

Survey findings

The Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Bill

May 2023

As part of the Senedd's Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee's scrutiny of The Environment (Air Quality and Soundscapes) (Wales) Bill (the Bill), a survey was conducted to gather the views of people across Wales.

The survey

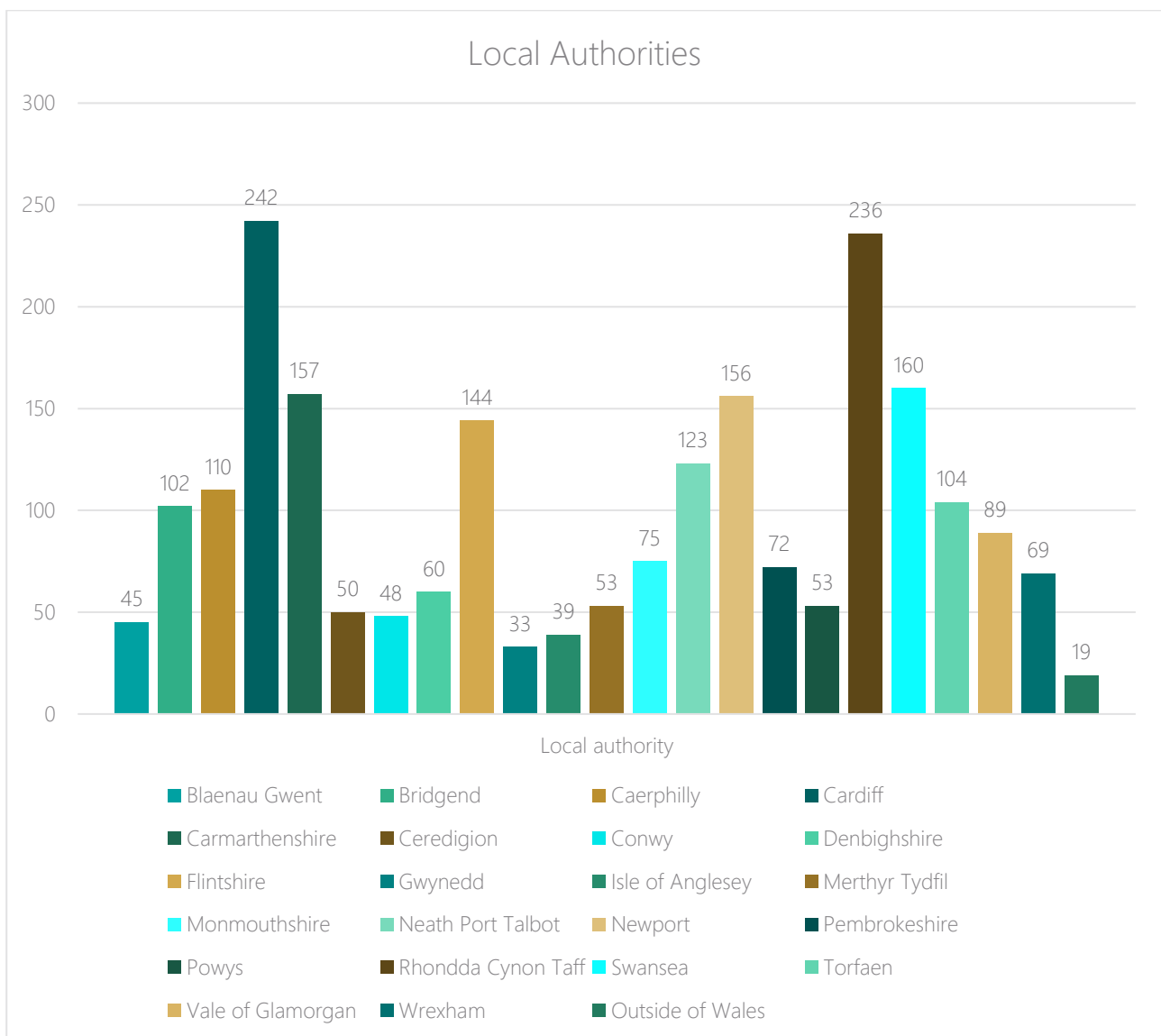
- 1.** A standardised and structured, self-completion survey was open for approximately a six-week period, between Monday 3 April and Monday 8 May 2023. The survey was available to complete online.
- 2.** The survey was promoted through several channels including the Senedd's social media channels.
- 3.** The survey asked five questions about the provisions in the Bill that relate to road user charging schemes. Respondents were provided with some information about what these provisions will do and what the current law on road user charging schemes is.
- 4.** This survey gave people across Wales an opportunity to give their views on some of the key provisions in the Bill.



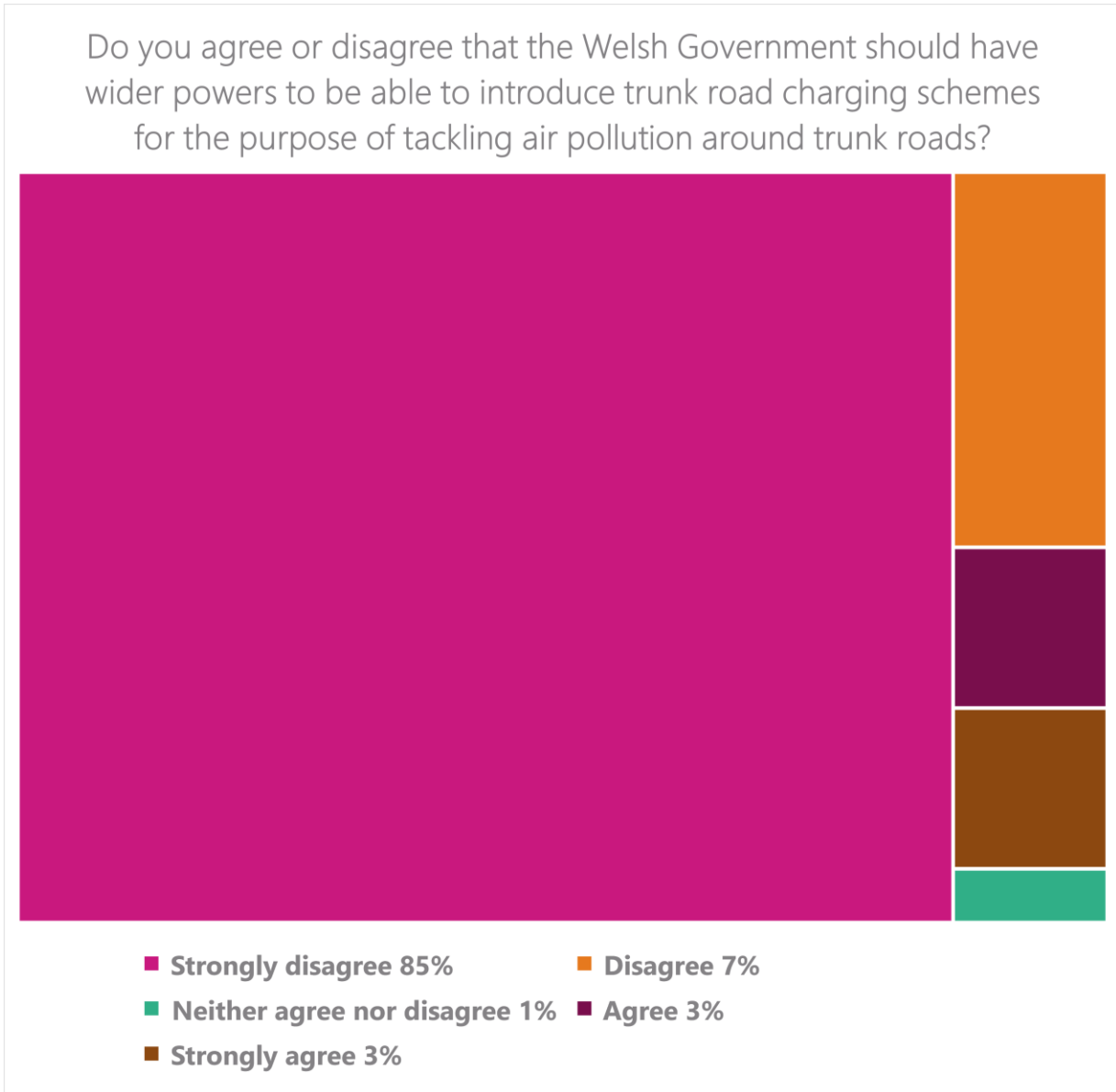
1. Findings

5. 2239 responses were received. The findings show the views of self-selecting respondents who chose to participate in the survey which may not be directly representative of the Welsh population.

6. Every local authority was represented within the responses, with Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taff receiving the highest number of responses.



Of the 2239 people who took part in the survey **92% disagreed** that the Welsh Government should have wider powers to introduce trunk road charging schemes to tackle air pollution around trunk roads.



7. 93% of respondents believe that it is essential that the Welsh Government should have to consult the public before introducing trunk road charging schemes, with an additional 4% of respondents claiming that it is important.

8. 1% of respondents believe that it is not important that the Welsh Government should have to consult the public before introducing trunk road charging schemes.

How important do you think it is that the Welsh Government should have to consult the public before introducing trunk road charging schemes?



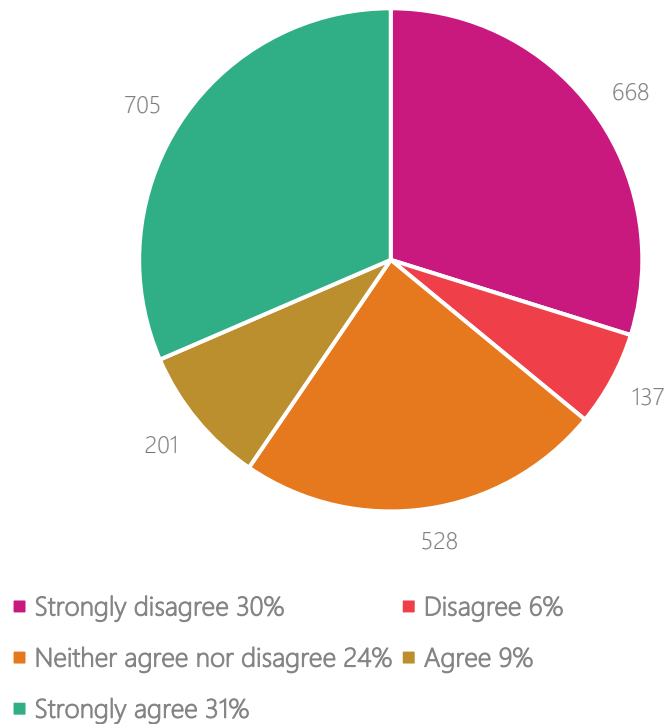
■ Not important 1% ■ Somewhat important 1%
■ Neither important nor unimportant 0% ■ Important 4%
■ Essential 93%

9. 92% of respondents said that, in principle, they do not support the provisions in the Bill on road user charging.

10. The remainder of the responses were even with 2% somewhat supporting, 2% neither supporting nor opposing, 2% supporting, and 2% strongly supporting the provisions in the Bill on road user charging.

11. 61% of respondents disagreed that the Welsh Government should have to use proceeds from trunk road charging schemes that have been introduced to tackle air pollution to fund policies to tackle air pollution. Responses were more evenly spread across the answer options.

Do you agree or disagree that the Welsh Government should have to use proceeds from trunk road charging schemes that have been introduced to tackle air pollution to fund policies to tackle air pollution?



12. Respondents were invited to explain their views on the Bill. 1866 respondents gave their views on the Bill. Of those who responded 93% spoke against the Bill and 6% in favour of the Bill.

13. Those who spoke in favour of the Bill felt that the Bill was, in principle, necessary to improve air quality.

“From the point of view of air pollution and climate change I strongly agree with the idea. However, an alternative to enable access must be in place. It may be that a trial needs to take place in a very polluted area.”

“I believe that it's vitally important that governments grasp this challenge to improve air quality now, in order to safeguard the health of people living in cities and near major roads. I

have replied in the survey that I consider it essential to consult with the public, however, I consider that the outcome of such a consultation should be advisory only.”

14. However, the overwhelming majority of comments from respondents were clearly against the Bill. Many respondents were angry about the potential financial impact of the Bill on people’s living costs and the potential financial pressure the Bill could place on the working public.

“Absolutely crazy idea, charge people to use roads that are designed to take traffic away from smaller roads, but you are actually making people drive on smaller roads. The people of Wales do not want this or the proposed cutting in speed limits. The public transport provision in the valleys is shambolic. This idea is just enough tax on people who are some of the poorest people in Europe. I live in Tredegar but work in Usk, that's 4 buses each way, please explain how that is practical.”

“With fuel prices still high introducing this bill would cripple the people who need to travel to their jobs on a daily basis. It will also force a lot of people off the road as the price of running a car is sky-high. Before even introducing a bill like this I would suggest you concentrate on getting public transportation to an acceptable level first. As an example in my local community they are stopping all bus services come June. I have to travel 27 miles a day to work so if I was forced off the road due to these extra charges I would have to quit my job.”

“Road charging is an idea which has long been put forward by a relatively small number of activists and planners but has little support among the general public. Individual choice should be respected, rather than trying to compel people to use slow and unreliable public transport by contriving to make private motoring more expensive and less convenient. Household budgets are already being squeezed by inflation and recession and road charging will disproportionately cause hardship for low-income motorists, forcing them to make difficult choices or off the road altogether while the wealthier will be able to afford to continue to travel as they please. Road charging is an attack on our standard of living, freedom of choice and freedom to travel and will rightly lead to a reaction against the politicians responsible at the ballot box.”

“The Bill is so vague, it doesn't tell us what WG will do. They say they don't have plans to introduce charging but we know they will. This Bill means they can do this without having to consult with us, the public. That's unethical, we didn't vote for this so they MUST consult. Otherwise, we'll see the problems that are happening in England happening here.”