

Perceptions on School Bus Transportation among Nova Scotians

Communications Nova Scotia and
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

By MQO Research



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Executive Summary

Currently, Nova Scotia transports approximately 77,000 students to and from school each day. While the system continues to transport students safely, there are some pressures in the school bus transportation system that require attention. Courtesy bussing and special needs bussing applications in certain regions have increased, new technology was introduced to help with scheduling and routing, and more busses were procured to accommodate more students. These factors, among others, have impacted pick-up and drop-off times, bus routes, and has resulted in service delays particularly in the Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE). As a result, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) launched a consultation to hear from stakeholders on how these issues can be addressed in new policy.

MQO worked with the EECD staff to develop an online survey and assist with in-person consultations. Feedback from stakeholders was gathered using two approaches: (a) a public online survey for parents and educators; and (b) in-person consultation sessions for specific stakeholder groups. The public survey was intended to allow parents and educators to provide input on school transportation priorities and thoughts on the key transportation issues (safety, routing, scheduling and communication). The in-person consultation sessions were held with several stakeholder groups (e.g., the Provincial Advisory Council on Education) and was intended to gather in-depth feedback on perceptions of (a) what is currently working well with school bus transportation, and (b) what needs to change or improve.

The consultation found that some issues were of particular concern in the HRCE, while others were cited across regions. Safety was a common priority cited by survey respondents and stakeholders alike. Weather conditions (e.g., driving on icy roads), location of bus stops, drivers' familiarity with the bus route and the monitoring and supervision of students on the bus were some of the factors cited with regards to safety. Routing and scheduling were also discussed, specifically the need for consistent bus routes and advance notice to bus drivers of any routing changes.

There were conflicting views on the current state of courtesy bussing, with some stakeholders citing that it was a strain on the current system, while others felt it was a good service, and necessary to accommodate the growing population in the HRCE. There was discussion around communication breakdowns – while some centres reported excellent communication between parents, school staff and bus drivers, others reported having major communication issues. A number of stakeholders in the in-person sessions cited the importance of relationships between the bus drivers and the students, indicating that good relationships had a substantial positive impact on students' overall school experience.

Overall, while concerns were cited about the current bussing system in Nova Scotia, a number of survey respondents and in-person stakeholder participants across regions were satisfied with the overall functioning of the current bussing system. For example, while safety was cited as a common concern, the results from the consultation were not indicative of the feeling that students were currently being placed in an unsafe environment on the bus.

Introduction

The Province of Nova Scotia has faced a number of challenges in school transportation this year. Courtesy bussing and special needs bussing applications increased substantially, new technology was introduced and \$1.9 million was invested for more busses. The additional demand for service, along with system changes impacted pick-up and drop-off times, bus routing, and caused service delays particularly in the Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE). Although this may be seen as an acute problem specific to the HRCE, they have also heard from many parents about challenges that persist year over year.

The Province of Nova Scotia viewed these recent challenges as an opportunity to address bussing issues. With the goal of applying consistent service standards across all regions and improving bus service for all students, the Province launched a consultation in October to hear from parents and teachers through an online survey. In addition to the survey, in-person consultation sessions were held with the Provincial Advisory Council on Education, the Principals Forum, the Minister's Advisory Council on Student Issues, CUPE, NSGEU, the Special Education Programs and Services Committee, and the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions, a group comprised of teachers and education specialists, which is co-chaired by the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union. Feedback will be used for a new set of bussing service standards for September, including bussing distances.

This report synthesizes and summarizes stakeholder feedback received from the public survey and in-person consultations.

Approach and Methodology

How Nova Scotians Gave Their Views

Feedback from stakeholders was gathered using two approaches: (a) a public online survey; and (b) in-person consultation sessions. These approaches are described in detail below. For reference, a consultation document was shared with session participants prior to the session so that individuals could have information on the current status of bussing in the province.

Public Survey

The public survey was intended to allow the public to provide input on school transportation priorities and thoughts on important issues related to school transportation. The public survey was designed by MQO Research with input from CNS and the EECD throughout the questionnaire development process. After an initial brainstorming session, a draft survey was developed and sent to CNS/the EECD for feedback. After this initial feedback was incorporated, MQO and CNS/the EECD worked together to finalize the questionnaire before it was launched on the provincial website.

The survey was launched on November 15th and could be accessed until December 5th, 2018. The survey was posted on the government's website, where guardians of school-aged children and teachers were invited to complete the survey in English or in French. In total, 8,178 surveys were completed. A copy of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix A, while full survey results are presented in Appendix B.

In-person Consultations

Between November 23rd and February 25th, 2019, eight in-person consultation sessions were held with stakeholders from the Provincial Advisory Council on Education, School Advisory Committee (SAC) members, the Principals Forum, CUPE, NSGEU, the Special Education Programs and Services Committee, and the Council to Improve Classroom Conditions, a group comprised of teachers and education specialists, which is co-chaired by the Nova Scotia Teachers' Union. A consultation session was also held with students from around the province who serve on a committee for the Minister. Feedback from these sessions will be used for a new set of bussing service standards for September, including bussing distances.

Stakeholder Feedback

This section of the report summarizes the stakeholder feedback received from the public survey and in-person consultations, organized into the following sections:

- Safety
- Routing and Scheduling
- Communication
- Other Concerns

Safety

SAFETY INFRASTRUCTURE

Safety was a dominant discussion topic in all of the stakeholder sessions. One aspect of the conversation around safety was focused on the impact of safety infrastructure in determining distance criteria for bussing eligibility. The challenge in creating a standard distance for bussing eligibility that could apply across all regions was discussed in almost every stakeholder session. Most stakeholders felt that consistent criteria for determining bussing eligibility that took into account issues such as traffic, availability of a side walk, coyotes, etc., may be more useful than a set distance. Some stakeholders suggested there should be a clear and shared definition of what constitutes a 'safe route'.

"Rural communities don't have the infrastructure to walk [sidewalks]...so kids who live very close to the school are being bussed."

"We need to establish what a safe route looks like."

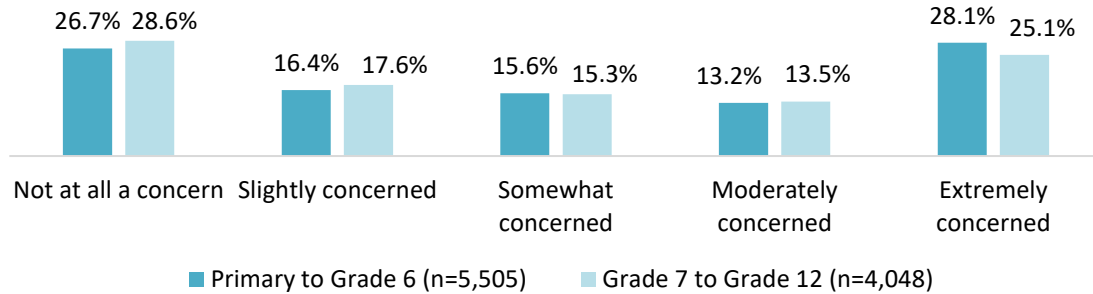
In line with the concerns over infrastructure, some discussion was centered on the need for bus stops to be physically reviewed in person. It was noted that routes planned by Bus Planner software may not always take into account safety issues that may only be evident when a stop is visited and viewed in person. Changes such as new developments can impact stops that were previously safe. Stakeholders noted that driver feedback into routing to identify safe infrastructure was important to the effectiveness of the system.

"You can't make a blanket range to apply to all regions...2.5 km off the highway is different from walking 2.5 km on Spring Garden Road."

Stakeholder feedback indicated that driving a route before bringing students on board, to get familiar with the route and identify any safety issues has been a very helpful practice to tweak routes. In some regions, drivers are paid for the practice of getting to know a route before bringing students on board; some regions encourage the practice but drivers are not compensated, and in other regions pre-running routes is not an expectation. Some stakeholders cited concerns over drivers going off-route due to lack of familiarity with bus routes and bus stops.

These safety concerns were reiterated by some respondents in the public survey. There was a relatively even split between those who felt safety was not at all a concern (P-G6 = 26.7%; G7-G12 = 28.6%) and those who felt they were extremely concerned (P-G6 = 28.1%; G7-G12 = 25.1%) about safety. (Figure 11)

Figure 11. Safety Concerns



Among those who stated they were moderately concerned or extremely concerned, the following table shows the top reasons that were cited as to why safety is a concern¹. While *location of bus stop* was the top safety concern for children in primary to grade 6, *weather conditions* was the top concern for children in grade 7 to grade 12. (Table 1a/1b)

**Table 1a. Why is safety a concern?
Primary to Grade 6**

Concern	Percent
Location of bus stop (area, distance, sidewalks, etc.)	17.0%
General comments about safety concerns	14.7%
No seatbelts	14.7%
Weather conditions	13.5%
Issues with other drivers speeding/not stopping/busy roads	13.1%
Issues with bus driver (driving, behaviour, training, etc.)	11.6%

¹ Throughout the report, only verbatim responses with frequencies of 10% or more are reported.

**Table 1b. Why is safety a concern?
Grade 7 to Grade 12**

Concern	Percent
Weather conditions	17.3%
General comments about safety concerns	15.1%
Issues with bus driver (driving, behaviour, training, etc.)	13.5%
No seatbelts	12.6%
Location of bus stop (area, distance, sidewalks, etc.)	12.4%

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Although there was some discussion on a distance or range that could be set to determine bus eligibility, most stakeholders felt that eligibility should be determined by considering multiple factors and that consistent criteria should be applied to determine eligibility. The majority of stakeholders agreed that the criteria for eligibility should take into account issues such as traffic, availability of a sidewalk, etc. The necessity of a clearly defined and shared definition of what constitutes ‘safe’ or a ‘safe route’ was also discussed. Other aspects suggested to be included within the definition of ‘safety’ were availability of a shoulder on highways (for rural areas in particular), speed limits, and distances between bus stops.

ACCURATE STUDENT INFORMATION

Stakeholders discussed the importance of having up-to-date and accurate student information. While new technology has made it possible to make changes to routes and rosters very quickly, the inability to access rosters quickly can lead to inaccuracies on bus lists. Some stakeholders discussed how inaccurate rosters can have potential safety implications. For example, outdated or little information about who should be in the driver’s care, who might belong on another bus, or the correct address where a guardian will be waiting can cause complications and safety risks for drivers. Providing access to a computer to reduce technological barriers for drivers and ensuring updates are not made the same day the change is to take place were recommended to reduce roster errors.

There is also inconsistency in the amount of student information that is provided to drivers from school to school. For example, some schools provide binders containing detailed information on all students within a school including medical conditions and behavioral issues, while other schools provide only minimal information for students on a specific bus route. Information on medical conditions and behavioral issues was considered incredibly important information that could help drivers or aides deal with emergency or behavioral situations that might arise safely and in the way a guardian would prefer.

“Medical and behavioural issues are shared with bus drivers and bus aids – but only some schools share this information.”

BEHAVIOR ON THE BUS

Managing student behavior on the bus was also raised as a safety concern. Stakeholders acknowledged the challenges drivers face in splitting focus between behavioral issues behind them and safely navigating the road in front of them. It was suggested that there is an inconsistent enforcement of consequences and expectations for bus behavior. Stakeholders noted that a lack of follow-up on conduct reports can lead to students losing respect for drivers' authority and drivers not feeling supported by schools. In one session, stakeholders cited cases of distracted driving and lack of safety training in emergency situations on busses that would not get reported or followed up on.

Students who were consulted also brought up the issue of behavior on the bus. Specifically, students stated that activities such as fights, smoking, and vaping took place on some busses, but that there was minimal supervision of students to hold them accountable. Students noted that this was a concern and safety risk, particularly given that a lot of busses have students from all age cohorts. Due to this, some stakeholders (specifically within the HRCE) had concerns about younger students (pre-primary and primary) sharing the same bus as older students, without supervision.

The value of cameras on busses was brought up on numerous occasions in relation to behavior on the bus. Stakeholders indicated that cameras on the bus, even when not turned on, are effective at deterring fighting and behavioural issues.

In terms of physical safety of students, some stakeholders brought up the inclusion of mandatory seat belts and snow tires (in the winter) to be included on all busses.

MONITORING AND SUPERVISION

Although cameras were viewed as an effective tool in managing behavior on the bus, the solution stakeholders considered most effective was student monitor support. Many stakeholders brought up the discrepancy between the required student/teacher ratios in a classroom and those on a bus. One challenge that was noted was union rules around teaching assistants (TA's) and student monitors. It was indicated that although TA's are not responsible for all children on the bus, only the individual child they are assigned to. Additionally, student monitors are not able to be placed on a bus where a TA is present, which poses further complications because TA's are unionized.

"Schools must enforce the parking rules – parents cannot stop where the bus is meant to stop."

Stakeholders also brought up a need for additional support in policing violators of traffic and school rules within the school zone. Stakeholders indicated that traffic rules that support safe drop-off and pick-up at the schools are frequently being ignored by parents and guardians. It was felt that increased congestion going into the school is making it hard for busses to unload students and creating an unsafe environment for students who walk to school. Stakeholders felt strongly about the need for schools to have people enforcing parking and stopping rules.

Routing and Scheduling

CONSISTENCY

When discussing things that were effective through different regions, consistency was a common theme. Stakeholders talked frequently about the value of being able to build a relationship with the students and guardians which could have a positive impact on communication and behavior. The benefit of consistent routing was also referenced in relation to route familiarity and being able to meet expectations for drop-off/pick-up windows. Stakeholders noted that drivers who were able to keep the same route were better able to respond to traffic and weather demands and stay consistent with timing. Stakeholders expressed concern with the frequency of changes and how quickly they were expected to be implemented.

“Having a schedule to follow is fine but the frequency of changes now is becoming more and more of a problem.”

Students stated that those who lived on rural backroads were particularly impacted by these changes. Specifically, if bad weather caused the busses to only travel on paved roads, communication to students and families who live on backroads would be last minute or often communicated by radio. Some students stated that this had a negative impact as a result, as students would come in late to school (as last-minute arrangements would have to be made) or would miss school entirely in some cases.

COURTESY BUSSING

Many stakeholders felt that courtesy bussing was causing considerable strain on the system resulting in stops that make it challenging to meet the expected drop-off window. One stakeholder commented that some of the distances for courtesy bussing were unreasonable. However, it was noted that increased congestion close to the school have created an unsafe situation for children walking, particularly in urban areas (e.g., City of Halifax). One stakeholder suggested parents may feel their child is safer bussing a short distance rather than trying to navigate the congestion of cars as parents drop off their children. Another stakeholder stated that courtesy bussing was indeed helpful and necessary, but that the current process of courtesy bussing needed to be re-evaluated to be more efficient.

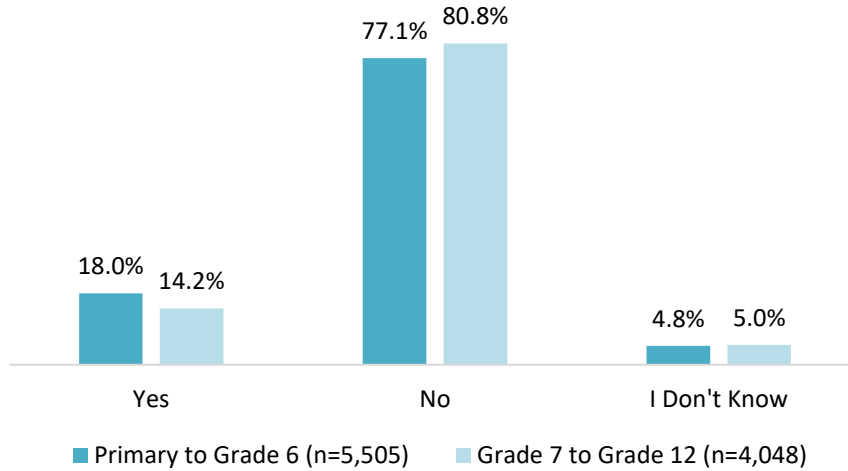
“All students should have access to the bus and cannot be 40 minutes late to school every day.”

It was also noted that in some regions, courtesy bussing is not at all an issue, but rather it has become extremely important in serving students. It was noted that for some disadvantaged communities, courtesy bussing has meant the difference between children attending or not attending school, and that removing the regions' flexibility to provide courtesy bussing would have a sizeable negative impact on the community.

“...with the complexities of parents today you have to be flexible.”

Use of courtesy bussing by the children of survey respondents was relatively low (less than 20% for both grade categories). Participants with children in both grade categories reported similar rates of courtesy bus use, with marginally greater numbers of children in primary to grade 6 using courtesy bussing (18.0%) compared to older children in grade 7 to grade 12 (14.2%). (Figure 8)

Figure 8. Does your child(ren) use 'courtesy bussing'?



SINGLE ADDRESS PICK-UP AND DROP-OFF

There was a great deal of discussion around single address pick-up/drop-off, versus the ability to change drop-off locations to accommodate multiple residences. Overwhelmingly, feedback indicated that offering more than one possible location to pick-up or drop-off a child was a challenge and has a significant impact on the system. Regional centres that do not provide the option for multiple addresses found that having a single primary address solved a lot of problems with bus rosters and drop-offs in particular.

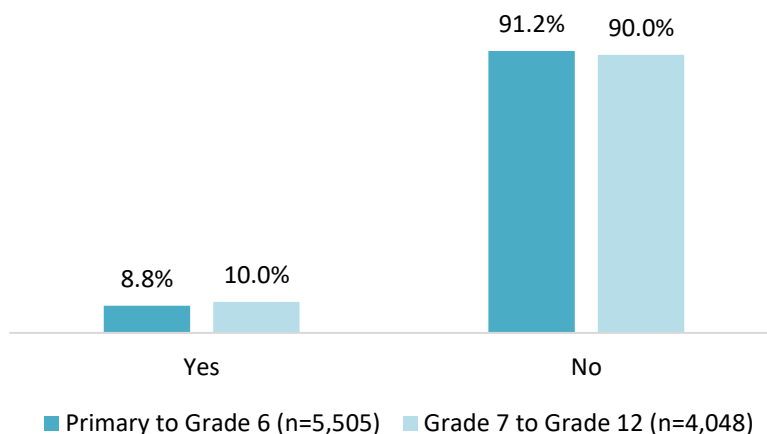
“CSAP does not allow transfers and this solves a lot of problems.”

“We need to accept that we can’t accommodate all kinds of request from all parents, we try to do this but we should recognize we have limitations.”

Some comments were made that the issues that arise from allowing multiple addresses is not the number of stops per child, but the frequency at which they change.

The survey indicated that the majority of students *do not* live in more than one home. The proportion was similar across both grade categories (P-G6 = 91.2%; G7-G12 = 90.0%). (Figure 14)

Figure 14. Living in More than One Home



DROP-OFF/PICK-UP WINDOW

The stakeholder discussions were varied in relation to the drop-off/pick-up window. Some regions have a difficulty with arrival times in particular, while others do not. Some stakeholders indicated the importance of monitors in ensuring school busses can arrive early enough to ensure all students are present before the start of the day. The 20-minute window before the first bell can be problematic, without the aid of staggered bells or the ability to drop students off outside the 20-minute window, it can be difficult for drivers to get students to the school for the start of the day.

There are a number of factors that play into timing such as courtesy bussing, stop zones, etc. Some stakeholders brought up the re-introduction of staggered pick-up/drop-off times for the bus, particularly in the HRCE where staggered bus times are no longer implemented.

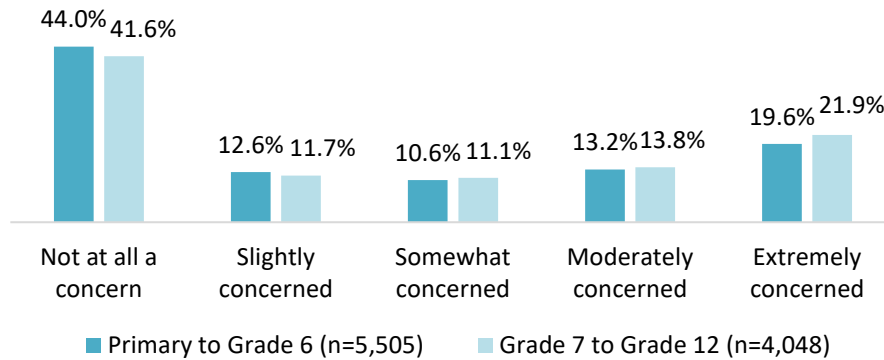
“Staggering the bells within a family of schools that share the same busses would be helpful.”

Additionally, special needs bus students are leaving very early, before the school day ends, and in other cases very late, some stakeholders expressed concern over these students’ access to a full day of education.

On a positive note, students in the in-person consultation stated that during the after-school pick-up, the busses for each route are always parked in the same location at their school. This makes it easy for students to know what bus they need to take home, as it is always parked in the same location at the end of each day. Students felt this was a convenient strategy that should be implemented throughout schools in the province.

Results from the survey indicate that with regards to pick-up and drop-off times, the majority of parents/guardians were *not at all concerned* (P-G6 = 44.0%; G7-G12 = 41.6%). (Figure 12)

Figure 12. Concerns over Pick-Up and Drop-Off Times



Communication

In regions where the drivers were employed directly by the centres for education, stakeholders cited communication as a strength, in other regions it was cited as an opportunity for improvement.

Drivers employed directly by the centres for education are brought together during in-services and participate in professional development days, drivers have a direct line to the school. The direct line of communication between the school administration and drivers, and even mechanics, has meant more collaboration between the school, drivers, and families. For example, one stakeholder described that in one area bus drivers are brought in and participate in orientation to talk about behaviour expectations

“Being in-house makes the family of drivers stronger.”

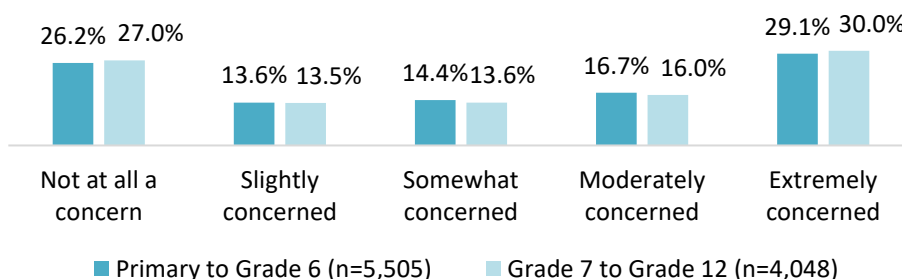
on the bus. Changes can be communicated quickly and issues, such as switching a student to another bus to address a behavioral issue, can be addressed swiftly.

Although communication could always be stronger in education centres across the province, communication was cited as a particular concern for stakeholders in HRCE. Some examples of communication breakdowns include dispatchers and managers providing different instructions to drivers, frequent route changes, frequent stop change requests from parents, schools not providing drivers with enough student information, and inconsistency in addressing behavior issue reports. Some stakeholders, who were also parents of children in the HRCE, stated that emergency phone numbers provided did not connect to an individual, but was an answering machine, which posed a challenge in addressing parents’ questions and concerns.

The three most frequently discussed topics related to communication seemed to be related to technological barriers, the rapid rate of route/address changes, and the relationship between drivers, the centers and families.

Results from the survey indicate that just under one-third of parents/guardians cited that they were *extremely concerned* about communication regarding bus transportation (P-G6 = 29.1%; G7-G12 = 30.0%), while a similar proportion felt it was *not at all a concern* (P-G6 = 26.2%; G7-G12 = 27.0%). (Figure 13)

Figure 13. Communication Concerns



TECHNOLOGICAL BARRIERS

Although the advances made possible by tools such as Bus Planner software and text notifications were appreciated by stakeholders, technological barriers or limitations were also cited as a challenge. Stakeholders, a number of whom were parents, were pleased with the existence of online tools and services for bussing information (e.g., Bus Planner app, Facebook pages, email communication), many felt that the functionality of these tools need to be enhanced and improved. For example, some stakeholders who had students within the school system reported instances of receiving Bus Planner notifications of late or cancelled busses 2-3 hours after the school day began.

Second, it was noted that because of the part-time nature of the work many drivers are retirees that may not have access to a home computer to print off day-to-day roster changes. Stakeholders noted that drivers are expected to keep up-to-date on last minute roster and route changes that are sent to a driver’s phone which is problematic for drivers who are not tech savvy but also because drivers are not supposed to be checking their phones while driving. Solutions such as providing a computer to print hard copies of rosters, more consistency in routing and ensuring changes to stops and routes are made 24 hours in advance of a change taking effect were recommended. Effective communication tools that do not require technology were also discussed, for example the primary tag system and providing drivers with binders that provide student information. As discussed previously, stakeholders also noted the importance of driver feedback in assessing the safety of suggested stops and not relying solely on software for routing.

FREQUENCY AND SPEED OF CHANGE

A commonly discussed challenge in almost all the sessions was the negative impact that frequent and rapid changes have on the system. Stakeholders frequently expressed safety concerns around address

changes and inaccurate rosters. Frequent route changes also negatively impact the ability for a driver to stay on schedule and make it difficult to build relationships with students and families.

RELATIONSHIPS

One of the most prevalent themes throughout the stakeholder discussions was the value of the relationships that drivers are able to build with families and the schools in regions where drivers are employed by the education centre. Small things like bringing the drivers together for professional development days, including them in orientation, and consistent routing were seen as having a largely positive impact on day-to-day running of school transportation from managing behavior on the bus to communicating the with the school and parents in emergency or weather situations.

The students who were consulted especially stressed the importance of the student-bus driver relationship, and how it positively impacted their school day. In particular, some students expressed appreciation for the ability of bus drivers to be accepting and understanding of cultural differences among students on the bus.

Other Concerns

A number of additional concerns were raised during the stakeholder consultations. These are highlighted below:

IMPORTANCE OF FLEXIBILITY

Stakeholders felt strongly that flexibility (for example, in the bussing distance criteria for rural versus urban areas) should be reflected in future policy to be able to continue to serve the unique needs of each region. The policy should have clear, understandable criteria that allows for flexibility and discretion to be used depending on the circumstances and needs of each regional education centre.

THE BUS AS AN EXTENSION OF THE CLASSROOM


Stakeholders brought forward the notion that the bus is an extension of the classroom. It was noted that the experience that students have on the bus sets the tone for their learning for the rest of the day. Concern was also raised over the adult to child ratios required in the classroom verses on the bus.

DIFFICULTY IN RETAINING DRIVERS

Stakeholders noted a number of factors influencing the ability to retain drivers that could cause additional issues into the future. The part time nature of the job combined with the staggered hours which makes it difficult to get additional employment make it a position that is only suitable to a small potential workforce.

ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF TRANSPORTATION

A number of stakeholders indicated a need to explore alternative forms of transportation as plausible solutions to some of the identified bussing issues. Solutions such as walking busses and facilitating private transportation were noted. Stakeholders felt that alternative forms of transportation may be



particularly impactful to address some of the strain that courtesy bussing has placed on the system and to support those children who are closer to the school without increasing the congestion of parents dropping children off. One suggestion made by some stakeholders, particularly for the HRCE, was to offer subsidies to students for public transit passes.

INEFFICIENT USE OF BUSES ON ROUTES

In one stakeholder session, some attendees pointed out that in the HRCE, some busses were full (or sometimes over capacity), others would be relatively empty with many free seats. Stakeholders attributed that this may be due to inefficiency in routing plans for the busses, that may not be picking children up from homes in a way that best utilizes space on the busses.

POLICY COMMUNICATION

In one stakeholder session, participants discussed the need for the policy to be clearly communicated to parents, particularly regarding rules for pick-up and drop-off. Some examples provided were seating plans on the bus, disciplining unruly behavior, and eating on the bus.

Appendix A: Public Survey

INTRODUCTION

The province of Nova Scotia would like to get your opinion on the current situation and development of future policy around school bus transportation for students attending public school in Nova Scotia.

Please note that your survey data will remain anonymous and confidential. Individual responses will not be shared, and results will only be reported in aggregate (group) form.

DEMOGRAPHICS AND INITIAL QUESTIONS

D1. Are you the parent or guardian of a child(ren) who currently attends public school in Nova Scotia?
For the purpose of this survey, a guardian could include grandparents, relatives, babysitter, caregiver, etc.

- 01. Yes
- 02. No **Go to Q13**

D2. Please indicate in which Regional Centre for Education your child(ren) attends, or if your child(ren) attends a school in CSAP.

- 01. Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP)
- 02. Halifax Regional Centre for Education
- 03. Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education
- 04. Cape Breton-Victoria Centre for Education
- 05. Chignecto-Central Regional Centre for Education
- 06. South Shore Regional Centre for Education
- 07. Strait Regional Centre for Education
- 08. Tri-County Regional Centre for Education

D3. What is your 6-digit postal code? _ _ _ _ _ _

D4. Please select the statement(s) below that describe you? *Please choose all that apply.*

- 01. I am the parent or guardian of at least one child in **grade primary to grade 6.**
- 02. I am the parent or guardian of at least one child in **grade 7 to grade 12.**

D5. Does your child(ren) in **grade primary to grade 6** take the bus to school?

- 01. Yes
- 02. No

D5.1 Does your child(ren) in **grade 7 to grade 12** take the bus to school?

- 01. Yes
- 02. No

[If D4 = 1 and 2] We understand that concerns may be different for students of different ages. For the following questions you will have the opportunity to answer each question for your child/children in grade primary to grade 6 *and* your child/children in grade 7 to grade 12.

Q1. [If D4 = 1] How often does your child(ren) in **grade primary to grade 6** get to and from school in the following ways:

	Almost Never	Occasionally	Almost Always
01 Walk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
02 Bike	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
03 Driven	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
04 Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
05 Public transit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q1.1 [If D4 = 2] How often does your child(ren) in **grade 7 to grade 12** get to and from school in the following ways:

	Almost Never	Occasionally	Almost Always
01 Walk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
02 Bike	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
03 Driven	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
04 Bus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
05 Public transit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q2. [If Q1 = Bus Occasionally or Almost Always] Does your child(ren) in **grade primary to grade 6** use 'courtesy bussing'?

Courtesy bussing allows students who do not qualify for bussing (distance from school to qualify for school bus), to take the bus if there are seats available.

01. Yes
02. No
03. I don't know

Q2.1. [If Q1.1 = Bus Occasionally or Almost Always] Does your child(ren) in **grade 7 to grade 12** use 'courtesy bussing'?

Courtesy bussing allows students who do not qualify for bussing (distance from school to qualify for school bus), to take the bus if there are seats available.

01. Yes
02. No
03. I don't know

Q3. [If D4 = 1] Thinking about school transportation, please indicate to what degree each of the issues listed below are a concern for your child(ren) in **grade primary to grade 6**.

PROGRAMMING NOTE: ROTATE STATEMENTS

	Not at all a concern	Slightly concerned	Somewhat concerned	Moderately concerned	Extremely concerned
01 Length of time on bus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
02 Bussing distance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
03 Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
04 Pick-up/drop-off times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
05 Communications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q3a. If 03 = moderately or extremely concerned - Please specify why safety is a concern: _____

Q3.1 [If D4 = 2] Thinking about school transportation, please indicate to what degree each of the issues listed below are a concern for your child(ren) in **grade 7 to grade 12**.

PROGRAMMING NOTE: ROTATE STATEMENTS

	Not at all a concern	Slightly concerned	Somewhat concerned	Moderately concerned	Extremely concerned
01 Length of time on bus	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
02 Bussing distance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
03 Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
04 Pick-up/drop-off times	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
05 Communications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q3b. If 03 = moderately or extremely concerned - Please specify why safety is a concern: _____

Q4. [If D4 = 1] Do any of your child(ren) in **grade primary to grade 6** live in more than one home?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

Q4.1 [If D4 = 2] Do any of your child(ren) in **grade 7 to grade 12** live in more than one home?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

BUSSING DISTANCE

Q5. [If D4 = 1] How far do you live from the school your **primary to grade 6** student attends?

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 01. Less than 0.5km (less than 5 minute walk) | [Skip to Q8] |
| 02. Between 0.5 and 0.9km (5 to 9 minute walk) | [Skip to Q8] |
| 03. Between 1.0km and 1.4km (10 to 14 minute walk) | [Skip to Q8] |
| 04. Between 1.5km and 1.9km (15 to 19 minute walk) | [Skip to Q8] |
| 05. Between 2.0km and 2.4km (20 to 24 minute walk) | [Skip to Q8] |
| 06. Between 2.5km and 2.9km (25 to 29 minute walk) | [Skip to Q8] |
| 07. Between 3.0km and 3.5km (30 to 35 minute walk) | [Skip to Q8] |
| 08. 3.6 km or more (more than 35 minute walk) | |
| 09. Don't Know | |

Q5.1 [If D4 = 2] How far do you live from the school your **grade 7 to grade 12** student attends?

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| 01. Less than 0.5km (less than 5 minute walk) | [Skip to Q8] |
| 02. Between 0.5 and 0.9km (5 to 9 minute walk) | [Skip to Q8] |
| 03. Between 1.0km and 1.4km (10 to 14 minute walk) | [Skip to Q8] |
| 04. Between 1.5km and 1.9km (15 to 19 minute walk) | [Skip to Q8] |
| 05. Between 2.0km and 2.4km (20 to 24 minute walk) | [Skip to Q8] |
| 06. Between 2.5km and 2.9km (25 to 29 minute walk) | [Skip to Q8] |
| 07. Between 3.0km and 3.5km (30 to 35 minute walk) | [Skip to Q8] |
| 08. 3.6 km or more (more than 35 minute walk) | |
| 09. Don't know | |

Q6. [If D4 = 1 & D5 = 1] On average, how much time does your **grade primary to grade 6** student currently spend on the bus to school? **[PROGRAMING NOTED: PROVIDE A DROP DOWN LIST OF OPTIONS]**

- | | |
|----|--|
| 01 | 10 minutes or less |
| 02 | Between 11 and 20 minutes |
| 03 | Between 21 and 30 minutes |
| 04 | Between 31 and 40 minutes |
| 05 | Between 41 and 50 minutes |
| 06 | More than 50 min |
| 98 | My child does not take the bus [Skip to Q8] |
| 99 | I Don't know |

Q6a. [If D4 = 1] In your opinion, is this a reasonable amount of time for a **grade primary to grade 6** student to spend on the bus *to* school in the morning?

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 01 | Yes |
| 02 | No |

03 I don't know

Q6b.[If D4 = 1] What do you feel is a reasonable distance for Regional Education Centres/CSAP to be responsible for transporting a student in **grade primary to grade 3** to and from school?

01. Less than 1.5Km
02. At least 1.5km to 1.9km (15 to 19 minute walking)
03. At least 2.0km to 2.4km (20 to 24 minute walking)
04. At least 2.5km to 2.9km (25 to 29 minute walking)
05. At least 3.0km to 3.5km (30 to 35 minute walking)
06. 3.6 km or more (more than 35 minute walking)
07. Don't know

Q6c.[If D4 = 1] What do you feel is a reasonable distance for Regional Education Centres/CSAP to be responsible for transporting a student in **grade 4 to grade 6** to and from school?

01. Less than 1.5Km
02. At least 1.5km to 1.9km (15 to 19 minute walking)
03. At least 2.0km to 2.4km (20 to 24 minute walking)
04. At least 2.5km to 2.9km (25 to 29 minute walking)
05. At least 3.0km to 3.5km (30 to 35 minute walking)
06. 3.6 km or more (more than 35 minute walking)
07. Don't know

Q6.1 [If D4 = 2 & D5.1 = 1] On average, how much time does your in **grade 7 to grade 12** student currently spend on the bus *to* school in the morning? **[PROGRAMMING NOTED: PROVIDE A DROP DOWN LIST OF OPTIONS]**

- 01 10 minutes or less
- 02 Between 11 and 20 minutes
- 03 Between 21 and 30 minutes
- 04 Between 31 and 40 minutes
- 05 Between 41 and 50 minutes
- 06 More than 50 min
- 98 My child does not take the bus **[Skip to Q8.1]**
- 99 I Don't know

Q6a.1 [If D4 = 2] In your opinion, is this a reasonable amount of time for a **grade 7 to grade 12** student to spend on the bus *to* school in the morning?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No
- 03 I don't know

Q6b.1 If D4 = 2] What do you feel is a reasonable distance for Regional Education Centres/CSAP to be responsible for transporting a student in **grade 7 to grade 12** to and from school?

- 01. Less than 1.5Km
- 02. At least 1.5km to 1.9km (15 to 19 minute walking)
- 03. At least 2.0km to 2.4km (20 to 24 minute walking)
- 04. At least 2.5km to 2.9km (25 to 29 minute walking)
- 05. At least 3.0km to 3.5km (30 to 35 minute walking)
- 06. 3.6 km or more (more than 35 minute walking)
- 07. Don't know

ARRIVAL

Students are expected to be in school by the start of instruction.

Q7. [If D4 = 1 & D5 = 1] On average, does the bus for your **grade primary to grade 6 student(s)** arrive at school on time?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No
- 03 I don't know

Q7.1 [If D4 = 2 & D5.1 = 1] On average, does the bus for your **grade 7 to grade 12 student(s)** arrive at school on time?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No
- 03 I don't know

COMMUNICATION

PROGRAMMING NOTE: Skip to Q13 if D5& D5.1 = 2

Q8. Do you get advance notice when your child's school bus will be late?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

Q8.1 If yes, was the notification useful?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

Q8.2 If no, why not? _____

Q9. When you have a concern with school bussing, do you know where to get information/who to contact?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

Q10. Have you ever had to contact someone about bussing issues?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

Q10_1. [If Q10 = 01] How did you receive your response?

- 01 By phone
- 02 By email/text
- 03 Other (please specify: _____)
- 04 I did not receive a response

Q11. [Q10 = 01] What was the issue?

Q12. [Q 10_1] Were you satisfied with the response?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No

GO TO Q13

TEACHER QUESTIONS – FOR TEACHERS ONLY

Q13. Are you currently a school teacher in a school in Nova Scotia?

- 01 Yes
- 02 No **If D1 = 02 = Terminate If D1 = 01, go to Q18**

Q14. Please indicate in which Regional Centre for Education you teach in:

- 01. Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP)
- 02. Halifax Regional Centre for Education
- 03. Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education
- 04. Cape Breton-Victoria Centre for Education

- 05. Chignecto-Central Regional Centre for Education
- 06. South Shore Regional Centre for Education
- 07. Strait Regional Centre for Education
- 08. Tri-County Regional Centre for Education

Q15. What is your 6-digit postal code? _ _ _ _ _ _

Students are expected to be in school by the start of instruction.

Q16. Does late arrival time of bussed students have a negative impact on your instruction day for students in **grades primary to grade 6?**

- 01 Yes
- 02 No
- 03 I don't know

Q17. Does late arrival time of bussed students have a negative impact on your instruction day for students in **grades 7 to 12?**

- 01 Yes
- 02 No
- 03 I don't know

GO TO Q18

FINAL QUESTIONS (OPEN-ENDED) – FOR ALL

Q18. Do you have anything else to add before this survey concludes? Please enter your additional feedback in the text box below.

Closing:

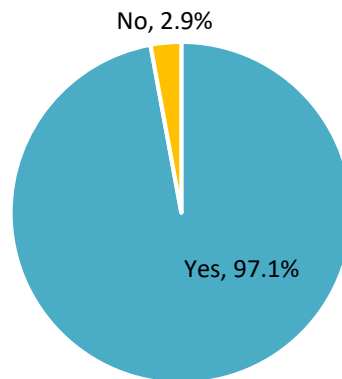
Thank you for contributing to this survey; your feedback is greatly appreciated.

Appendix B: Survey Results

Respondent Characteristics

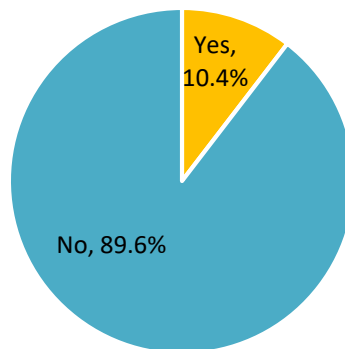
The majority of respondents to the public survey (97.1%) identified as parents or guardians of child(ren). (Figure 1)

**Figure 1. Proportion of Parents/Guardians in Sample
(n=8,178)**



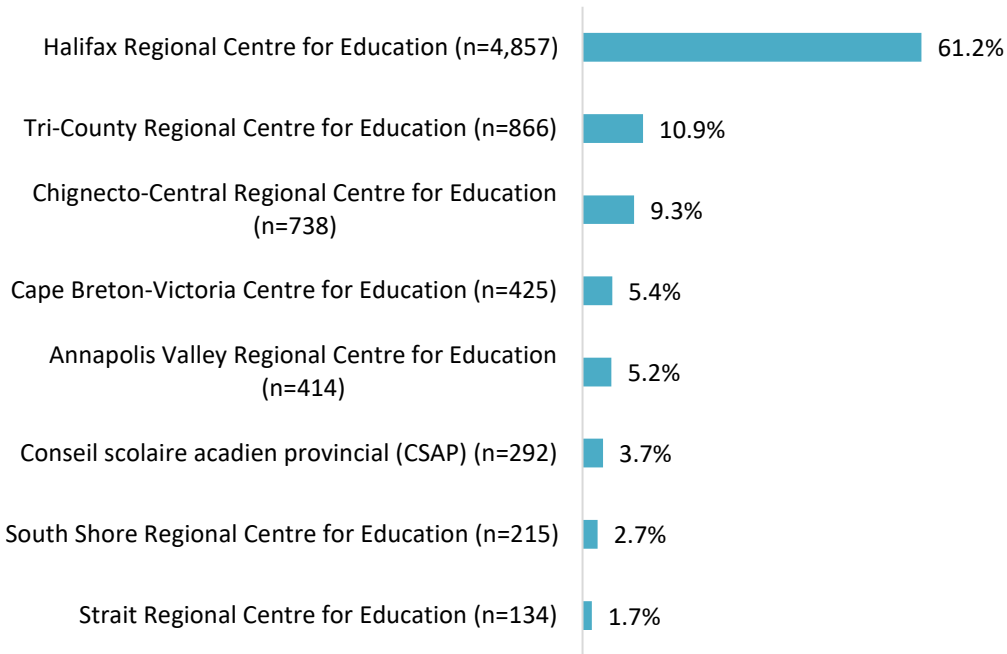
One in ten individuals in the sample (10.4%) identified as teachers. (Figure 2)

**Figure 2. Proportion of Teachers in Sample
(n=8,178)**

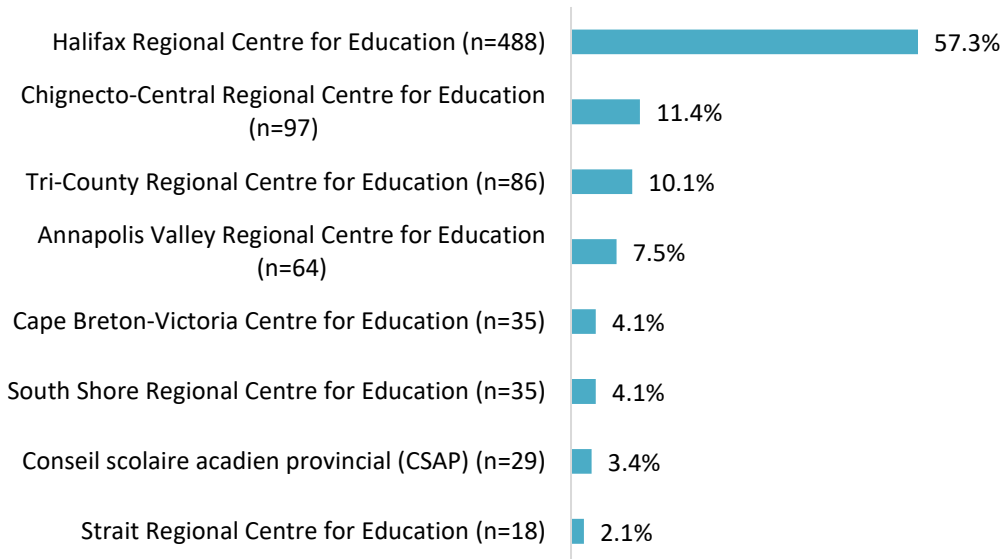


The majority of the parent/guardian sample reported being part of the Halifax Regional Centre for Education (61.2), and just over half of the teachers (57.3%) were part of the HRCE. (Figures 3a/3b)

**Figure 3a. Regional Centre for Education/CSAP
(Parents/Guardians)
(n=7,941)**

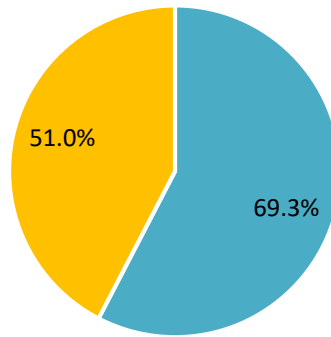


**Figure 3b. Regional Centre/CSAP
(Teachers)
(n=852)**



The sample had more individuals who had at least one child in primary to grade 6 (seven in ten; 69.3%), while just over half had at least one child in grade 7 to grade 12 (51.0%). (Figure 4)

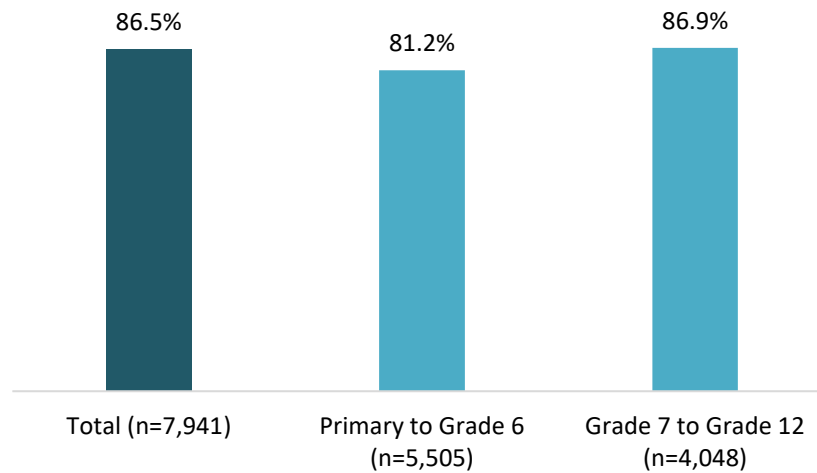
**Figure 4. Grade Level of Children
(n=7,941)**



- I am the parent or guardian of at least one child in grade primary to grade 6
- I am the parent or guardian of at least one child in grade 7 to grade 12

Almost all parents/guardians reported that they have a child that takes the bus to school (86.5%). The proportions were similar across both grade categories. (Figure 5)

**Figure 5. Has a Child that Takes the Bus to School
- % Yes -**



Getting To and From School

Among those with child(ren) in primary to grade 6 (n=5,505), the majority reported that their child(ren) get to and from school via the school bus, with 77.1% citing their child(ren) *almost always* get to school

using the bus. Just over half reported that their child(ren) are *occasionally* (47.8%) or *almost always* (16.6%) driven to school. (Figure 6)

Similarly, among those with child(ren) from grade 7 to grade 12 (n=4,048), the vast majority reported that their child(ren) get to and from school using the bus. Over half reported that their child(ren) are *occasionally* (54.3%) or *almost always* (11.7%) driven to school. (Figure 7)

Figure 6. How often does your child(ren) in grade primary to grade 6 get to and from school in the following ways? (n=5,505)

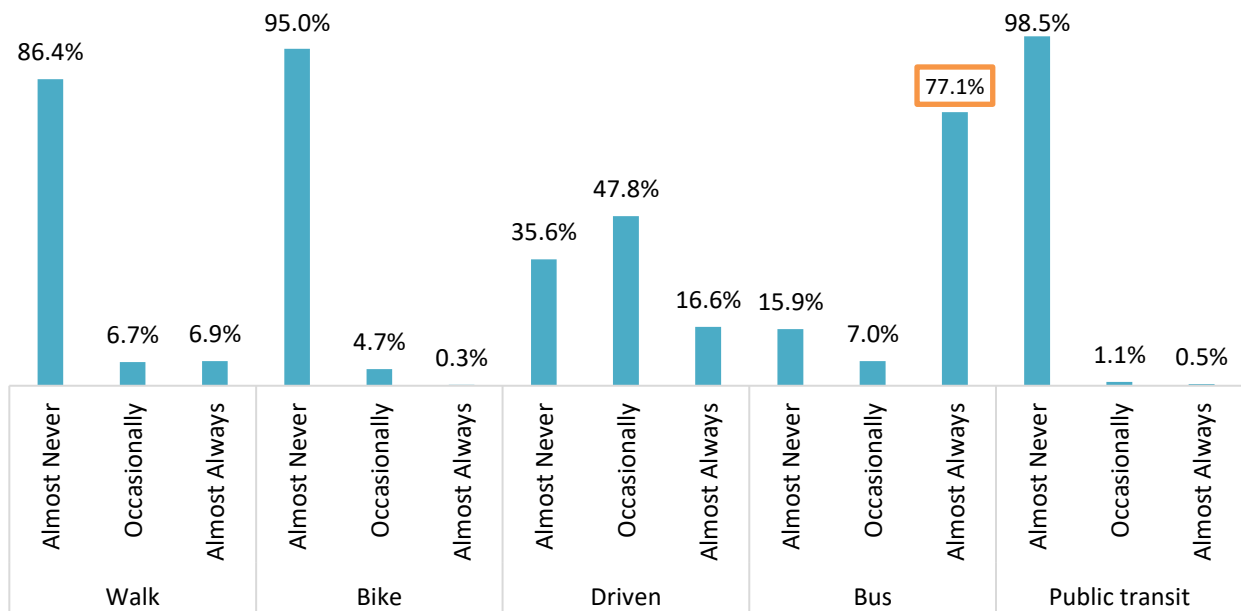
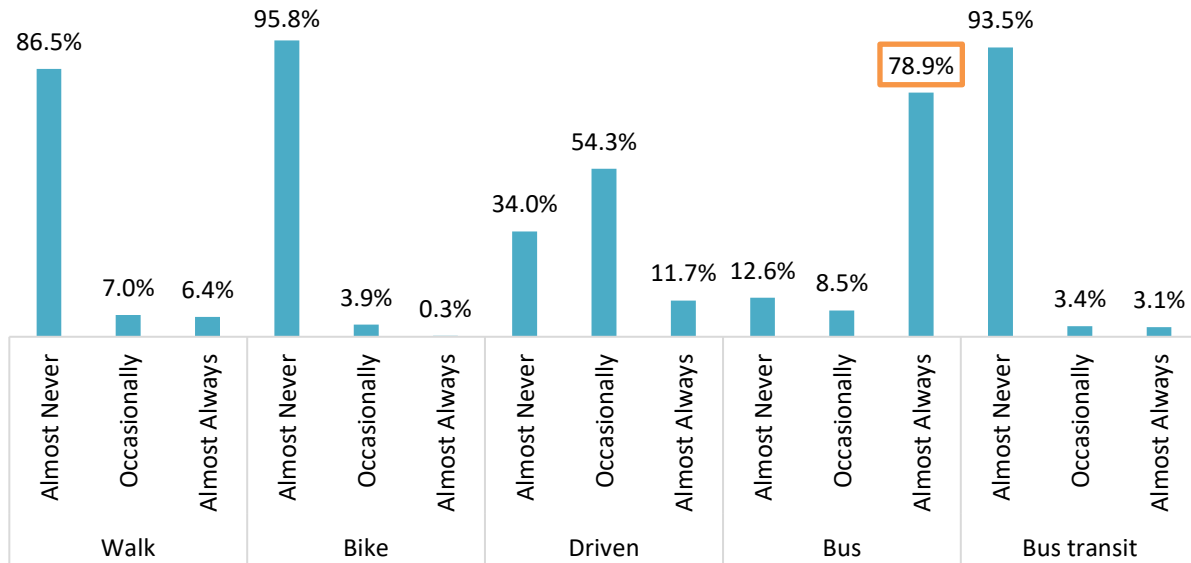


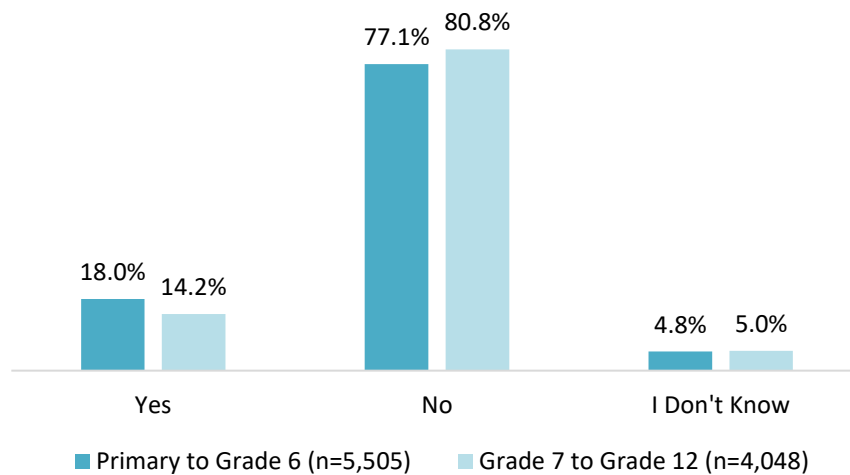
Figure 7. How often does your child(ren) in grade 7 to grade 12 get to and from school in the following ways? (n=4,048)



Courtesy Bussing

Participants with children in both grade categories reported similar rates of courtesy bus use, with marginally greater numbers of children in primary to grade 6 using courtesy bussing (18.0%) compared to older children in grade 7 to grade 12 (14.2%). (Figure 8)

Figure 8. Does your child(ren) use 'courtesy bussing'?

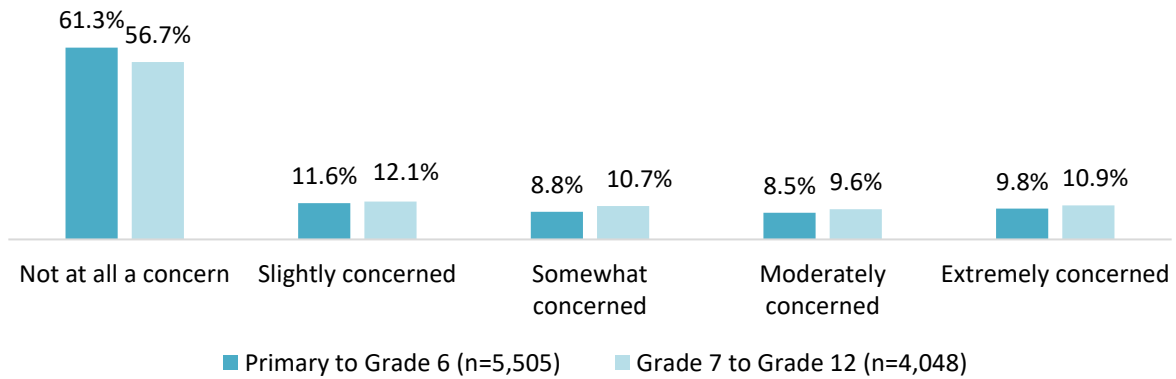


Transportation Issues

Length of Time on Bus

The length of time spent on the bus was not a big concern for parents/guardians for both grade categories, with the majority citing *not at all a concern* (P-G6 = 61.3%; G7-G12 = 56.7%). (Figure 9)

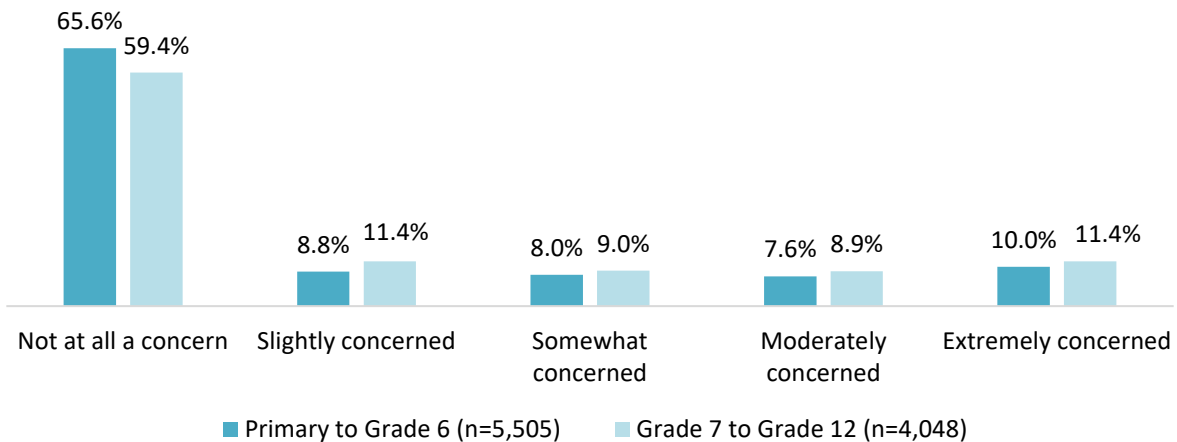
Figure 9. Concerns over Length of Time Spent on Bus



Bussing Distance

Similar to length of time on the bus, bussing distance was not perceived as a major concern. The majority of parents/guardians in both grade categories stated bussing distance was *not at all a concern* (P-G6 = 65.6%; G7-G12 = 59.4%). (Figure 10)

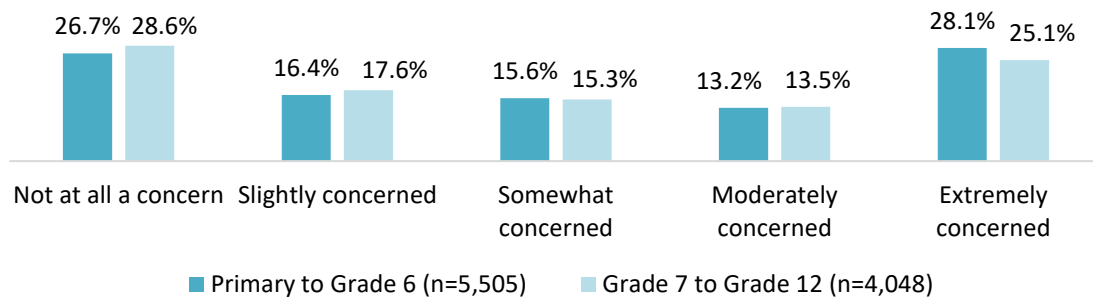
Figure 10. Concerns over Bussing Distances



Safety

Responses were more varied when it came to concerns over transportation safety. There was a relatively even split between those who felt safety was *not at all a concern* (P-G6 = 26.7%; G7-G12 = 28.6) and those who felt they were *extremely concerned* (P-G6 = 28.1%; G7-G12 = 25.1%) about safety. (Figure 11)

Figure 11. Safety Concerns



Among those who stated they were moderately concerned or extremely concerned, the following table shows the top reasons that were cited as to why safety is a concern². While *location of bus stop* was the top safety concern for children in primary to grade 6, weather conditions was the top concern for children in grade 7 to grade 12. (Table 1a/1b)

**Table 1a. Why is safety a concern?
Primary to Grade 6**

Concern	Percent
Location of bus stop (area, distance, sidewalks, etc.)	17.0%
General comments about safety concerns	14.7%
No seatbelts	14.7%
Weather conditions	13.5%
Issues with other drivers speeding/not stopping/busy roads	13.1%
Issues with bus driver (driving, behaviour, training, etc.)	11.6%

**Table 1b. Why is safety a concern?
Grade 7 to Grade 12**

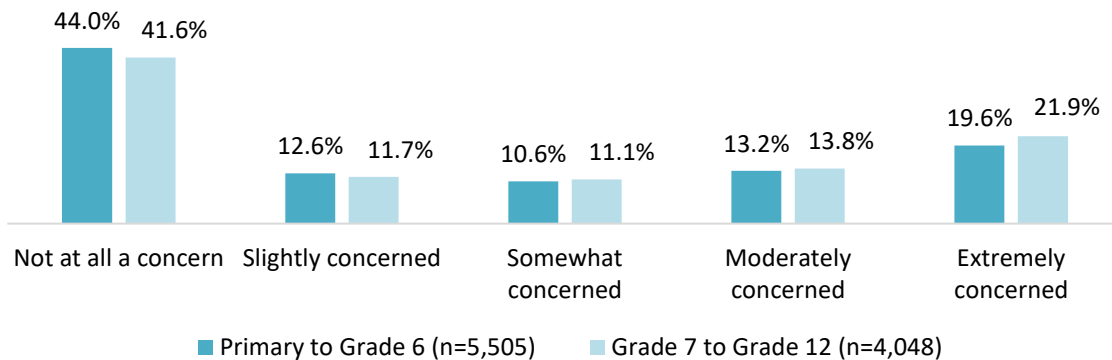
Concern	Percent
Weather conditions	17.3%
General comments about safety concerns	15.1%
Issues with bus driver (driving, behaviour, training, etc.)	13.5%
No seatbelts	12.6%
Location of bus stop (area, distance, sidewalks, etc.)	12.4%

² Throughout the report, only verbatim responses with frequencies of 10% or more are reported.

Pick-Up/Drop-Off Times

With regards to pick-up and drop-off times, the majority of parents/guardians were *not at all concerned* (P-G6 = 44.0%; G7-G12 = 41.6%). (Figure 12)

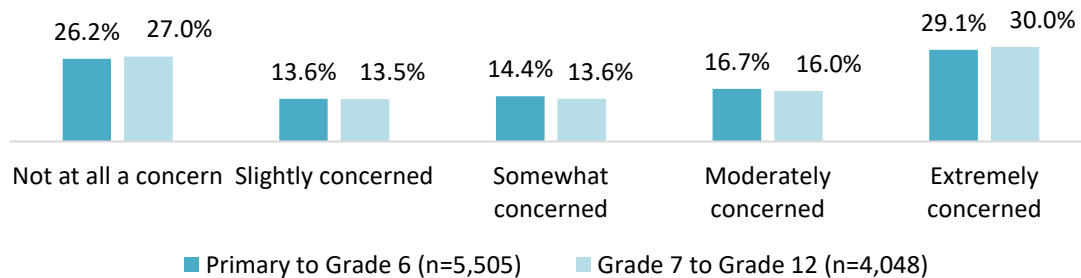
Figure 12. Concerns over Pick-Up and Drop-Off Times



Communications

Just under one-third of parents/guardians cited that they were *extremely concerned* about communication regarding bus transportation (P-G6 = 29.1%; G7-G12 = 30.0%), while a similar proportion felt it was *not at all a concern* (P-G6 = 26.2%; G7-G12 = 27.0%). (Figure 13)

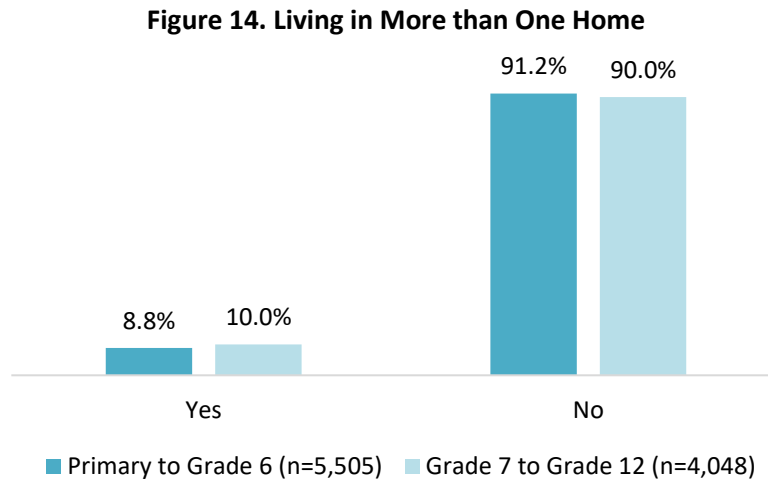
Figure 13. Communication Concerns



Routing and Distances

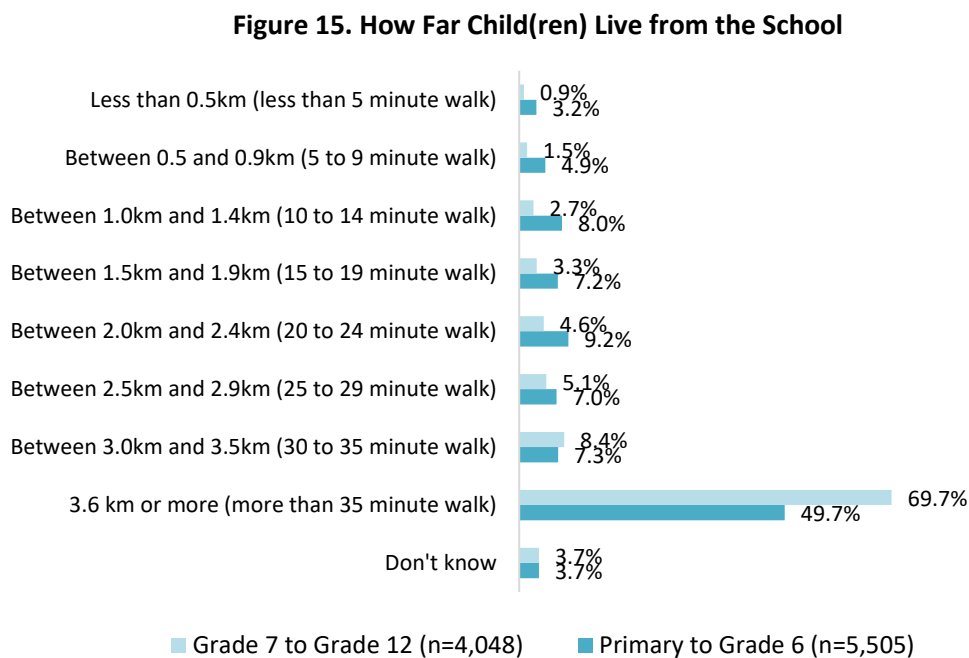
Multiple Addresses

The majority of students *do not* live in more than one home. The proportion was similar across both grade categories (P-G6 = 91.2%; G7-G12 = 90.0%). (Figure 14)



Distance from School

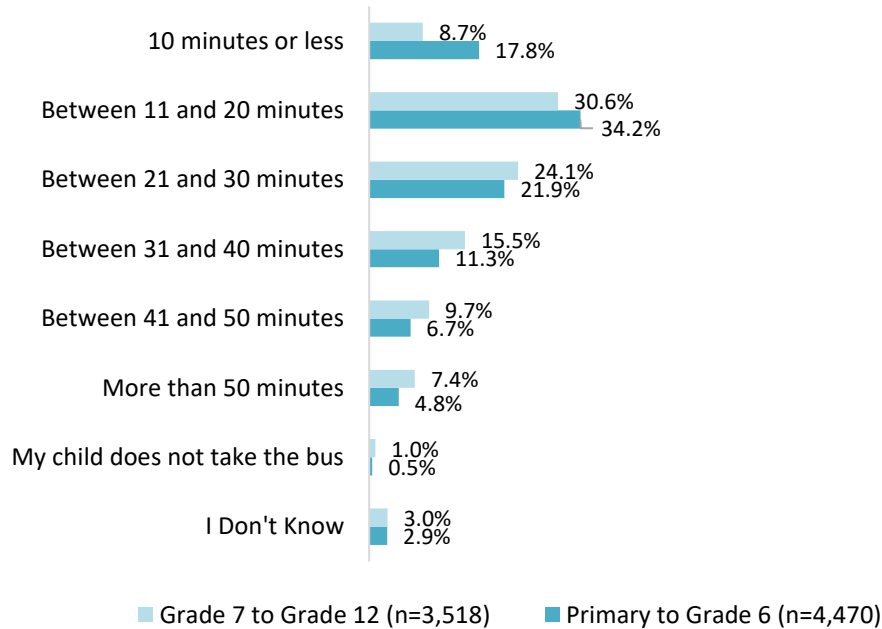
The majority of students live 3.6km or more from their school. Specifically, just under half (49.7%) of students in primary to grade 6 live 3.6km or more from their school, while almost seven in ten (69.7%) students in grade 7 to grade 12 live 3.6km or more from their school. (Figure 15)



Time Spent on Bus

Approximately one-third of students spend between 11 and 20 minutes on the bus (P-G6 = 34.2%; G7-G12 = 30.6%). A large proportion of students (just under one-quarter) spend between 21 and 30 minutes on the bus. (Figure 16)

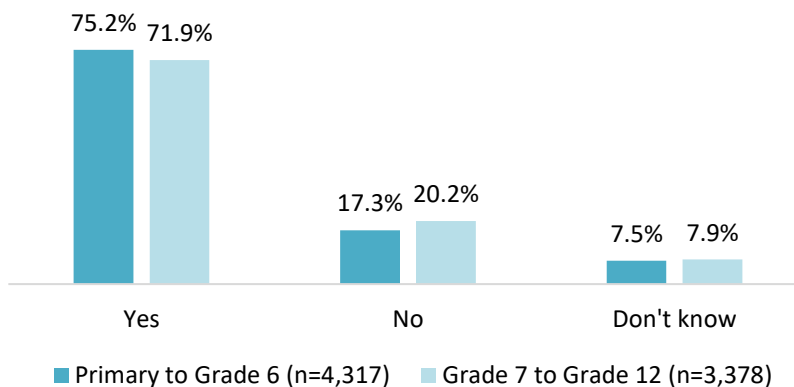
Figure 16. Time Spent on the Bus



Reasonable Time to be on the Bus

As a follow up question, parents/guardians were asked if the time their child(ren) spent on the bus was reasonable. The vast majority agreed that it was a reasonable amount of time. This was the case for both grade categories (P-G6 = 75.2%; G7-G12 = 71.9%). (Figure 17)

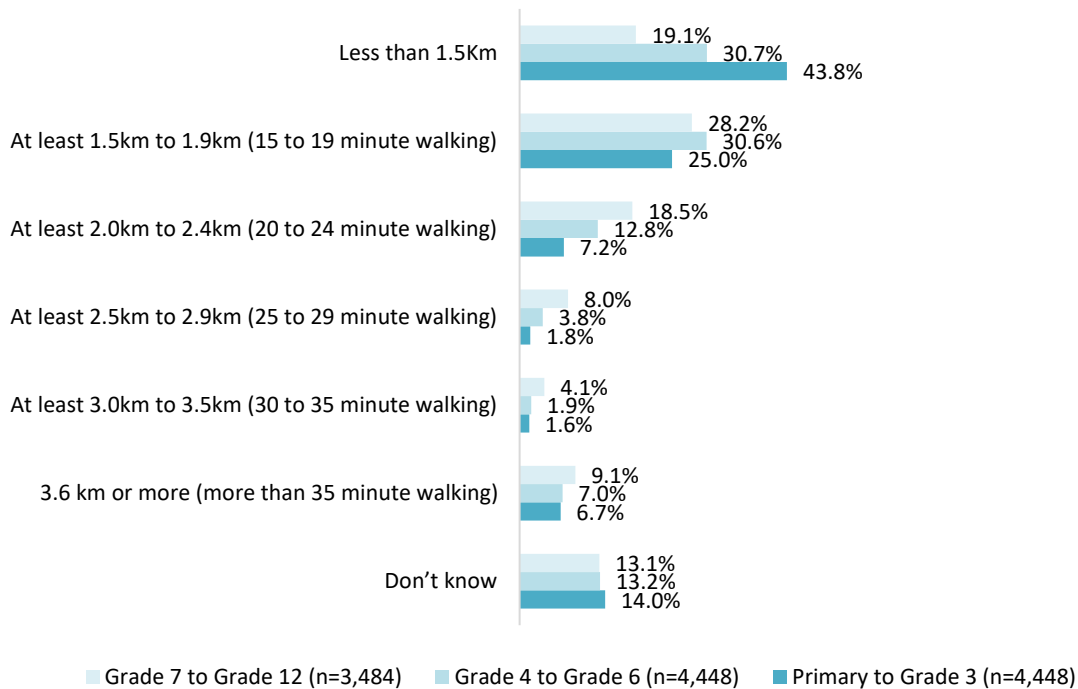
Figure 17. Reasonable Time to be on Bus



Reasonable Bussing Distance

With regards to reasonable bussing distances, results showed that lower bussing distances were preferred for younger children. Specifically, over four in ten respondents (43.8%) felt that children in primary to grade 3 should have a bussing distance of *less than 1.5km*. There was an even split between *less than 1.5km* (30.7%) and *at least 1.5km to 1.9km* as a bussing distance for those in grade 4 to grade 6. Finally, responses were more varied for children in grade 7 to grade 12, with the majority of respondents feeling *1.5km to 1.9km* was appropriate (28.2%). (Figure 18)

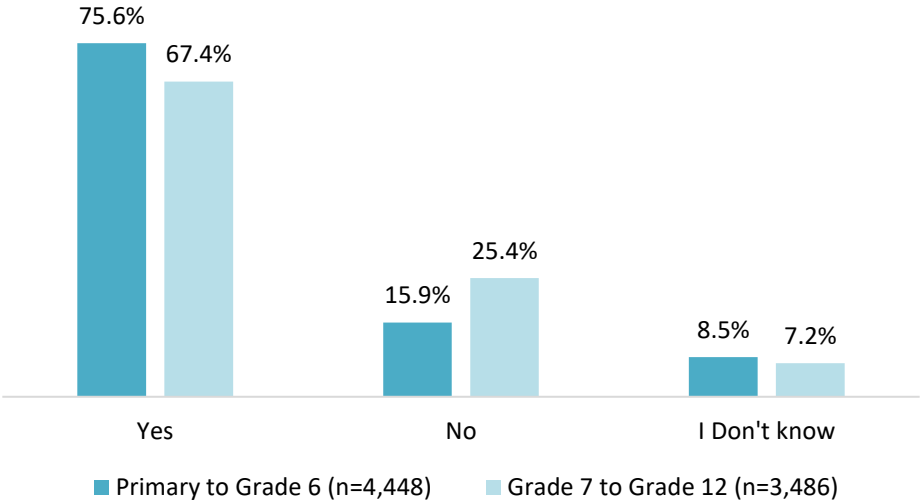
Figure 18. Reasonable Bussing Distance by Grade Category



Arriving to School on Time

The majority of parents/guardians felt that on average, the busses do arrive to school on time (P-G6 = 75.6%; G7-G12 = 67.4%). However, there was a perception that students in grade 7 to grade 12 did not arrive to school on time as much as younger students. (Figure 19)

Figure 19. Does the Bus Arrive to School on Time?



Notifications and Contact over Issues

Only one-quarter of parents/caretakes reported that they *do* receive advance notice if their children’s school bus will be late (24.2%). (Figure 20).

Among those who stated ‘Yes’ to receiving advance notice, the majority found the notification to be useful (87.3%). (Figure 21)

Figure 20. Advance Notice When Bus Will Be Late (n=6,826)

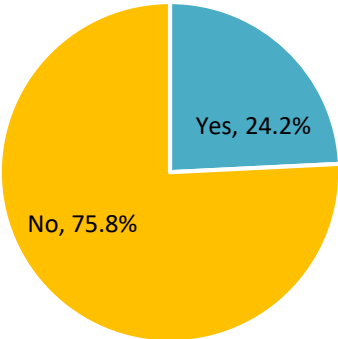
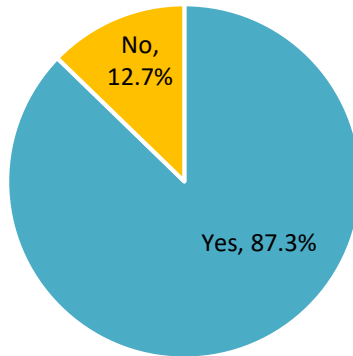


Figure 21. Was the notification useful?
(n=1,664)



Among those who *did not* find the notification useful (n=211), *notifications arriving too late* was the top reason. (Table 2)

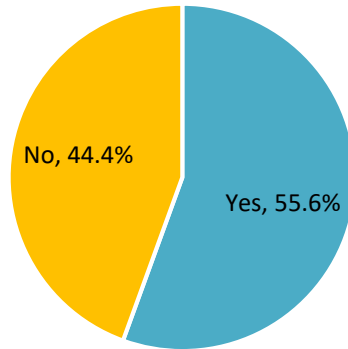
Table 2. Why was the notification not useful?

Reason	Percent
Notifications arrive too late	51.7%
Method of delivery was not convenient	21.3%
Inaccurate information given (regards to expected arrival time of bus)	17.1%

Contact over Bussing Issues

Just over half of parents/guardians are aware of who they need to contact when they have a concern with school bussing (55.6%). (Figure 22)

Figure 22. When you have a concern with school bussing, do you know who to contact? (n=6,826)



Seven in ten respondents (69.0%) have had to contact someone about bussing issues. (Figure 23)

Issues were primarily related to the arrival time (or lack of arrival) of busses. Table 3 shows the top issues.

Table 3. What was the issue?

Issue	Percent
Bus was late/did not arrive/too early	30.5%
Location of bus stop/bus route (pick-up location, drop-off location, location requests, etc.)	18.0%
Communication issues with company	11.8%

Among the subset who had contacted someone about bussing issues, the majority received their response by phone (43.2%), while another one-third (34.1%) reported not receiving a response at all. (Figure 24)

Finally, satisfaction on the response was divided among respondents, with about half (48.4%) stating that they were satisfied with the response they received. (Figure 25)

Figure 23. Have you ever had to contact someone about bussing issues?
(n=6,826)

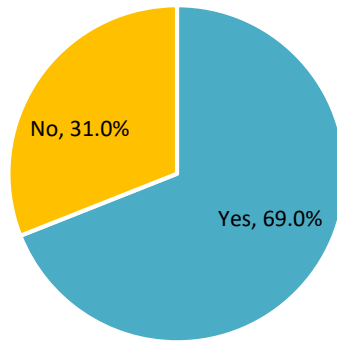


Figure 24. How did you receive your response?
(n=4,710)

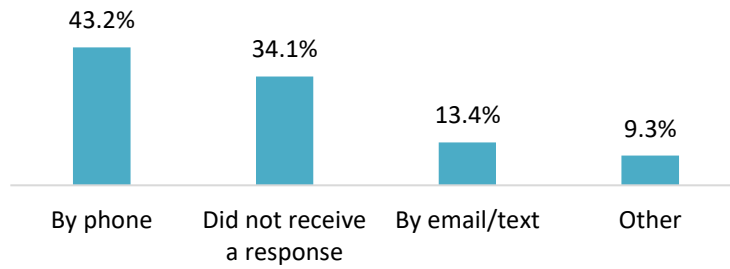
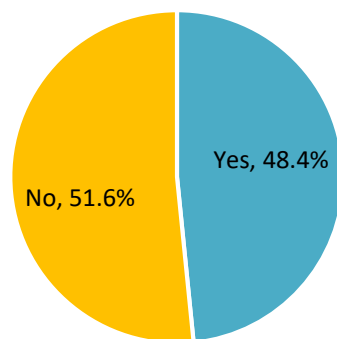


Figure 25. Were you satisfied with the response?
(n=3,103)



Survey of Teachers

Does Late Arrival Time Impact Instruction Day?

A section of the public survey asked respondents who identified as teachers to answer whether the late arrival time of busses impacted the day's instruction. Teachers overwhelmingly felt that late arrival time of busses impacted class instruction (P-G6 = 82.9%; G7-G12 = 79.6%). (Figure 26)

Figure 26. Impact of Late Arrival Time on Instruction

