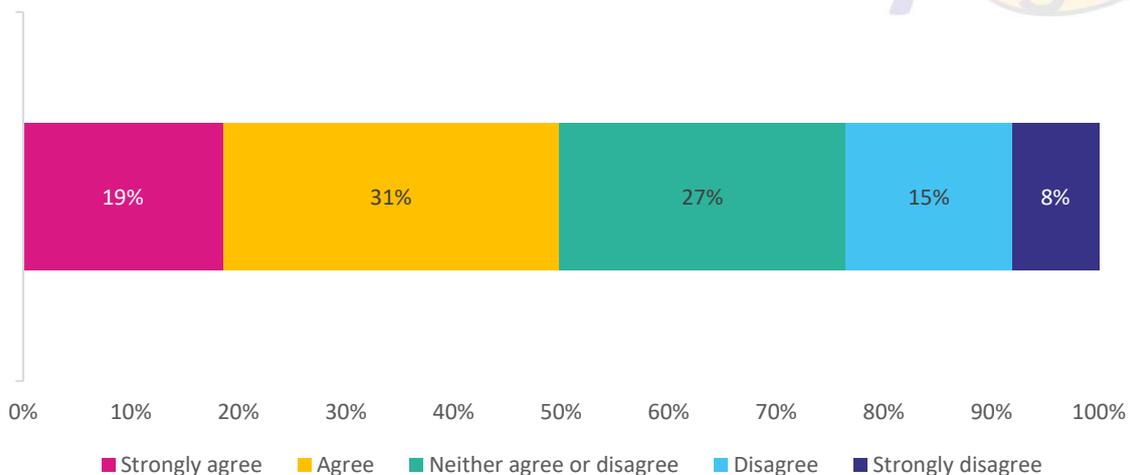


Numbers do not add up to 100% as respondents were asked to *Select all that apply*

2.5 How much do you agree with the following statement? "Ensuring young people wear seat belts on a school bus or coach can help improve the atmosphere and reduce incidents of misbehaviour."

All 646 respondents answered this question.

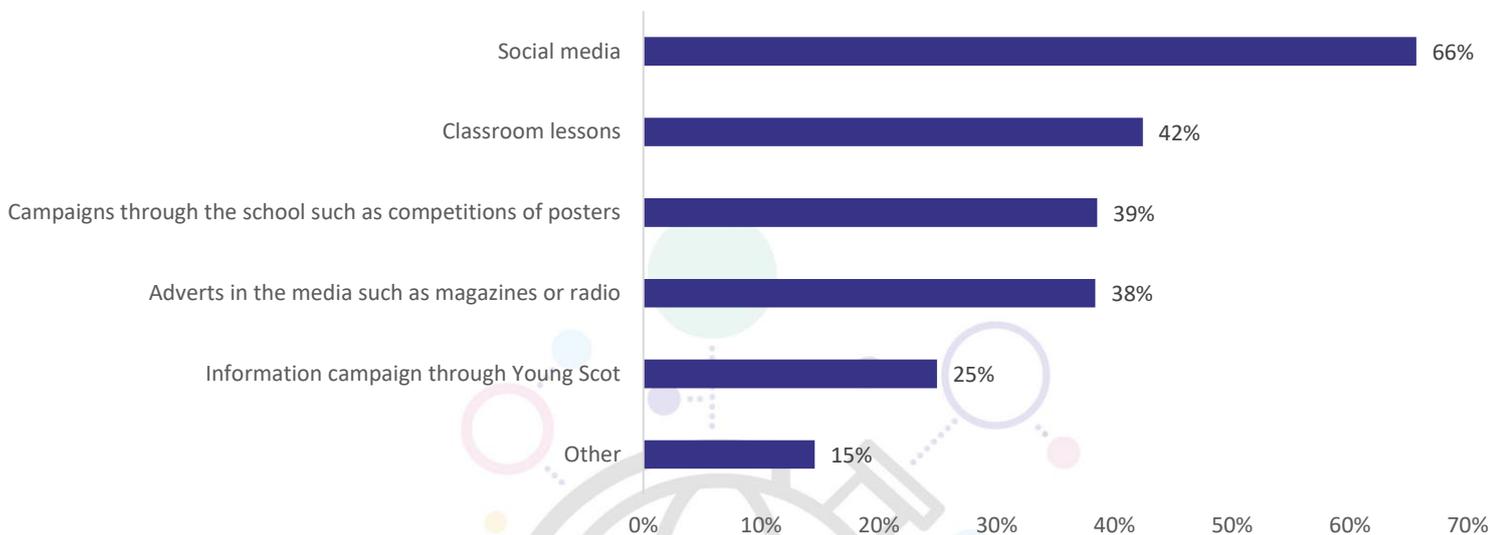
Half of respondents either *strongly agree* or *agree* that ensuring seat belt use by young people can help improve the atmosphere and reduce incidents of misbehaviour on school buses or coaches.



2.6 What do you think would be the best method to promote the wearing of seat belts to young people?

All 646 respondents answered this question.

Two thirds of respondents think that the best method to promote wearing of seat belts to young people is the use of *social media*. Ninety-four respondents selected *Other*, with 65 providing a typed response with suggestions on how this could be achieved, such as celebrity endorsement and the bus driver reminding people to buckle-up (responses are included in the Appendices).



Numbers do not add up to 100% as respondents were asked to *Select all that apply*

2.7 Please use the text box below to let us know any other thoughts you have about wearing seat belts and the best ways to encourage young people at school to do so.

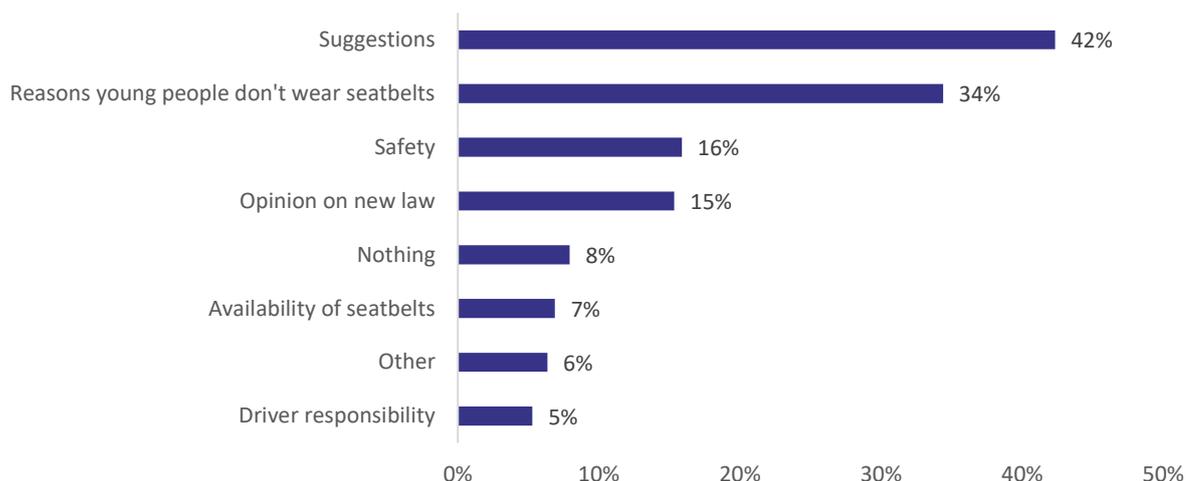
When given an option to provide further comments about safety on school buses, 189 people typed a response.

Responses to this question were categorised under six key themes:

1. Suggestions
2. Reasons young people don't use seat belts
3. Safety
4. Opinion on new law
5. Availability of seat belts
6. Driver responsibility

Fifteen people typed a variation of *Nothing* or *I don't know*. Twelve responses were categorised as *Other* as they did not fit the other themes (included in Appendices).

Thirteen responses were excluded from thematic analysis as they were considered to be 'non-pertinent'. These responses are not included in the report but are available in the Appendices.



2.7.1 Suggestions

Eighty respondents provided suggestions regarding how to encourage seat belt use in young people. *Other suggestions* included options like playing recorded messages before the bus leaves, sending young people on a virtual reality course and holding talks by emergency services about the dangers of not wearing seat belts.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
SUGGESTIONS	SHOW EXAMPLES OF CONSEQUENCES	18
	OTHER SUGGESTIONS	13
	PROMOTION/INFORMATION	11
	SOCIAL MEDIA	8
	EDUCATION	7
	MAKE SEAT BELTS COMFORTABLE	7
	PENALTY	7
	INCENTIVE/REWARD	6
	OLDER STUDENTS SET EXAMPLE	3

“Encourage young people to wear a seat belt by showing them the result of accidents caused by not wearing a seat belt.”

2.7.2 Reasons young people don't use seat belts

Just over a third (34%) of responses identified reasons why young people don't currently use seat belts on school transport. Most responses mentioned peer pressure, but there were also mentions of the physical features of seat belts themselves (not suitable, uncomfortable or difficult to use). Responses commenting on the suitability of seat belts made statements such as they are restrictive if you want to turn around and speak to people around you and that they are a hassle to clip in and clip out.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
REASONS YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T USE SEAT BELTS	PEER PRESSURE	19
	SEAT BELTS NOT SUITABLE	15
	SEAT BELTS UNCOMFORTABLE	10
	DON'T KNOW CONSEQUENCES	9
	SEAT BELTS DIFFICULT TO USE	7
	NOT ASSOCIATION LIKE CAR	5

"It is frustrating being on a school bus because I understand the risks that come with not wearing a seat belt, but I feel pressured into not wearing one. I can't wear it without being judged as "uncool"."

2.7.3 Safety

Thirty responses referred to the safety benefits of seat belts.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
SAFETY	SAFETY	30

"I think seat belts are important as if the bus crashes then it prevents serious injuries."

2.7.4 Opinion on new law

A number of responses (29) made reference to the new law. Most felt that it would be difficult to encourage young people to use the seat belts once installed.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
OPINION ON NEW LAW	CANNOT/DIFFICULT TO ENCOURAGE	14
	NOT NECESSARY/NEEDED	10
	POSITIVE OPINION	5

"I think it will be a very difficult process getting young people to wear seat belts on the school bus. I don't see it as particularly practical. Whilst I don't disagree with the concept I think many young people will want to know why this is a necessity, despite not being implemented on public buses."

2.7.5 Availability of seat belts

Thirteen respondents commented on whether or not seat belts were available, with some making comparisons to public buses.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
AVAILABILITY OF SEAT BELTS	NOT ON PUBLIC BUSES	9
	NOT ALWAYS INSTALLED	4

"Seat belts are often not provided on public buses and so pupils don't think it is necessary to wear them on a school bus. There is no difference between a pupil travelling on a school bus and a public bus so why should they wear a seat belt on one and not the other?"

2.7.6 Driver responsibility

Ten responses stated that checking/reminding young people to wear seat belts was the responsibility of the driver of the school bus or coach.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
DRIVER RESPONSIBILITY	DRIVER RESPONSIBILITY	10

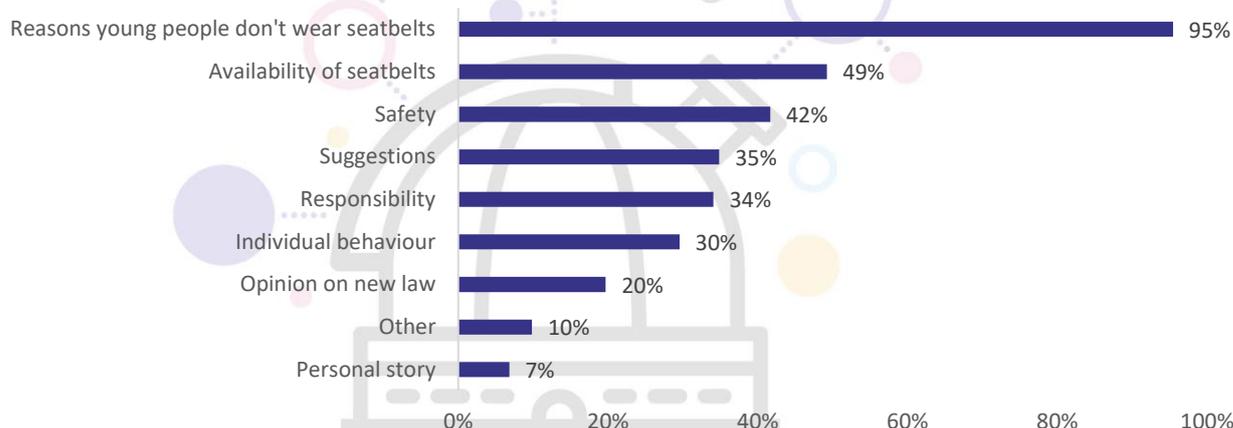
"I think that bus drivers should remind passengers to wear a seat belt as they get on the bus."

3. Safety on School Transport Letters

Young Scot received 132 open letters around the topic of wearing seat belts on school transport. Of these, nine responses were excluded from thematic analysis as they were considered non-pertinent. These responses are not explored in the report but are available in the Appendices.

Letters were categorised under nine key themes:

1. Reasons young people don't wear seat belts
2. Availability of seat belts
3. Safety
4. Suggestions
5. Responsibility
6. Individual behaviour
7. Opinion on new law
8. Other
9. Personal story



3.1 Reasons young people don't wear seat belts

Ninety five percent of open letters mentioned reasons why young people don't currently use seat belts on school transport. Most responses mentioned peer pressure, but there were also mentions of the physical features of seat belts themselves (not suitable, uncomfortable or difficult to use). Responses commenting on the suitability of seat belts made statements such as they are often hidden away, they could be broken, or too old to use. There is also a difference between cars and buses – buses are seen as safer than cars meaning there is less of an association of wearing a seat belt.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
REASONS YOUNG PEOPLE DON'T USE SEAT BELTS	PEER PRESSURE	35
	SEAT BELTS NOT SUITABLE	18
	SEAT BELTS UNCOMFORTABLE	17
	SEAT BELTS DIFFICULT TO USE	12
	NOT ASSOCIATION LIKE CAR	10
	DON'T KNOW CONSEQUENCES	10
	HASSLE/NUISANCE	9
	RESTRICTS MOVEMENT	9
	BUSES SAFER THAN CARS	4
	FORGET	2

“... I think it is considered uncool and an inconvenience and people think they needn't bother - I think a law change as well as better communication that buses are dangerous too would help.”

3.2 Availability of seat belts

Sixty-five respondents commented on whether or not seat belts were available, with some making comparisons to public buses. Ten respondents discussed the differences between lap belts and shoulder belts, with lap belts being considered less suitable. More responses stated that everyone wearing a seat belt creates a negative rather than positive environment.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
AVAILABILITY OF SEAT BELTS	NOT ALWAYS INSTALLED	16
	SEAT BELTS ALWAYS AVAILABLE	16
	NOT ON PUBLIC BUSES	11
	LAP BELTS VS SHOULDER BELTS	10
	NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENT	5
	COMMENT ON TRANSPORT	5
	POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT	2

“At first we had seat belts on the bus that had went across our laps. It was hard to use them because when the bus had it brakes on them you could bang your head on the seat. I think that the new seat belts with the shoulder strap is better to use because then you are safer when the bus stops suddenly then you are at less risk of bumping your head on the seat.”

3.3 Safety

Fifty-five responses made reference to the safety benefits of seat belts.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
SAFETY	SAFETY	55

“I have to wear one everyday but I know it is for a good reason. It keeps me and the other passengers on the bus safe. If something were to happen whilst travelling on the bus the consequences could be much more serious if we were not all wearing our seat belts.”

3.4 Suggestions

Forty-six respondents provided suggestions regarding how to encourage seat belt use in young people. Most highlighted that there is a lack of awareness, suggesting a boost in promotion and education around the topic.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
SUGGESTIONS	PROMOTION/INFORMATION	10
	EDUCATION	9
	OTHER SUGGESTION	8
	SHOW EXAMPLES OF CONSEQUENCES	7
	PENALTY	6
	INCENTIVE/REWARD	4
	MAKE SEAT BELTS COMFORTABLE	1
	SOCIAL MEDIA	1

"I feel that I, and many others, would wear seat belts more if there was an awareness of bus related accidents and the devastating impact it can have on children, young people and their families. In order to enforce this, I think there should be posters designed by children/young people to increase awareness of the importance of seat belts, and have the driver instruct their passengers politely to fasten their seat belts to keep them safe throughout their journey."

3.5 Responsibility

Forty-five responses identified issues with checking/reminding young people to wear seat belts. Seventeen responses stated that the use of seat belts was not enforced by anyone. Responses identified teachers and drivers as the individuals who should be enforcing seat belt usage.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
RESPONSIBILITY	TEACHER RESPONSIBILITY	17
	NOT ENFORCED	17
	DRIVER RESPONSIBILITY	11

"Our drivers never told us to do our seat belts up, or if they did they never followed up on it. In my opinion it needs to be made the norm. If bus drivers continue to follow up on the seat belts rule more and more people will continue to wear them."

3.6 Individual behaviour

Thirty-nine letters described the individual's behaviour in regard to wearing seat belts, with most stating that they do use them.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR	I WEAR THEM	18
	I DON'T WEAR THEM	10
	I GET PUBLIC BUSES	7
	I SOMETIMES WEAR THEM	4

"I always wear my seat belt on the school bus. I've always been taught to wear it from a young age and it has become a habit that I automatically wear my seat belt."

3.7 Opinion on new law

A number of responses (26) made reference to the new law. Most expressed a positive opinion, although there is still recognition that it would be difficult to encourage young people to use the seat belts once installed.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
OPINION ON NEW LAW	POSITIVE OPINION	11
	CANNOT/DIFFICULT TO ENCOURAGE	6
	NOT NECESSARY/NEEDED	6
	WILL HELP MISBEHAVIOUR	2
	WON'T HELP MISBEHAVIOUR	1

“It would be good to have seat belts on all school transport so that risk of injuries in an accident is reduced. I think this new law will certainly reduce the risk of injury in accidents. I think there should be a law that means you have to have seat belts on because people may not wear them to be cool or have a laugh.”

3.8 Other

Seven responses did not fit into the other categories. Six letters made reference to young people distracting the driver if they were not wearing their seat belt.

Main Theme	Secondary Theme	Number of responses
OTHER	OTHER	7
	DRIVER DISTRACTION	6

“[Wearing seat belts] would also stop people trying to get up and walk around while the bus is moving and would be less distracting for bus drivers.”

3.9 Personal Experience/Story

Finally, nine respondents wrote about a specific experience or story regarding safety on school buses (all included in Appendices).

4. Summary of Findings

There are very similar themes explored within both the survey results and open letters.

The most prominent finding is that although young people are mostly aware that they should be wearing seat belts on school transport, they often feel pressured not to by their peers. There is a stigma attached to wearing a seat belt, although many respondents can't identify why.

For this reason, several respondents think that it will be difficult to encourage the use of seat belts even when they are universally available.

There were also comparisons between school transport and public buses (where seat belts are not available) and a question as to why there is a difference between the two. School transport is also seen as safer than other methods of transport where seat belts are used (cars, planes) which has led to a lack of association between school transport and seat belt use.

In terms of encouragement to use seat belts, most survey respondents selected that *outlining the discipline or punishment for not wearing* a seat belt would be the most effective message. However this result was closely followed by the other suggestions.

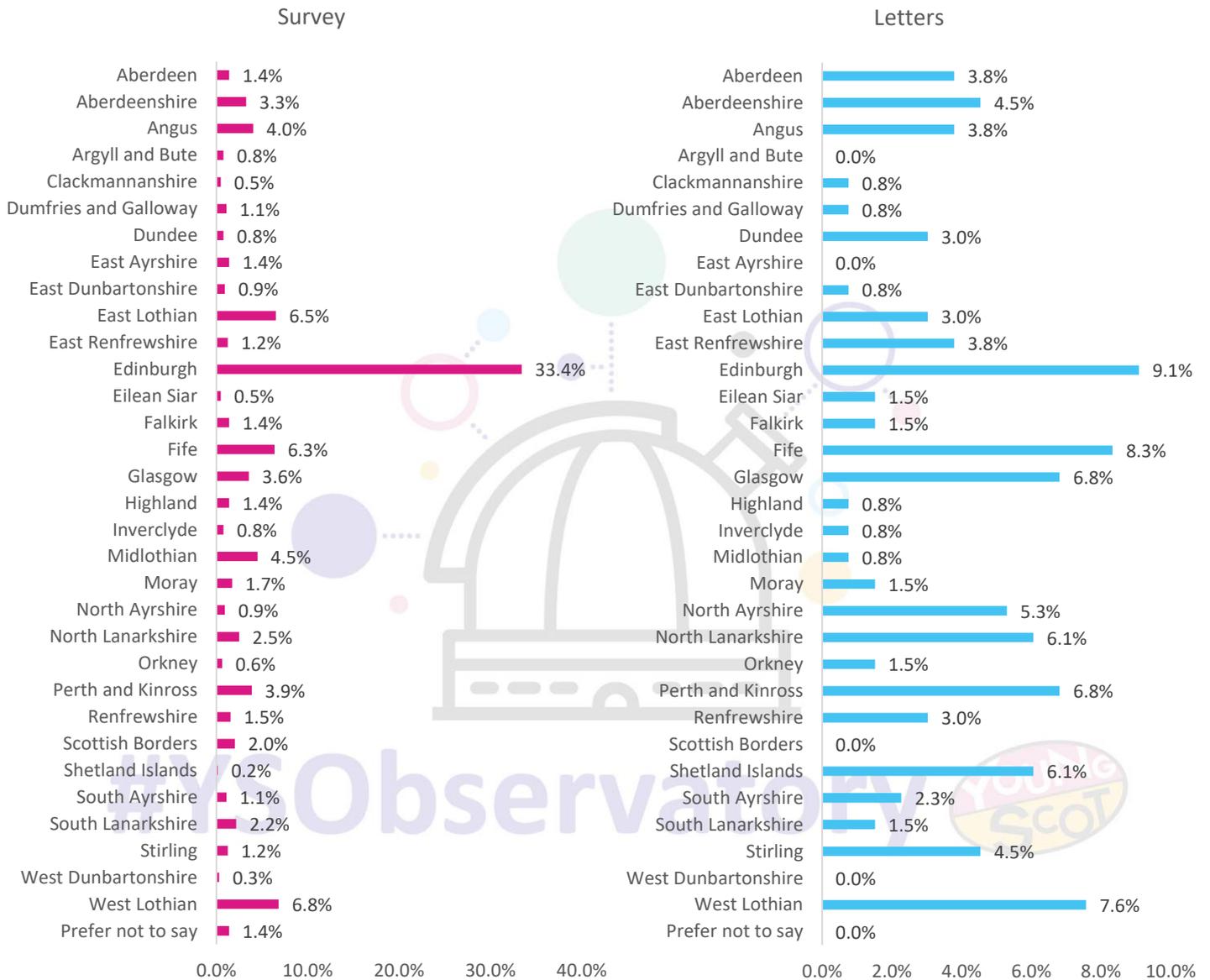
Suggestions from the open question are mostly related to showing examples of the consequences of *not* wearing a seat belt. There is also recognition that there is not enough information provided around the topic.

Going forward, it seems that the best way to encourage young people to use seat belts is to provide detailed information and examples of consequences. This should come from someone with no connection to school, using their preferred method of communication, social media.

5. Demographics

5.1 Demographics: What Local Authority do you live in?

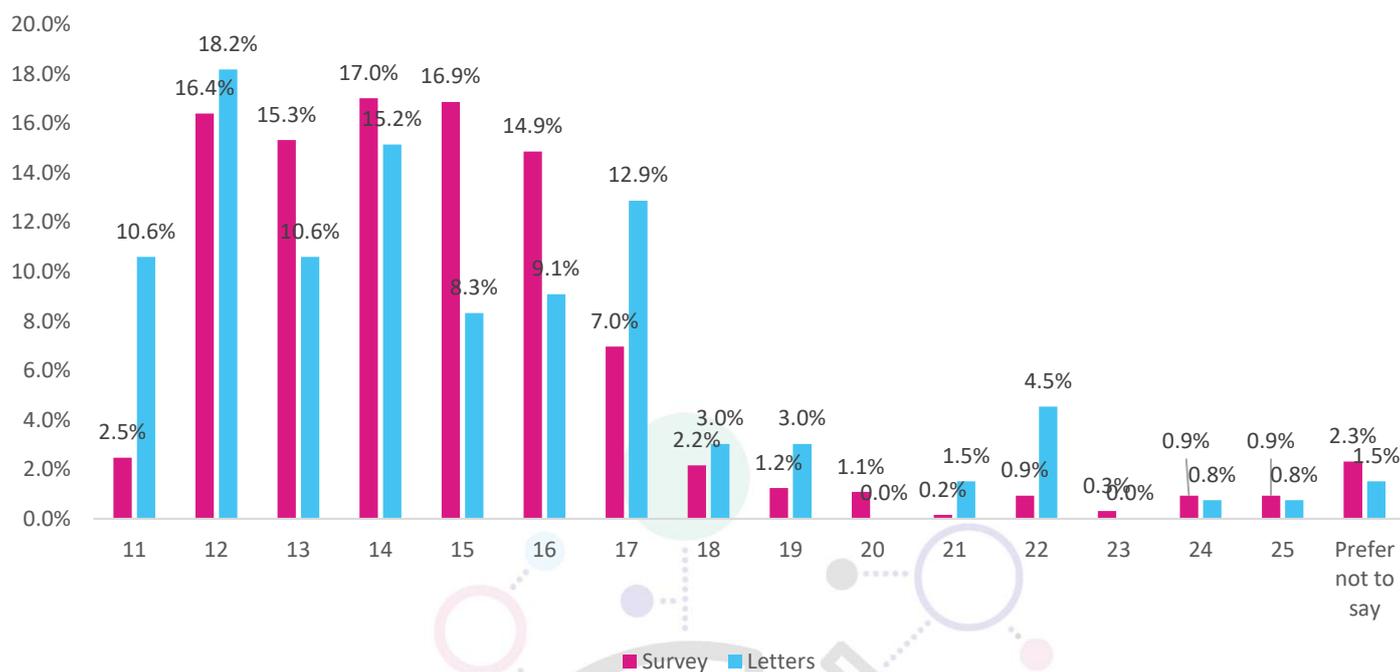
For those that answered the survey there was representation across all 32 Local Authorities. The largest number of respondents were from Edinburgh (216). For the open letter there were no respondents from Argyll and Bute, East Ayrshire, Scottish Borders and West Dunbartonshire.



Respondents were also asked to provide the first half of their postcode. These responses have been included in the Appendices as they were freely typed.

5.2 Demographics: How old are you?

Most survey respondents were in their early to mid-teens (12-16 years old).



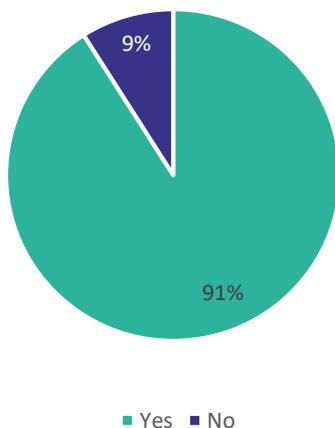
5.3 Demographics: Gender

Fifty-six percent of respondents in the survey identified as *female* and 38% identified as *male*. Of the remaining two percent, 23 respondents selected *in another way* and 14 respondents selected *prefer not to say*. Eleven respondents have identified as transgender at some point in their lives.

Seventy-one percent of respondents in the survey identified as *female* and 26% identified as *male*. Of the remaining four percent, 2 respondents selected *in another way* and 2 respondents selected *prefer not to say*. One respondent has identified as transgender at some point in their lives.

5.4 Demographics: Are you currently at school?

The majority of survey respondents (587) are currently at school.



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Or pop in for a cuppa and a hobnob...

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