Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

ROTHERHAM CYCLING STRATEGY

Consultation Analysis Report

November 2021

Contents

Executive summary

A public consultation into the proposed Rotherham Cycling Strategy was held on-line between 2nd July, and 27th August 2021. This consultation sought to understand public views, needs and desires in respect of cycling to inform the final draft of the strategy.

The consultation process received 86 responses, including 74 from within Rotherham. This document provides an analysis of findings, along with an indication of changes made to the strategy document in response to the consultation findings.

The consultation identified a number of key aspects of cycling in Rotherham at the present time and provided useful insights into peoples' views on the role cycling currently does, and in future could, play in their day to day lives.

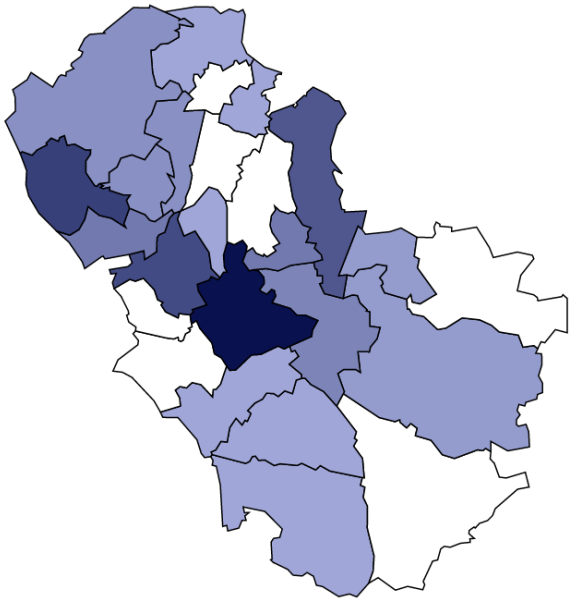
Key lessons from the consultation are that: -

- There needs to be more engagement with local communities to gain a better understanding of how cycling as a travel choice can be improved, especially in areas with low cycling uptake
- The greatest scope in increasing cycling is by people already cycling, there is therefore a need to understand more about the needs of non-cyclists
- Individual benefits such as for enjoyment and especially health motivate more than the wider benefits to society such as environmental or congestion reduction - though these cited by a minority of people, especially less frequent cyclists.
- Danger from traffic is seen as the biggest barrier to cycling. This suggests the strategy's main focus should be not only on effective measures for actual but also perceived safety.
- Not having a bicycle was the second most cited barrier amongst non-cyclists. A lack of information on existing routes which was seen as a notable barrier for infrequent cyclists, though not for non-cyclists.
- A significant minority of non-cyclists and infrequent cyclists saw trip length, topography, weather and journey time as a barrier to cycling.
- Punitive measures such as higher parking charges were seen as unlikely to encourage more cycling. Instead, more cycle paths are seen as the single most effective intervention with the second being traffic volume reduction which was seen as considerably more important than slower traffic. This reinforces the focus of the proposed Rotherham Cycling Strategy.

Profile and representativeness of respondents

Locations of respondents

The consultation provided 86 responses were received. The majority of these, 74, were based in Rotherham, with a further 8 and 4 responses received from Sheffield and Barnsley respectively. The distribution of responses from within Rotherham is shown in the plan below, with darker colours indicating a greater response rate. Wards marked white supplied zero responses to the consultation.



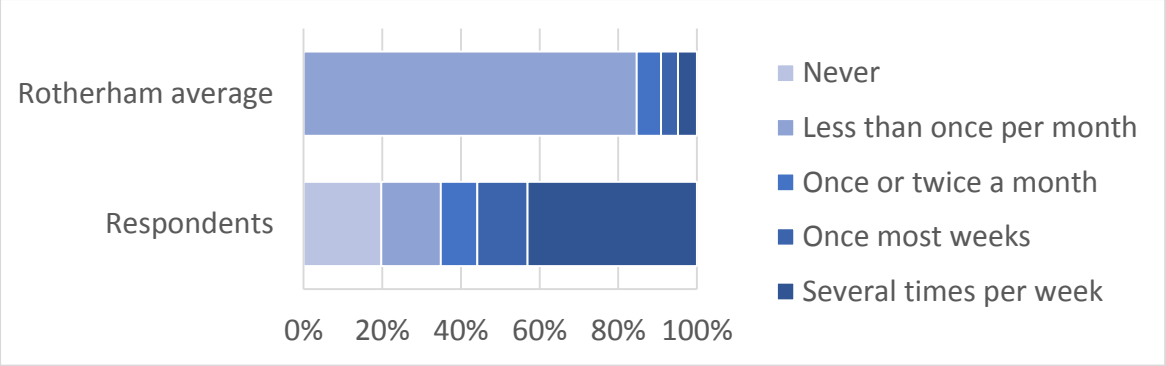
Notably, while there was relatively good response rate from the central Rotherham wards in terms of respondents. Nearby, Brinsworth and Rother Vale wards do not provide any respondents.

Other areas identified as priorities for interventions saw sparser levels of response. There was no feedback from Maltby East and only 2 responses from Maltby West. Similarly, with Dinnington having no responses from Anston and Woodsetts, and only two from Dinnington Ward. Whilst there are 3 responses from nearby Hoober ward, there is only 1 for Wath Ward and none for Swinton Rockingham.

***Key point** – areas of greatest (modelled) potential for cycling are underrepresented in the consultation feedback.*

Existing cycling behaviour of respondents

Respondents' self-reported existing cycling behaviour is illustrated in the chart below. The cycling behaviour reported in Rotherham by the Active Lives Survey is provided as a comparison. Note the Active Lives Survey does not permit respondents to report that they never cycle.



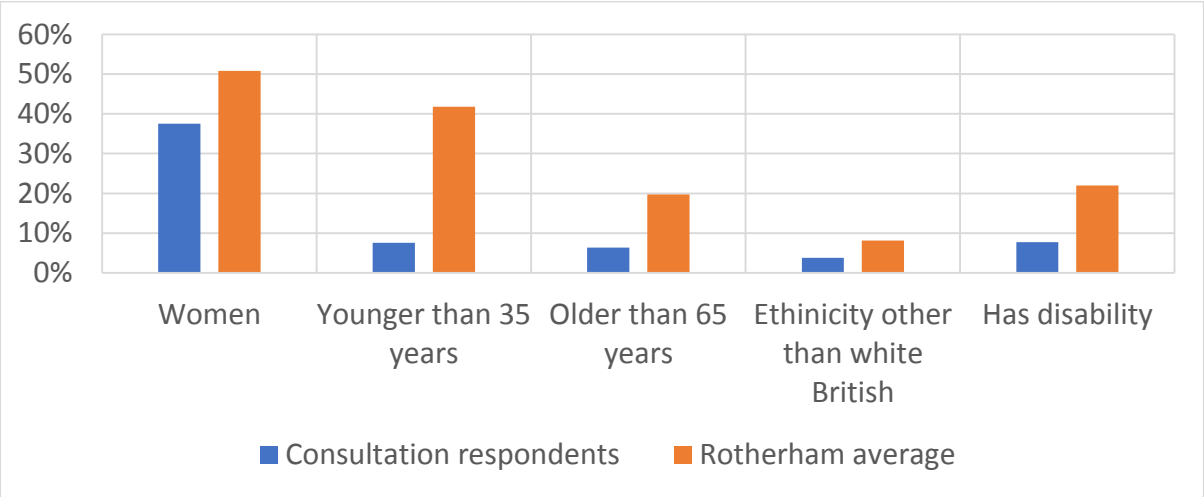
Around half the respondents cycle frequently, compared to just 9% of Rotherham's population. The remainder were split evenly between cycling occasionally (no more than once or twice a month) or never.

***Key point** – the survey response over-represents the views of existing cyclists, and greatly under-represents the majority of Rotherham's citizens who cycle infrequently.*

The above data is used in some of the subsequent analysis to weight responses by existing cycling behaviour, in line with the Rotherham averages. Whilst these weighted averages should be treated with caution given the low response rate, this is intended to provide a more representative insight in terms of feedback to reduce the risk of the cycling strategy being unduly influenced by an enthusiastic minority.

Equalities monitoring

Respondents were asked to provide demographic information. This was then compared with Rotherham's population as a whole, below.



As can be seen, respondents were markedly more likely to be male, middle aged, white British and not disabled, relative to the population in Rotherham as a whole.

Key point *– the survey response under-represented minority and/or marginalised groups. This highlights that, without more intensive engagement to understand community needs, work to improve cycling activity risks inadvertently reinforcing inequalities and may, without further engagement, not meet the needs to key and/or large groups of people.*

Conclusions

Caution in interpretation of the findings is required on account of a number of points -

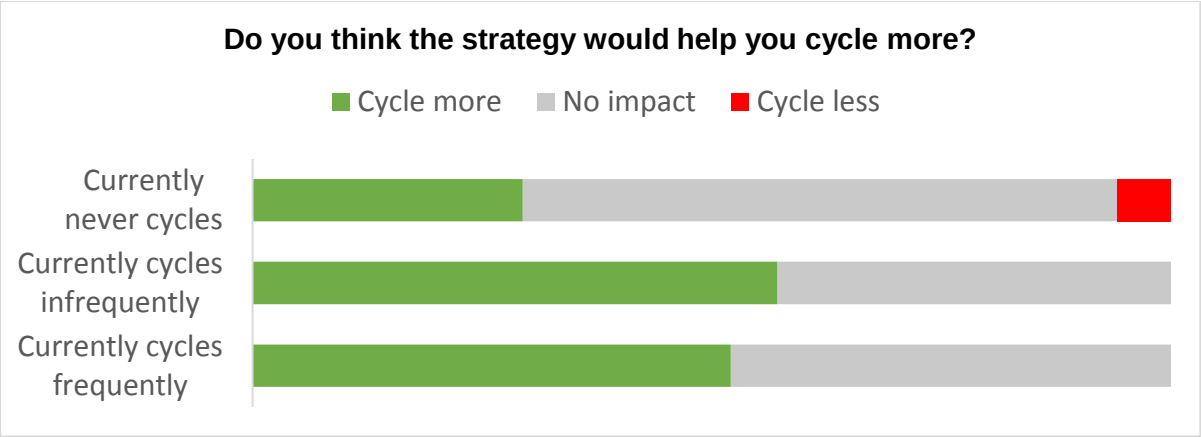
- A low response rate gives a low level of confidence in findings;
- The response does not particularly reflect areas of greatest (modelling) uplift in cycling;
- The response over-represents existing cyclists, and especially frequent cyclists;
- More generally, the response does not reflect Rotherham's population as a whole, and notably under-represents key (and large) groups of people of protected characteristics.

The lack of representative engagement in the consultation raises a challenge in successful delivery of the strategy, both in terms of ensuring the Council's work meets the needs of the whole community and avoids widening inequalities, but crucially in meeting the need to get people who don't cycle frequently to do so more. Recognising this weakness, additional text is included in Section 3.1 of the strategy, to emphasise for need for engagement with local communities to ensure local need is met.

Potential shifts in travel behaviour

Potential for people to cycle more

Respondents were asked whether they felt the cycling strategy will help them cycle more. For existing cyclists, whether cycling frequently or not, around half felt it would enable them to cycle more, with infrequent cyclists identifying greater scope to cycle more. This fell to around a quarter for those never cycling. Leaving aside one implausible response, the remaining respondents considered the strategy would have no impact.



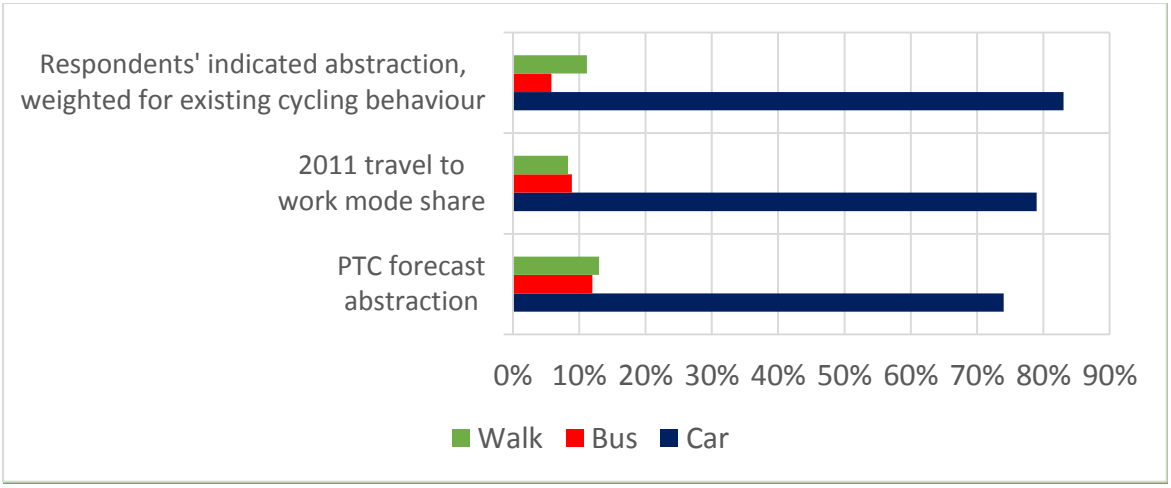
Of people responding that they presently cycle infrequently or not at all, and that the strategy would have no impact on their cycling, analysis of free-text response did not reveal any common threads, except some people commented that the highlighted priority areas were not where they lived.

Potential for mode shift

Respondents were asked, if they did feel they would cycle more, how might they travel in the absence of the strategy. The purpose of the question being to understand the potential for mode shift (change of travel choice to cycling).

Around 12% of respondents indicate they would simply travel more, rather than shift modes. All of these reported they were existing frequent cyclists. When responses are weighted to reflect the proportions of existing cyclists in Rotherham, this falls greatly, with 98% of respondent indicating they would shift modes for existing trips, rather than travel more.

Of people indicating they would shift modes, when adjusted based on reported existing cycling behaviour, a clear majority indicated they would shift from cars, rather than from public transport or walking. The weighted response is compared to the existing travel-to-work mode share in Rotherham, and the abstraction predicted by the ‘Propensity to Cycle Tool’ Go Dutch scenario, in the table below.



This analysis supports the potential rates of abstraction predicted by modelling, and taken at face value, that there may be potential for greater abstraction (change) from car and less abstraction from bus than forecast.

Conclusions

Based on the response to the consultation, the greatest scope to increasing cycling appears to be to get people already cycling, especially infrequently, cycling more. There appears to be greater scope amongst infrequent cyclists to increase cycling rates, and to do so by in a manner which abstracts (transfers mode) from car use - which is required to deliver on transport benefits.

However, people cycling less than once a month make up 85% of Rotherham's population (it is not known how many of these never cycle). Given this, and that this group is most likely to be in need of (for example) improved levels of activity, benefits may be severely undermined if the needs of non- or particularly infrequent cyclists are not understood and met.

On the flip side, if the needs of non- and infrequent cyclists are more effectively met, a greater abstraction from car trips might be possible than models might suggest.

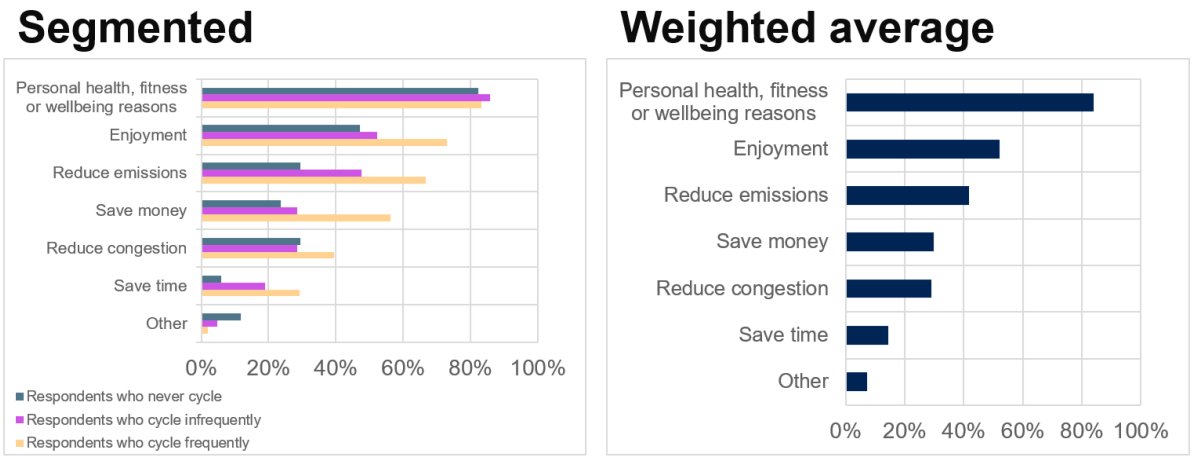
Reflecting these competing considerations, the strategy has been updated (section 2.1) to reflect the difficulty in encouraging non-cyclists to take up cycling. The approach and prioritisation has been refined to support areas in which there is evidence of both existing and potential increase in cycling, with a view to enabling infrequent cyclists to cycle more and so improve perceptions of cycling beyond the core of frequent cyclists.

Motivations, barriers and facilitators of cycling

In order to understand how the strategy might be improved to maximise benefits, respondents were asked three questions –

- What do you think are the most important reasons to cycle? (Motivations);
- Which of the following put you off cycling? (Barriers); and,
- What is most likely to encourage you to cycle more? (Facilitators)

Motivations

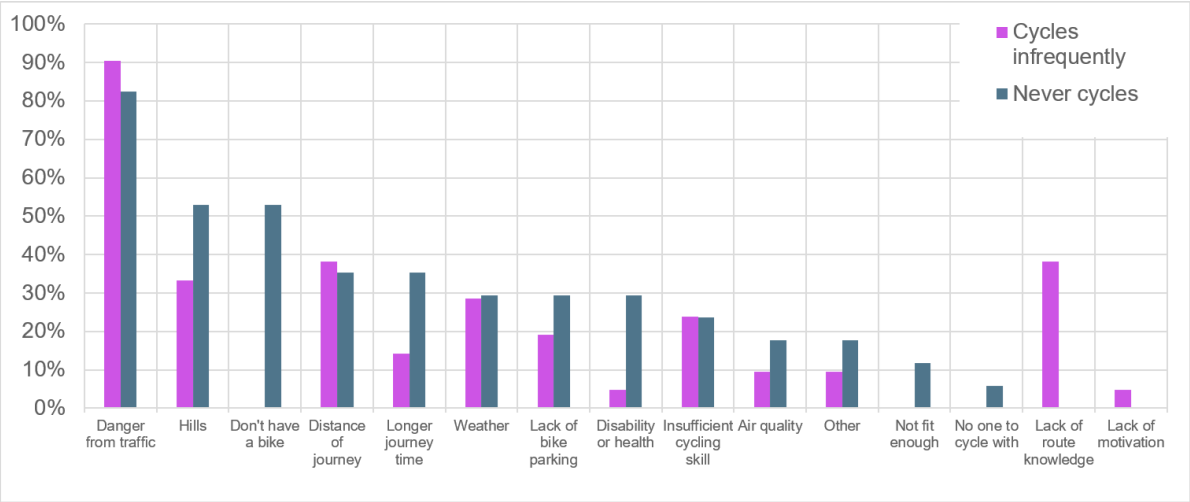


Respondents reported personal benefits around health, fitness and enjoyment motivate people to cycle more, rather than personal transport benefits (saving time or money) or wider social benefits (reducing emissions or congestion). This was particularly the case for people who do not already cycle frequently.

***Key point** – Personal benefits (enjoyment and especially health) motivate more that societal benefits. If increasing cycling is the aim, a change in focus to health and leisure within the strategy may perform better than a utility-led approach.*

Barriers

Those respondents who indicated they cycled infrequently or never were asked which, of a list of factors, put them off cycling. Respondents could tick all which applied. The results are illustrated below.



Danger from traffic was cited as the most significant barrier.

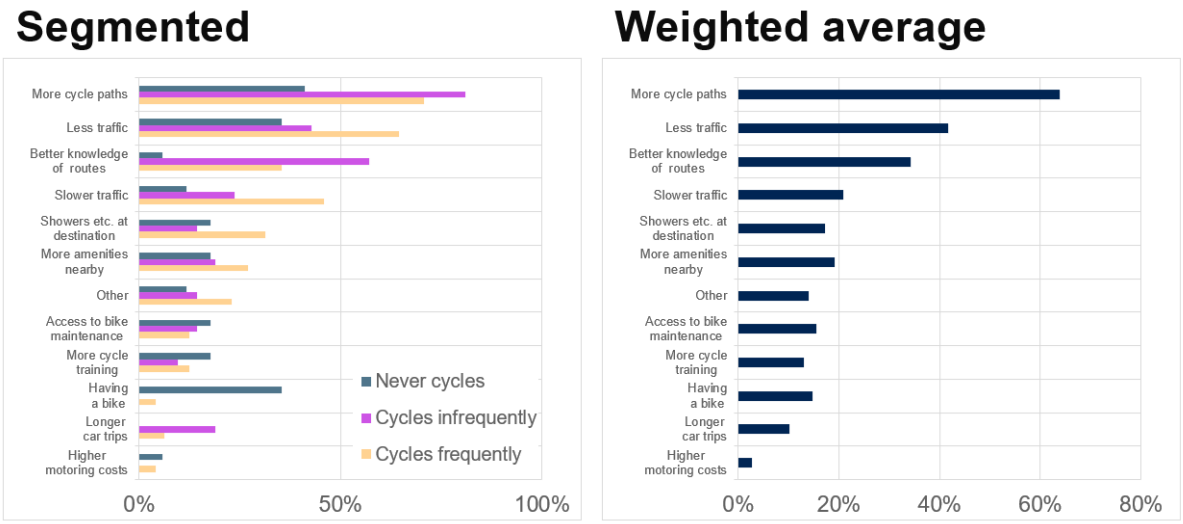
Lack of access to bikes was cited as a major barrier for non-cyclists – the second most-cited barrier amongst this group. A lack of information regarding available routes presents a more significant barrier for infrequent cyclists.

The next most commonly cited barriers, though cited significantly less than danger from traffic and typically less often by infrequent cyclists than non-cyclists, were physical constraints on cycling as a mode of transport such as topography, trip distance or time, or the weather.

Key point *– Danger from traffic was cited as the greater barrier to cycling by those not already cycling frequently.*

Facilitators

Respondents were asked which of a given list of interventions was most likely to encourage them to cycle more. Responses are illustrated in the table below.



The two most common facilitators of cycling cited were construction of more cycle paths, and reduced traffic volumes.

For people not cycling, the second most common facilitator cited was simply having a bike. For infrequent cyclists, the second most common facilitator cited was better knowledge of routes.

Reduced traffic speeds were only cited as facilitating cycling by around a fifth of the respondents when adjusted to attempt to reflect the balance of existing cycling levels in Rotherham, suggesting a change in emphasis away from managing from speed and towards providing separated cycle paths and/or managing traffic volumes is required to enable cycling.

Introduction of measures to inconvenience or otherwise penalise motorists were the least cited measures in respect of encouraging cycling.

Key point *–Construction of cycle paths and traffic volume reduction are reported as being most likely to encourage cycling. Reducing traffic speed is reported as being less significant as might be traditionally thought.*

Conclusions

Key conclusions in respect of motivations, barriers and facilitators are -

- Personal benefits (enjoyment and especially health) motivate more that societal benefits.
- Amongst infrequent or non-cyclists, danger from traffic was cited as the most significant barrier.

- For non-cyclists, the second greatest barrier was lack of access to a bike. For infrequent cyclists, this was lack of information or knowledge of available routes.
- Constraints of trip length / time, topography or weather were cited as the next most significant barriers to cycling.
- Construction of cycle paths and reduced traffic volumes were cited as the most important interventions to facilitate cycling, which has good alignment with the proposed strategy.
- Measure to deter motoring are unlikely to be effective in encouraging cycling in and of themselves (though it is noted that measures to e.g. reduced traffic volumes may have or be perceived to have that effect).

In response to these findings, the following changes have been made to the strategy

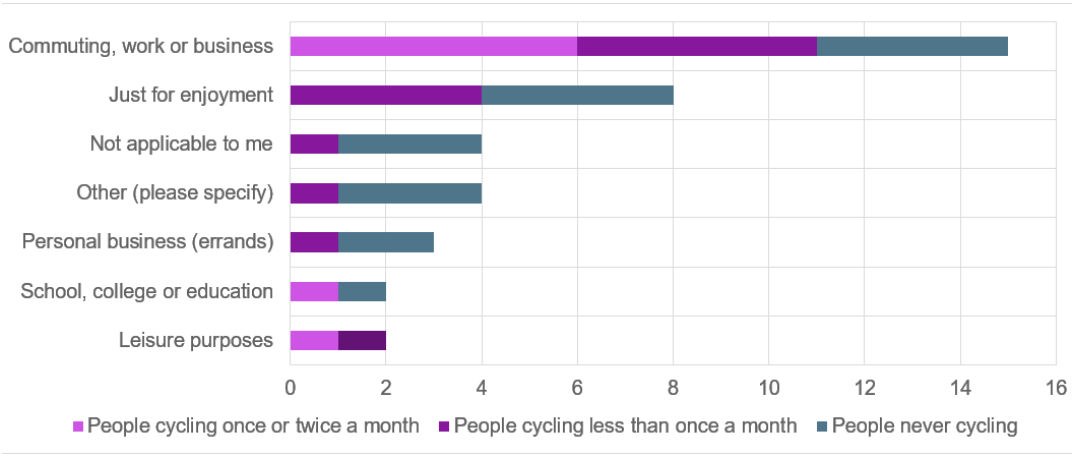
- Section 4.0 is updated to reflect strategic need to prioritise utility cycling to deliver transport benefits, but also to prioritise / design schemes to support leisure cycling given this appears to better motivate people to cycle.

- Additional text is also included in the strategy to emphasise the need for focus on measures addressing actual or perceived danger from traffic, especially measures to provide separate cycleways and those to reduce traffic volumes – with management of traffic volumes highlighted as more important than managing traffic speed.

- Additional text has been added to reflect a need to re-prioritise ‘softer measures’ activity in light of findings above, and to highlight that the response indicates measures to deter motoring are unlikely to facilitate cycling in and of themselves.

For what purpose, and over what distance, might people cycle more?

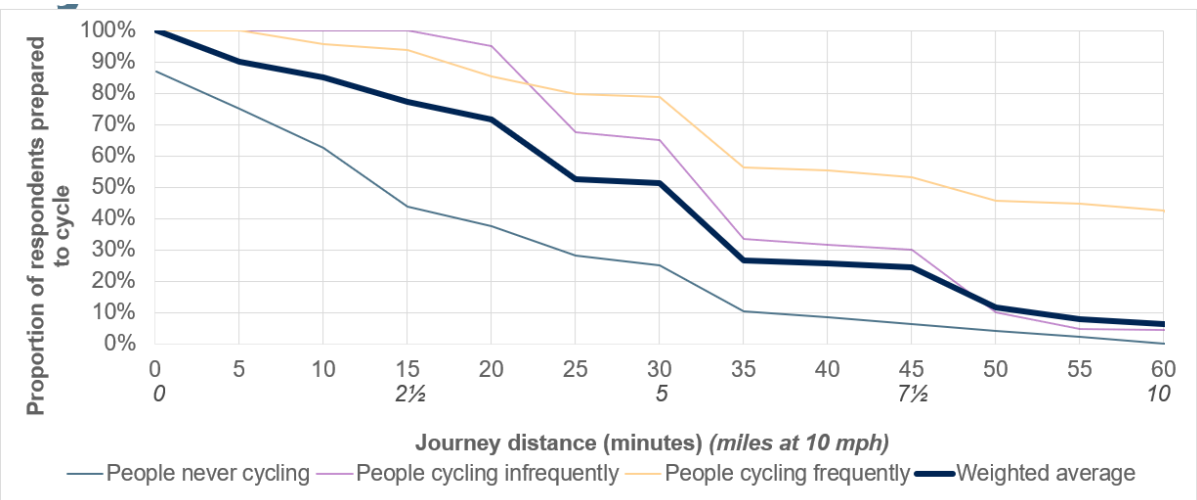
Respondents were asked to indicate for what purpose they thought they might cycle more. The chart below illustrates the response, broken down by exiting cycling behaviours.



Commuting & business seen as trip purposes with greatest scope for cycling, with cycling for 'its own sake' the second most significant purpose. Other trip purposes seemingly not seen as viable for cycling – though it should be noted only one purpose could be specified.

How far would you cycle?

Respondents were asked how far they felt it reasonable for them to cycle, in minutes. The results are shown by the chart below – the height of the line representing the proportion of respondents considering the distance on the horizontal axis to be acceptable to cycle.



Taking the weighted average, the median acceptable cycling distance is around half an hour, or around 5 miles at 10mph average. However, there is considerable variation, with existing cyclists considering much greater distances to be reasonable

to cycle, and non-cyclists generally considering an acceptable cycling distance to be much shorter. 13% of non-cyclists considered no distance to be suitable for cycling.

Conclusions

Commuting and business were cited as trip purposes with greatest scope for cycling. This finding has good alignment with the method of prioritising interventions based on travel to work data

Additional text has been added to reflect this, and the apparently considerable appetite for cycling ‘for its own sake’ corroborated by other responses. Risks around an apparent lesser appetite for other utility cycling is also covered in the revised text.

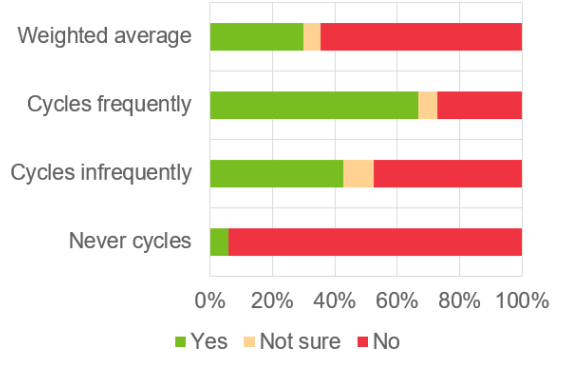
Text has been added to highlight that the response is consistent with observed cycling behaviours in high cycling places such as the Netherlands, but also to emphasise that non-cyclists have lower expectations of reasonable levels of cycling and frequent cyclists have markedly higher expectations relative to the weighted average or to mass cycling behaviours observed elsewhere.

Therefore, additional text has been added to highlight the need for realism in respect of potential for cycling, especially when encouraging non-cyclists – but also more positively to highlight that potential for cycling might be greater than regional policy suggests.

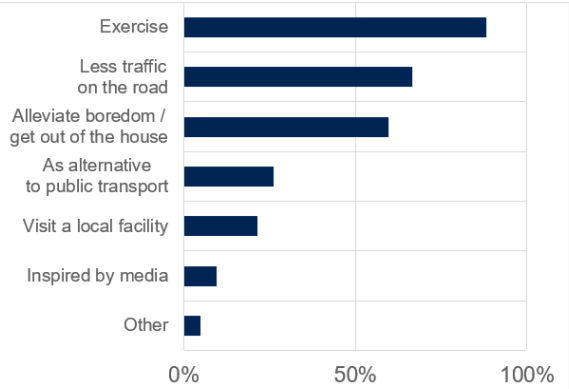
Cycling during the pandemic

RMBC traffic monitoring revealed an increase in cycling during part of the global coronavirus pandemic. To understand what prompted this, and to learn any lessons that might inform strategy development, respondents were asked if they cycled more, and for what purpose. The results are summarised below.

Did you cycle more during the pandemic?



Why did you cycle more in the pandemic?



The response indicates that existing cyclists cycled more during the pandemic, but there appears to be little uptake in cycling by those not cycling. Note that anyone not cycling prior to the pandemic but who has taken it up and had stayed in the habit at the point of consultation would report as being an existing cyclist. The greatest increases were recorded by frequent cyclists.

Exercise and to get out of the house were both cited as significant reasons to cycle more. The second most common reason was cited as reduced traffic levels (resulting from lockdowns). This may in part be reflective of these being amongst the few reasons permitted to leave the house during stricter periods of lockdown. Relatively few cited taking up cycling as an alternative to public transport.