

# **Public Opinion and Road Pricing**

## **Report from primary research**

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## Executive summary

'We're going to be gridlocked in ten years' time' Workshop participant, North East Somerset

'Road pricing is another way of ripping us off; where does our money go already?' Focus group participant, Harlow

More than 90 per cent of the people we polled for this study see congestion as a serious problem for the UK<sup>1</sup>. People expect it to get worse and do not believe that current approaches to congestion management are working. They are open to radical solutions to ensure that we do not hit gridlock. Most people are to some extent open to the introduction of road pricing, if it is such a solution. Only 25 per cent of people disagree with the principle that 'people should pay to use the roads in proportion to use'.

However, for proponents of road pricing, the centre of gravity of public opinion is in the wrong place. Nearly two thirds of people say there is a fair or better chance of them opposing road pricing, while only a third say there is a fair or better chance of them supporting road pricing. When asked to rate road pricing on a temperature scale where 10 is 'warm/favourable' and 1 is 'cold/unfavourable', the mean and median scores are 4, and the mode is just 1. The more people discussed road pricing in our deliberative workshops and focus groups, the more negative towards it they became. Where people believed road pricing would work, they accepted it only grudgingly. While road pricing has increasing support among policy elites, it lacks support in the countryside.

Road pricing is not instinctively seen as a solution to the problem of congestion. People believe that the majority of journeys are made at unalterable times of day along routes inadequately served by public transport. They cannot see how price can shift behaviour, when they feel they have no option as to when to travel, or the mode they use. In this context, road pricing is widely seen as a part of the 'stealth tax' narrative. Rhetoric claiming that road pricing will address congestion is seen as a smokescreen for the underlying aim: raising revenue. Where people see road pricing as ineffective and costly, they oppose it.

A further problem for road pricing is that it is often seen as an attack on freedom. People see it as government meddling in their day-to-day lives and trying to tell them what to do. They often think this despite also believing that it will not actually impact on their behaviour.

Other concerns about road pricing are that:

- It will be easy to evade the charge, meaning that the people that pay will have to carry the burden of people who do not.
- It will be costly to introduce and run, and so wasteful of taxpayers' money.
- Where it does change behaviour, it will lead to increased traffic on residential streets and danger to children playing.
- The scheme will be complex and it will be hard to know what a journey will cost.
- The cost of goods will go up as hauliers pass on the cost of the charge.
- Privacy will be compromised as data will be held on movement.
- It will be unfair and penalise the poor and disabled among others.

Opposition is not randomly distributed. Regression analysis of the poll data revealed that the more people drive, the more likely they are to oppose road pricing. The more they use public transport, the warmer their attitudes are, and the more satisfied they are with public transport, the less likely they are to oppose. Variables such as age, gender, and class appear to have little effect, though people who work in transport are disproportionately likely to oppose road pricing.

This pattern is somewhat problematic for proponents of road pricing as most people drive most days and rarely use public transport. However, public transport satisfaction is more common, with roughly two fifths of people quite or very satisfied, and a third quite or very dissatisfied.

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1. This report draws on three day-long deliberative workshops, six focus groups and a nationwide poll of 1550 people. For the methodology, see Annexes 1-4.

The way road pricing is structured will have a significant impact on the level of opposition it faces. Introducing road pricing in addition to existing road taxes leads to 48 per cent of people saying there is a very good chance of opposing road pricing, compared to 35 per cent if it replaces both existing road taxes, 28 per cent if it replaces just fuel duty and 36 per cent if it replaces just Vehicle Excise Duty (VED). However, for each of these options the proportion saying there is either a 'good' or 'very good' chance of opposing continues to hover around 60 per cent. Replacing taxes takes the edge off opposition; it does not remove it.

When described as replacing petrol tax, 44 per cent of people say they have a 'good' or 'very good' chance of supporting road pricing, which is a third more people than when it is described as replacing either VED or both taxes, and double the number if it replaces neither tax.

Where the money is spent is just as important as the way it is raised. Only 4 per cent of people want the money to go towards general public services, while 30 per cent want it to go towards public transport, 29 per cent towards fuel duty cuts, and 28 per cent towards road improvements. For people with a 'very good' chance of opposing road pricing, the emphasis is on fuel duty cuts (42 per cent) and road improvements (29 per cent), rather than public transport (17 per cent), while for people with 'no chance' of opposing, the pattern is reversed (12 per cent, 21 per cent and 52 per cent respectively). When given the option of dividing revenue between public transport and road improvements, most people go for a 50:50 split, but more opposed people tend to prefer a bias towards roads.

There is a strong consensus that this money should be hypothecated for transport uses. Sixty-nine per cent of people agree that 'all the money raised from road pricing should be spent on transport', rather than 'most of the money... should be spent on transport, but some should be used on other public services'. One person told this study:

'If it's for road use and public transport it should go there and nowhere else.' Workshop participant, Newcastle

Nearly three quarters of people strongly believe that public transport should be improved before road pricing comes in, not after, rising to 91 per cent for people with a very good chance of opposing. Just 5 per cent agreed that it should come after rather than before.

In order to tackle opposition, other important features of scheme design are that it should be:

- Simple, with a predictable charging structure
- Flexible about billing, including a pay-as-you-go or pre-pay option
- Joined up with planning policy, school transport policy and flexible working policy to increase people's ability to leave the car behind.

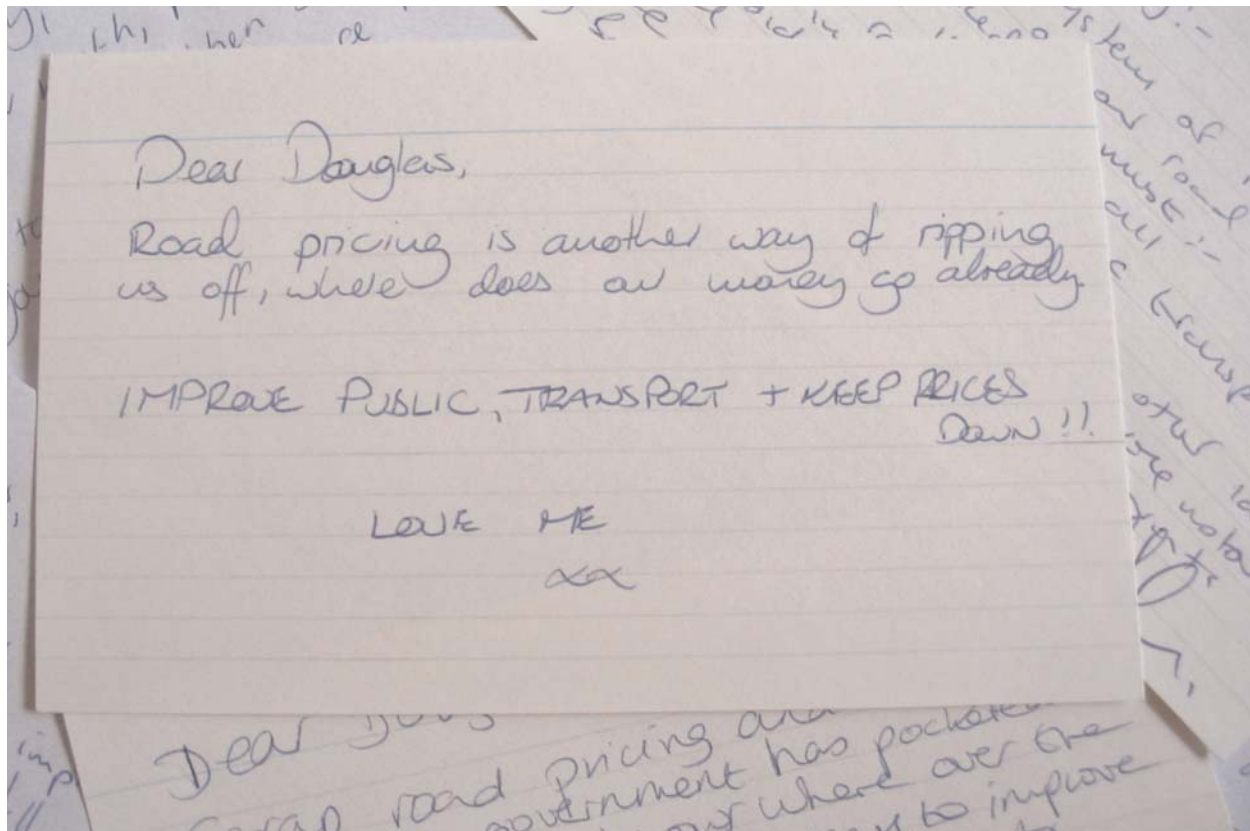
Opposition can also be addressed through communications and a phased strategy for introduction. The key goal is to frame road-pricing as a way of tackling congestion, rather than allow it to be framed in terms of taxation or a 'big brother' measure. The main barrier to this way of framing it is that people do not see how road pricing can possibly work. Arguments relating to cost acting as an incentive for change frame road pricing as being about taxation, not congestion. A more effective strategy is to draw on case studies of road pricing success. However, international examples and the London example are not ideal for this as people believe that there is high quality public transport in the case study areas, and so they are not relevant to their local situation. The Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) scheme could help address this gap, by providing congestion charging in other cities in England.

Ensuring that road pricing is seen as an attempt to tackle congestion also relies on the perception that, if road pricing does not work, it will not be used. This means presenting road pricing as an area to explore, not a *fait accompli*. It is also valuable to put it in the context of increasing congestion.

In the long run, climate change may also have an important role to play in the messages around road charging (and scheme design), but at the moment it is more effective in a role of galvanising support than in neutralising opposition.

Road pricing can tap into people's instinctive sense that congestion needs tackling, and that the principle behind road pricing is fair, but only if it is seen as a serious and cost-effective way of preventing gridlock.

## 1. Introduction



The postcard above was written at the end of a focus group held for this research in Birmingham. Participants were asked to offer constructive advice to politicians on the topic of road pricing. As implied by this postcard, the most widely offered tip was to junk road pricing and do something else instead. Road pricing was not a popular idea.

This paper seeks to understand what motivates public opposition: to get a grip on who is opposed, why they are opposed, and what could win them over. Engaging with the public is likely to prove vital to the successful development of road pricing. There is an emerging consensus among transport policy experts that road pricing is central to the solution of Britain's congestion problems. All three main political parties have signed up to it in principle. These positive attitudes, coupled with advances in the necessary technology, should be enough to ensure introduction, were it not for the extent of opposition among the public. Road pricing does not necessarily need more supporters, but it definitely needs less public opposition. It is this public opposition that is the focus of this paper.

### Methodology

The public engagement methodology is set out in detail in the Annexes to this document. However, here we briefly sketch out the three phases of research used in this project.

The first phase was a series of three deliberative workshops. Each was a day long, held on a Saturday and involved around 15 people, purposively recruited to be roughly representative of their local area in terms of age, class, gender, ethnicity and car use. Participants were paid for their attendance. Workshops were held in Newcastle, North East Somerset and Canterbury, Kent.

The second phase was an online opinion poll designed to be representative of people of voting age in the UK in terms of age, gender, Government Office Region and Standard Occupational Classification. A sample of 1150 people were given a description of road pricing that claimed it would replace Vehicle Excise Duty (VED). Three additional samples of between 100 and 150 people were told that it would replace fuel duty, VED and fuel duty, or neither tax. Unless otherwise noted, the poll results cited below refer to the main sample of 1150.

Three questions were used in the poll to measure opinions about road pricing, all of which were asked after

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the provision of a brief description of road pricing. The first question was asked immediately after the idea was presented, and asked people to rate road pricing on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 meant they were extremely cold/unfavourable to road pricing, and 10 meant they were extremely warm/favourable to road pricing. The second and third questions were more linked to behavioural expectations (Warshaw and Davis, 1985) than pure attitudes, and applied near the end of the questionnaire. The second question asked people how easily they could see themselves opposing the introduction of road pricing; the third question asked how easily they could see themselves supporting the introduction. Both questions had a scale that ran 'no chance', 'slight chance', 'fair chance', 'good chance' and 'very good chance'. Through this report, we cross-tabulate answers to other questions by these measures, to get an understanding of the different behaviours and attitudes of people with more or less positive views about road pricing. In addition we entered the attitude and opposition expectation measure into a regression analysis using an ordered probit model.<sup>2</sup>

The third phase of the methodology was a series of six focus groups held with participants who drive every day or nearly every day and who stated they were either 'very satisfied', 'quite satisfied' or 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' with their local public transport. These groups were held in Sale, Birmingham and Harlow.

All the fieldwork took place between March and June 2006. In all the phases, the research focused on attitudes to the principles that should guide road pricing rather than specific scheme designs. For example, we did not look at specific proposed tariffs. And while we discussed climate change in the qualitative research, and looked at it in the opinion poll, road pricing was framed primarily as a way of tackling congestion, not emissions.

## Findings

This report draws together the findings from all three phases of work. It paints a 'warts and all' picture of public opinion that reflects the inconsistencies and confusions discovered in the research, as well as the more sound reasoning used by both opponents and supporters. With a few exceptions, the findings presented are all drawn from the primary research. We have not sought to put them into the context of other findings (see Bird and Vigor (2006) for a survey of other sources of knowledge about attitudes to road pricing). Neither have we sought to make policy recommendations (see Bird and Morris (2006) for more detailed consideration of policy options). However, this report aims to provide a comprehensive evidence base of current public attitudes.

Our analysis comes from the point of view that the case for road pricing is compelling. However, public concerns need to be addressed. This can be done either through adjusting policy designs to meet those concerns, or through a public debate: presenting an argument as to why those concerns are misplaced. These strategies will not remove all opposition, but will soften it. Road pricing will become less opposed.

## Structure of the report

This report begins by looking at attitudes to congestion (section 2), then considers the scale and causes of opposition and support for road pricing (sections 3 and 4). In section 5 we look at different ways of segmenting the population, using regression analysis to identify factors that explain differing degrees of opposition. Sections 6 and 7 then look at policy and communication approaches that can reduce opposition. Section 8 draws conclusions.

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2. An ordered probit model is a regression technique used when the 'dependent' variable (i.e. the variable we are seeking to explain) is 'ranked'. An example would be if people were asked to say how satisfied they were with public transport provision, giving answers from the set: 'very satisfied', 'quite satisfied', 'not very satisfied', 'not at all satisfied'. The ordered probit allows us to analyse how this variable is correlated with other explanatory variables (for example, people's age, class, and so on), without having to assign arbitrary numerical values to the rankings.

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## 2. The trouble with congestion

The findings discussed in this section show that congestion is a significant concern. Moreover, people expect it to get worse. However, it is seen more as a problem for their area and their country than for them personally.

### What's wrong with congestion?

It is frustrating to sit going nowhere.  
Workshop participant, Newcastle

I'm beginning to get used to congestion. It's part of your day. I know it'll take me twenty minutes, not the ten it's supposed to.  
Focus group participant, Sale

You can't think it's a fifteen minute drive there so I'll allow fifteen minutes; you have to allow half an hour or forty-five minutes.  
Workshop participant, Canterbury

Congestion is a chronic ache, not an acute pain. People are bored, frustrated and annoyed by congestion but it is not at the top of their lists of concerns. They have generally found ways to live with it, for example by taking more circuitous routes, or waiting until after rush hour wherever possible. As we shall see, the fact that people believe that they have already adjusted their behaviour to allow for congestion poses a major problem for their comprehension and acceptance of road pricing.

Of course, congestion is more of a problem for some people than others. It is a particular problem for people whose jobs involve driving. This came through in the workshops, but also in the poll: 44 per cent of transport and machine operatives (whose jobs are more likely to involve driving) and 41 per cent of sales and customer service workers thought that congestion was a 'quite' or 'very serious' problem for them personally, compared to 35 per cent among people in other occupational groups.

There were also differences between the areas we visited in the qualitative phases of the study, with greater concern about congestion in Canterbury and Harlow than in the other areas. This was apparently the result of a perception that the two towns had extended beyond the capacity of their road systems.

On the other hand, people who were satisfied with public transport were less concerned about congestion. Among people 'very satisfied' with public transport, 26 per cent of people did not think that congestion was a problem for them at all, compared with an average of 8 per cent for people who were 'quite satisfied', 'very' or 'quite dissatisfied' or 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' with public transport.

As Figure 2.1 shows, while people do not, by and large, see congestion as a very serious problem for themselves, they are more likely to see it as a problem for their local area and the country. Concern for the local area came through particularly strongly in the groups and workshops. People were concerned that the local area would 'seize up' if congestion got any worse.

It used to take two minutes to get to the Swan Roundabout, now it's forty-five minutes. It's the biggest problem in the city.  
Workshop participant, Newcastle

Concern about congestion was higher when people were asked to think about the future. Congestion was believed to have got significantly worse over any time scale we looked at – from twenty years to just two years. This perceived trend was expected to continue.

Participants had a sophisticated analysis of why this was the case. Widely cited reasons included:

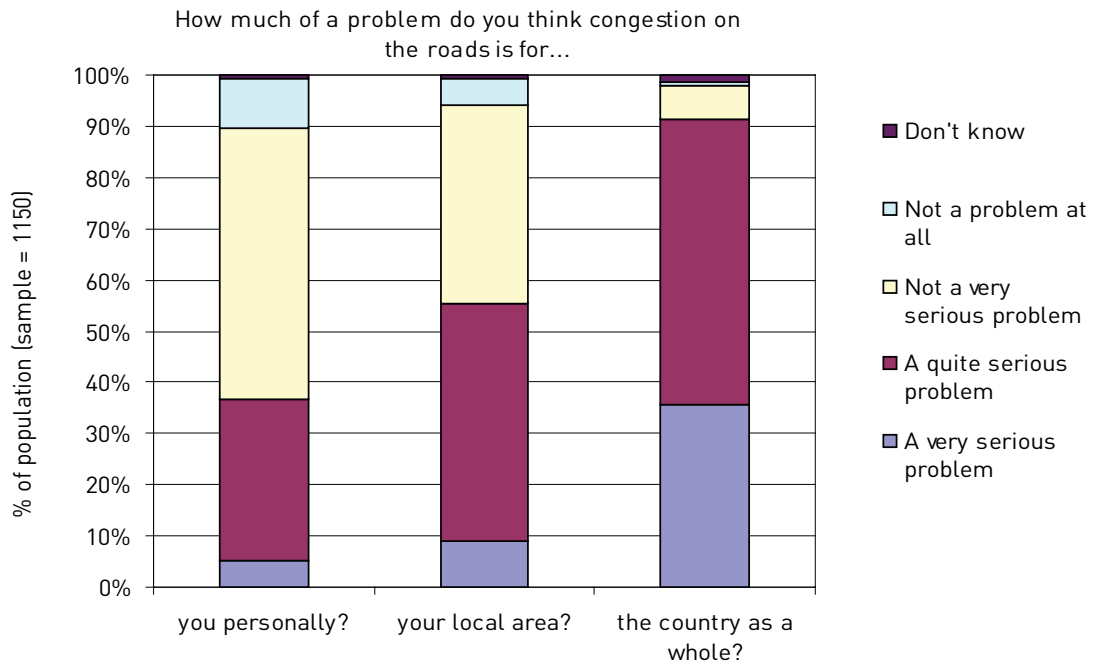
- More car ownership
- Lack of alternatives to car use
- Poor roads and road layout
- Town planning, for example out-of-town shopping centres
- Increased housing density



- Introduction of bus lanes

While people generally felt they could put up with the current level of hassle, there was concern that before long we would hit gridlock. Congestion was seen to be getting worse.

**Figure 2.1 The problem of congestion**



**In summary**

- People are concerned about congestion
- The concern is focused on their local area and the country as a whole, not their personal lives
- They have a complex analysis of its causes
- They expect congestion to get worse

### 3. Support for road pricing

When asked how easily they could see themselves supporting road pricing, nearly two thirds of people said that there was some chance of them supporting the introduction. The majority of this support was superficial and as Section 4 will show, most people have significant reservations about road pricing and are more likely to oppose it than support it. Rather than being contradictory positions, this reveals that opinion towards road pricing is not a simple continuum; it is more complex than that. However, road pricing has three key strengths that should cheer its proponents should they become depressed by many of the findings discussed in this report. The strengths are:

- People think something dramatic needs to be done to solve the problem of congestion
- People support the principle of paying in proportion to the amount they drive
- After deliberation in the workshops (but not the focus groups) many people come to the view that if road pricing worked, it would be worth it.

While people are not particularly optimistic about road pricing, they hope it will deliver better public transport and better roads.

#### Something needs to be done

We have to do something about this [congestion]. What they're suggesting is perhaps one of the best things we can do at the moment' Workshop participant, North East Somerset

#### Box 3.1 Attitudes to congestion

##### What causes congestion?

They're building houses but they're not extending the roads, that's where they're going wrong.  
Workshop participant, Canterbury

You can't get me out of my car because where I live there are no buses. Workshop participant, North East Somerset

Archbishop's School starts at 8:50. That means Archbishop's School is controlling the traffic... You are crawling in traffic from Tyler Hall, down past the university and when you get there all there is is a man with a lollipop. Workshop participant, Canterbury

It's quite an attractive place to live but there's not that much work so people are travelling to work.  
Focus group participant, Sale

They've put in bus lanes. That's made things worse. Focus group participant, Harlow

It's the same everywhere, every city. Out of town, big retail parks, there's a lot of them across the country. Workshop participant, Newcastle

I noticed a stupid bottle neck coming out of Harlow... two lanes, narrows to one, then two again. Focus group participant, Harlow

Years ago the heavy goods all went by train. It's ridiculous on the motorway with heavy lorry after heavy lorry. Workshop participant, Canterbury

##### What will happen in the future?

We're going to be gridlocked in ten years' time. Workshop participant, North East Somerset

If we don't do something now, in 10 years we won't be able to move. I agree. Something needs to be done. Not sure what, but something. Focus group participant, Harlow

There is an appetite for radical solutions to the problem of congestion. In both the deliberative workshops and the focus groups, participants spontaneously suggested a range of innovative solutions to the congestion problem. Nine of the thirteen participants in Newcastle were in favour of banning cars in the city centre. In Sale, there was a significant minority in favour of raising the driving age to either 21 or 25 and taking driving licences away from people when they reached 70. Participants in several areas were very positive about the M6 toll road and the expansion of tolls for long distance journeys. There was also some support for congestion charging in central Bath, and to a lesser extent in central Manchester. People were also in favour of staggering school opening times, and the introduction of more school buses, park-and-ride schemes and car-pooling. There was also widespread support for better public transport.

One idea was conspicuous by its relative absence: significant road building. People were deeply suspicious of the process used to set road layouts. There was a strong appetite for 'better' layouts and longer lasting road surfaces. However, brand new roads were seen as having only a marginal role in addressing congestion. Even the few people who did think they play an important part of the solution were unsure if new roads were viable.

This pattern of attitudes creates a platform on which proponents of road pricing can build. While the specifics of road pricing were highly controversial, there was no controversy over the claim that something innovative is needed to solve the problem.

Less encouragingly, there were two common threads running through the radical solutions people suggested. The first is that they invariably imposed minimal costs on the person suggesting them. None of the supporters of banning cars in Newcastle city centre regularly drove into the city centre. None of those supporting changes in the driving age had children or parents who would be affected. Support for tolls was based on the fact that long-distance journeys were infrequent and that there was a 'free' alternative (for example, diverting to A-roads or similar). Parents who dropped children at school before going on to work were not in favour of staggering school opening times. People often termed this absence of costs as 'fairness'.

The second thread was that these radical ideas are simple and intuitive. Even those opposed to the ideas could easily see how they would influence congestion. Road pricing currently lacks both these features. It is seen as costly and it is not intuitive. Nevertheless, it builds on this platform of broad acceptance of the need for change.

### Box 3.2 Radical solutions to congestion

'I think they should ban all cars from the city in Newcastle... I drive the wagon in for deliveries and I hate cars.' Workshop participant, Newcastle

'No-one under age 25 or over 70, get them off the road. That's the way to do it.' Focus group participant, Sale

'They should stop building and selling cars' Workshop participant, North East Somerset

'They won't do the dramatic thing of getting rid of the combustion engine and replacing it with electric because of the money' Focus group participant, Harlow

'Government should try to encourage people to walk. Parents should not use cars to pick up their kids.' Workshop participant, Newcastle

'They should build a network of underground roads' Focus group participant, Birmingham

## Popular in principle

The second fundamental factor in favour of road pricing is that the pay-in-proportion-to-use principle is widely endorsed. As Figure 3.1 (next page) shows, 62 per cent of people accept that it is fair to pay for roads in proportion to use.<sup>3</sup> This question was asked after the idea of road pricing was introduced. Given the level of hostility to road pricing, and the obvious link between road pricing and this principle, it may be that the number in other contexts would be higher. There does not appear to be a problem with the principle behind road pricing; indeed, people seem to support it.

Interestingly, the more concerned people are with congestion in their local areas, the more likely they are to endorse the principle, as Figure 3.2 (next page) shows.

It also appears that the principle is more supported by older than younger people. For example, 75 per cent of over-65s support it, compared to just 55 per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds.

In the workshops, discussion of the pay-in-proportion principle was conducted after the introduction of the discussion of road pricing. As a result, conversation was orientated around the principle as it applies to road pricing, rather than people's general attitudes towards it. Nevertheless, the principle was widely supported.

3. We have used the term pay-in-proportion-to-use rather than pay-as-you-drive because the latter was interpreted as relating to the way people are billed as well what they are billed for.

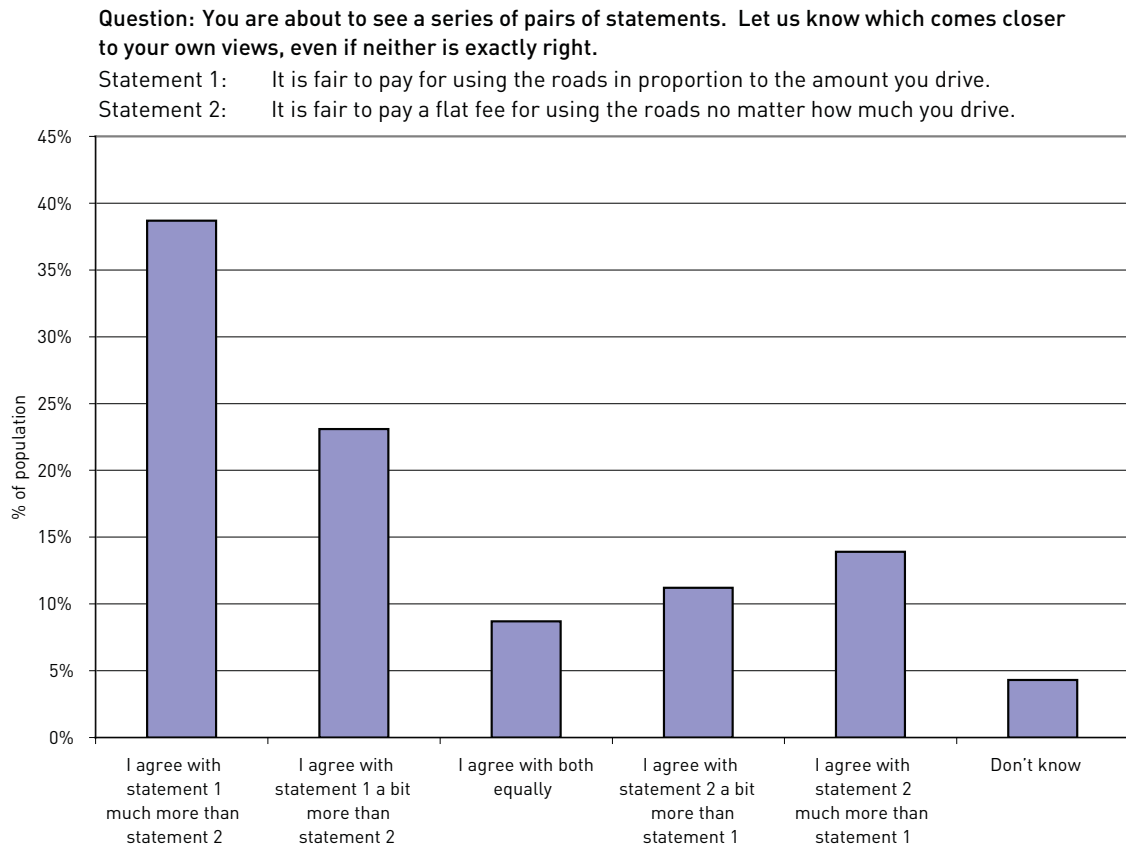
'If you're living on a fixed income you're paying road tax even if you're not using your car much.'  
Workshop participant, Canterbury

'Heavy users should pay more.' Workshop participant, North East Somerset

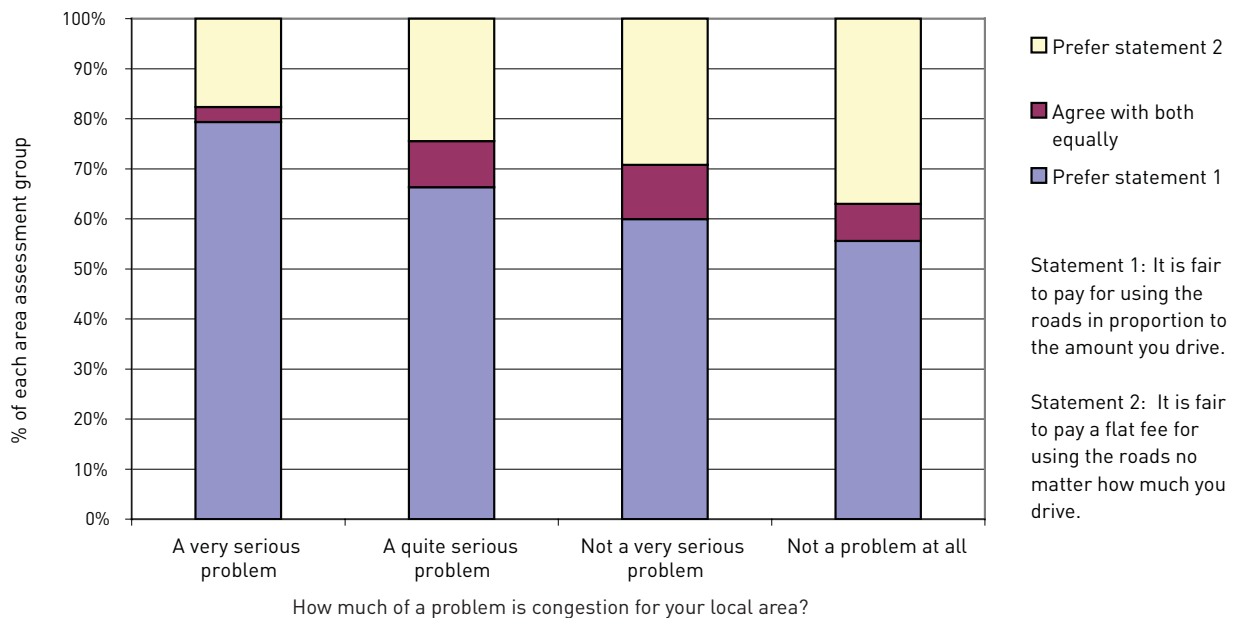
'It's fair if people drive more they should pay more.' Workshop participant, Newcastle

However, while the principle was endorsed, its application to road taxation was not straightforward. People thought that they already paid more than is proportionate for their road use. The high level of fuel

**Figure 3.1 The principle behind road pricing**



**Figure 3.2 Perception of congestion and the principle of road pricing**



duty, and the perception that much of it goes to fund services other than transport, led people to think that a fairer system would involve a cut in costs, for more or less any usage level. Still, the key point is that paying in proportion to use is widely supported.

### If it works, it's worth it

For all people's concerns about the cost and effectiveness of road pricing (see sections 4 and 5), roughly half the participants in the workshops felt that if road pricing led to less congestion and better public transport, it would be worth paying a bit more for road use. This view was particularly prevalent in the workshops in Canterbury and North East Somerset.

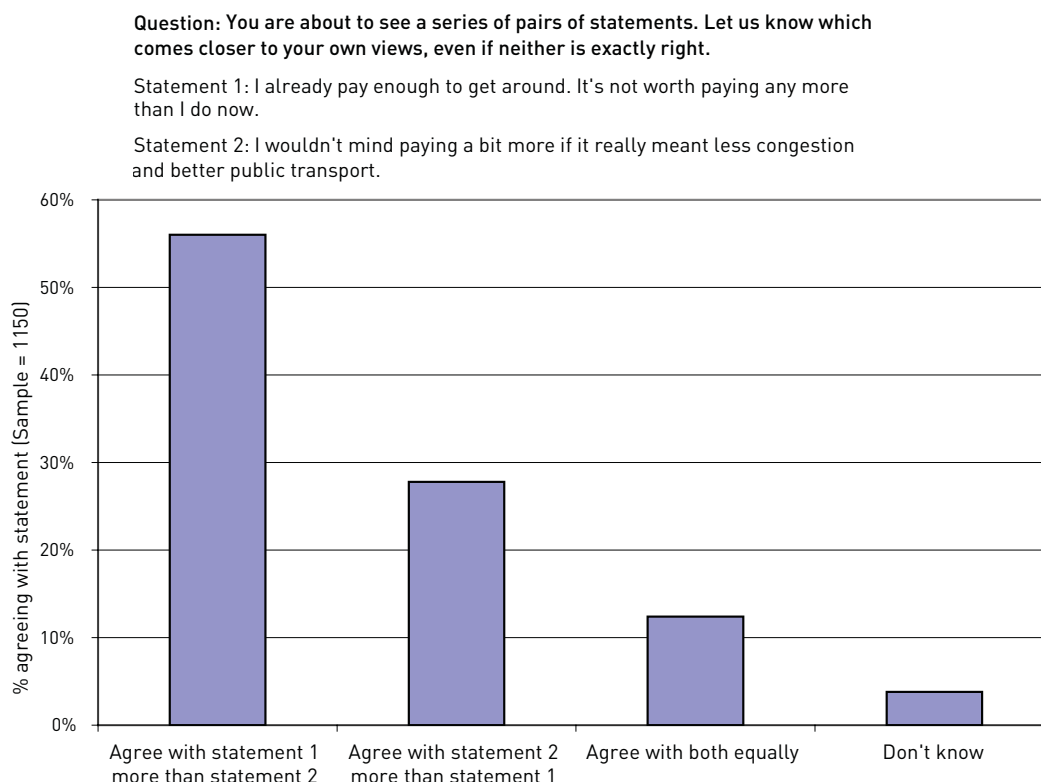
In Canterbury, the participants' perception of the local transport situation was that it was particularly poor. There were near universal complaints that bus and train lines ran to a limited range of destinations along indirect and time-consuming routes. At the same time, traffic was seen to be particularly bad, with a number of pinch-points including level crossings, roundabouts and the city walls. Against this background, the desire for a better transport system was stronger than in the other places we visited. If road pricing could deliver that system, then it was largely seen as acceptable.

The situation in North East Somerset was rather different. While people were, if anything, more reliant on their cars because of the inadequacies of rural public transport, there was much less concern about congestion (except in and around Bath). However, people did not expect road pricing to cost them as much as people in other areas, and so there was more openness to the idea overall. They felt that they had a lot to gain from a greater focus on rural public transport, and relatively little to lose from the introduction of pricing.

It was difficult for people to put a price on the value of less congestion and better public transport. Such a world was hard for people to imagine and people had different conceptions of what 'better' public transport and 'reduced' congestion actually meant. However, overall, roughly two-thirds of the workshop participants who could drive came to the view that it would be worth paying more. The average figure was £4.50 a week, though people doubted whether this would be adequate to secure the dramatic improvements to both roads and public transport that they were looking for.

In contrast, as Figure 3.3 shows, support for paying more was considerably weaker in the opinion poll. It was also largely absent in the focus groups. This is probably a function of the deliberative methodology

**Figure 3.3 Is it worth paying more?**

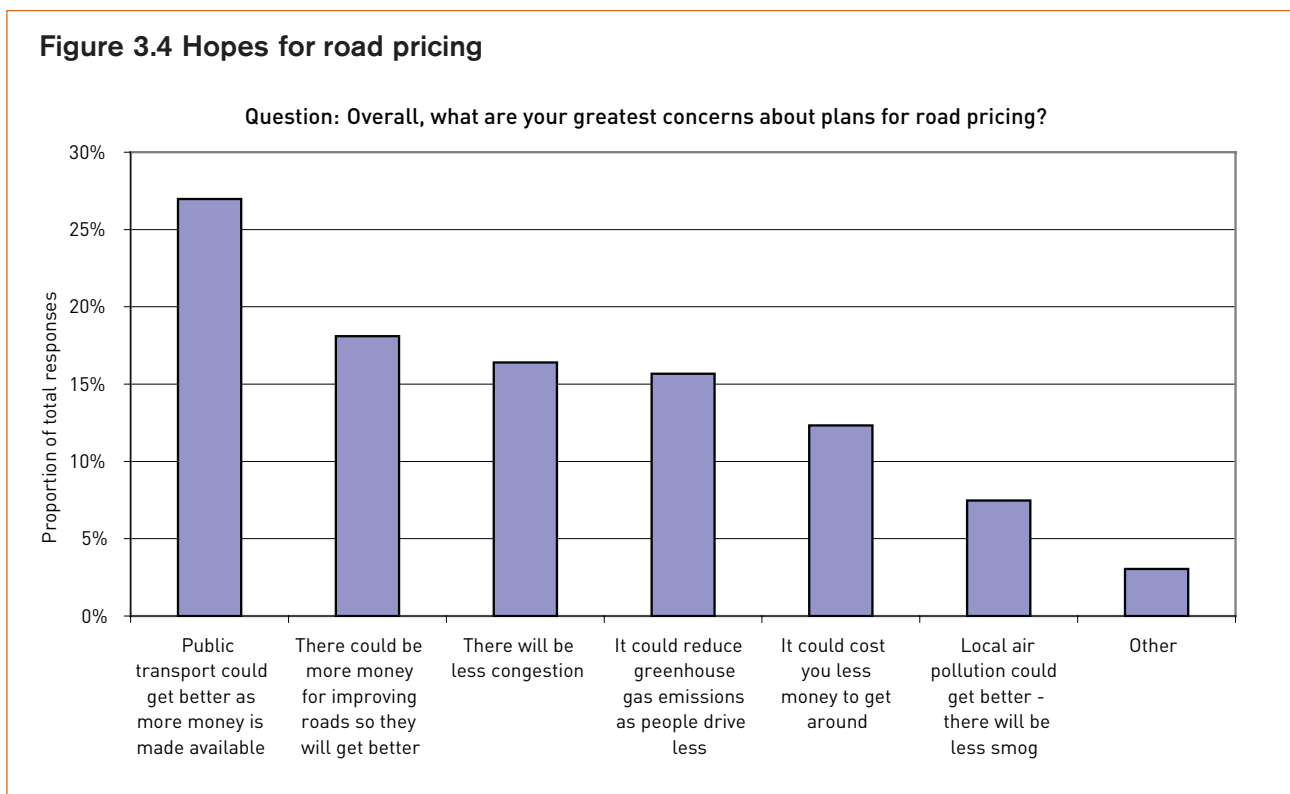


used in the workshops. The workshops were designed to give people more opportunity to weigh up different options and make informed trade-offs. While this does not simulate real life discussions as closely as focus groups do, it may provide an insight into where public opinion will head if it is well informed. Support for this analysis is provided by surveys in places where road pricing and congestion charging has already been introduced. Opposition to road pricing falls after introduction, once people have better and more first-hand information (Bird and Vigor, 2006).

It is also worth noting that while two-fifths of people agreed with statement 1 ‘much more’ than statement 2, three-fifths of people did not. A majority of people have some sympathy with the claim that ‘I wouldn’t mind paying a bit more if it really meant less congestion and better public transport’.

### Hopes for road pricing

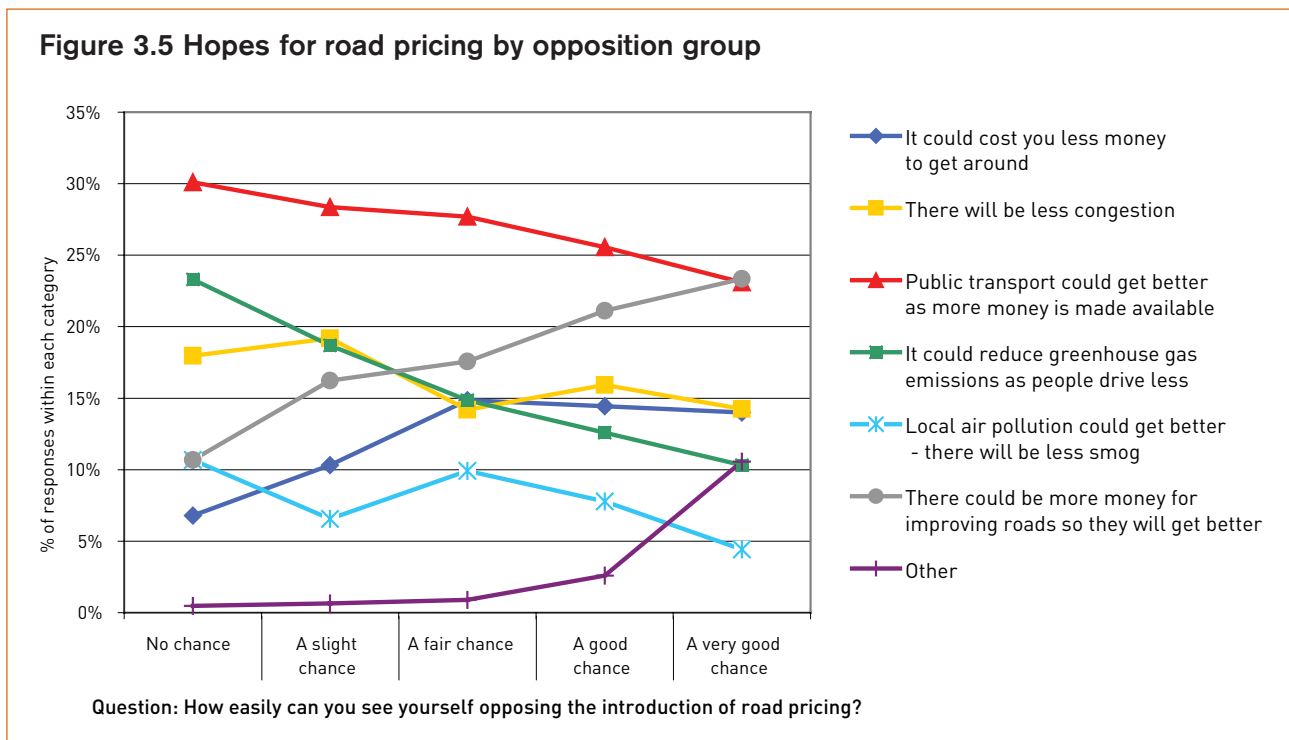
As we shall see, the people we spoke to were not particularly positive about road pricing, nor optimistic about its ability to deliver benefits. However, when given the scenario that pricing was going to come in, there was some consensus about the sorts of benefits it should deliver. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the focus was on transport improvements: better public transport, better roads and less congestion. People were less interested in it delivering environmental benefits such as less local air pollution or a reduction in carbon emissions. This pattern, which was clear in the workshops, also emerged in the poll (Figure 3.4). Participants were asked about their greatest hopes for road pricing, selecting up to two options from a list of six preset options plus a seventh option of inserting their own hope. (The order of the options was randomised for each participant.) The results are below – the bars show proportion of the 1939 total responses; each person could choose up to two responses.



While public transport improvements top the poll, the combined scores for the two road improvement measures (road improvements and less congestion) are 8 percentage points higher than the score for public transport.

Just 12 per cent of people selected the hopes that road pricing could reduce costs. An explanation of this finding comes from the qualitative work: it is not that people do not value tax cuts, it is more that they simply do not expect them to come about. People seem to have answered the question about hopes realistically (where what is ‘real’ is determined by their prior beliefs and attitudes). It would be wrong to conclude from this graph that financial savings are not important. Instead, it shows that they are not considered plausible.

People with different attitudes to road pricing have different hopes and fears to road pricing, as is shown in Figure 3.5 below. It is important to remember that the graph shows relative rankings. People were limited to two options at most, so were forced to prioritise different hopes. For example, the low numbers for a fall in local air pollution do not necessarily mean that this is not valued, but instead that it is not valued as highly as other outcomes.



The chart reveals some steep gradients. The less likely people are to oppose road pricing, the more important public transport and climate change appear to be. People more likely to oppose are more concerned about improvements to the roads, and to a lesser extent financial savings.

This pattern can be explained in two ways. As discussed above, it may be that hopes are grounded in what is believed to be practical – what they expect road pricing to deliver, or what they want to see happen – the outcomes they value. Differences between groups in terms of either expectation or value could explain differences in attitudes to road pricing, and different hopes for the benefits it delivers. The workshops and focus groups seem to suggest that both factors play a role with regard to hopes, but as we shall see in section 4 below, values are more important in explaining differing fears about road pricing.

### In summary

- People are open to radical solutions to the problem of congestion.
- The principle that people should pay in proportion to road use is widely accepted.
- On reflection, many people think that if road pricing works, it's worth it.
- If road pricing is introduced, people hope it will deliver better public transport, roads and less congestion.
- Opponents of road pricing emphasise road improvements over lower congestion and particularly public transport.
- People less opposed tend to emphasise public transport and climate change. They are also more likely to hope for reductions in local air pollution, though this is less significant.

## 4. The centre of gravity is in the wrong place

This section looks at the scale and causes of opposition to road pricing. It notes that 59 per cent of people say there is a fair chance or better of them opposing road pricing. Three key reasons for this opposition are identified: people do not believe road pricing will work, think it is a stealth tax, and are concerned that it impinges on their liberty. It also discusses a number of less significant causes of concern, before looking at people’s overall fears about road pricing.

### The scale of opposition

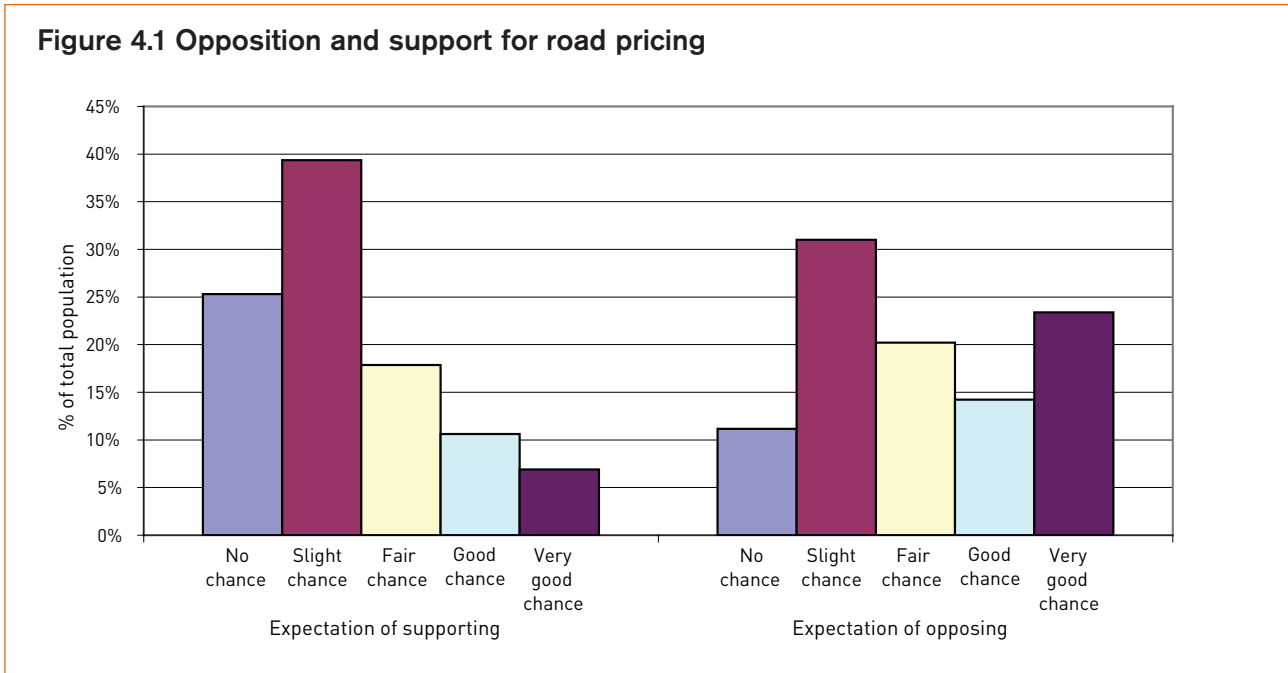


Figure 4.1 shows the distribution of people’s expectations of supporting or opposing road pricing, based on data from the poll. It shows a picture that is not particularly encouraging for proponents of road pricing. Fifty-nine per cent of people say there is a fair or better chance of them opposing road pricing, while only a third say there is a fair chance or better of them supporting road pricing.

The picture is even clearer when looking at the temperature scores. When asked to rate road pricing on a temperature scale where one means they are completely cold/unfavourable to the idea and ten means they are extremely warm/favourable to the idea, both the mean and median scores are 4, and the mode is just 1. For proponents of road pricing, the centre of gravity is in the wrong place.

As explained in the introduction, the focus for this research was on understanding opposition to road pricing rather than support. This distinction is important because an individual’s assessment of their own likelihood of supporting road pricing was not always inversely related to the likelihood of them opposing it. Indeed, 16 per cent of participants in the opinion poll said there was a slight or no chance of both supporting and opposing road pricing. Table 4.1 below shows the total population cut by both support and opposition.

**Table 4.1 Expectations of opposition and support**

		How easily can you see yourself supporting road pricing?				
		No	Slight	Fair	Good	Very good
How easily can you see yourself opposing road pricing?	No	1%	2%	1%	2%	5%
	Slight	1%	12%	9%	7%	2%
	Fair	2%	13%	7%	1%	0
	Good	5%	8%	1%	0%	0%
	Very good	18%	5%	0%	0%	0%



Discussions picked out several concerns about road pricing that explain this pattern of resistance. Below we outline each of these arguments, beginning with the three most significant concerns.

## Road pricing will not work

'Most people rely on their car because public transport is not reliable and convenient, so they would pay whatever the cost is. It would not change my driving habit' Focus group participant, Sale

'It's just a spin... They must think we're gullible. How can it be true?' Workshop participant, Canterbury

'People don't choose when they use their cars; they use them for a purpose' Focus group participant, Birmingham

'People have to make the journey when they do.' Focus group participant, Sale

'I don't think it will work. Public transport is not up to it at the moment', Focus group participant, Harlow

'My employer is not flexible in changing my working hours here so I cannot avoid the time I go to work' Focus group participant, Birmingham

'School starts when it starts, so what am I supposed to do?' Workshop participant, Canterbury

'Lots of businesses are moving to business parks and you have to drive.' Focus group participant, Sale

'Call me sceptical but I don't think this is going to reduce congestion.' Workshop participant, Newcastle

Unlike banning cars from a city centre, or banning under-25s from driving, it is not intuitively obvious how road pricing is supposed to tackle congestion. One reason for this is that many people do not believe that road pricing is even designed to cut congestion; instead they see it as a stealth tax (see below). However, there is also a fundamental practical concern pithily expressed by a participant in the Newcastle workshop: 'Nobody deliberately sits in traffic'.

People believed that charging could not be effective in changing their travel patterns because they already did all they could to avoid congestion, particularly at peak times. Where possible, they already used back streets, travelled at different times of day, and took longer routes so they could avoid sitting in a jam. Where time was not particularly pressing, people also considered public transport. However, they felt that most journeys had to be made by car and could not be delayed. People could not control what time they had to be at work or the time that their children's school days started. They simply had to get to the relevant place on time. Public transport was often not deemed adequate for this purpose because of a lack of routes. Only 9 per cent of people in the poll said they could use public transport to get everywhere they needed to go. However, more often, the problem was not the reach of public transport, but perceptions that it was expensive, slow and uncomfortable.

The only major changes to driving patterns that were thought plausible were shifts in off-peak journeys and greater use of minor roads, which were expected to be cheaper. The consensus was that all road pricing would do is charge people for behaviour they cannot avoid.

An additional but less significant problem was that people couldn't imagine the practicalities of road pricing. How would their journeys be tracked? How would they be billed? When would they pay? How would they know what the price was? Lack of clarity on these points and a lack of experience of similar systems made it hard for people to imagine what road pricing would really be like, and that made it harder to see how road pricing could work. Analogies with payment for mobile phones helped to some extent – particularly in thinking about billing options.

This concern about effectiveness is not top-of-mind. As we shall see below, concerns about financial implications are far more salient. However, the issue of effectiveness is fundamental: it helps determine the way people frame road pricing. They see it as a 'stealth tax'.

## Road pricing is a stealth tax (though we can see it)

'My first reaction was another stealth tax... The motorist is grossly over-taxed.' Workshop participant, Canterbury

'Just another stealth tax to get more money out of the motorist.' Workshop participant, Newcastle

'[It's] more of a money-making racket than solving congestion...The Chancellor will be rubbing his hands.' Workshop participant, Newcastle

'They're not doing it for the environment or whatever, they're in it to line their pockets.' Focus group participant, Sale

'Just feels like the government is trying to make more money. Don't we pay enough?' Workshop participant, North East Somerset

'Doesn't Council Tax pay for local roads? You're then paying twice.' Focus group participant, Sale

'If it costs more to go to work, I'll just have to pay it. I have to go to work.' Workshop participant, Canterbury.

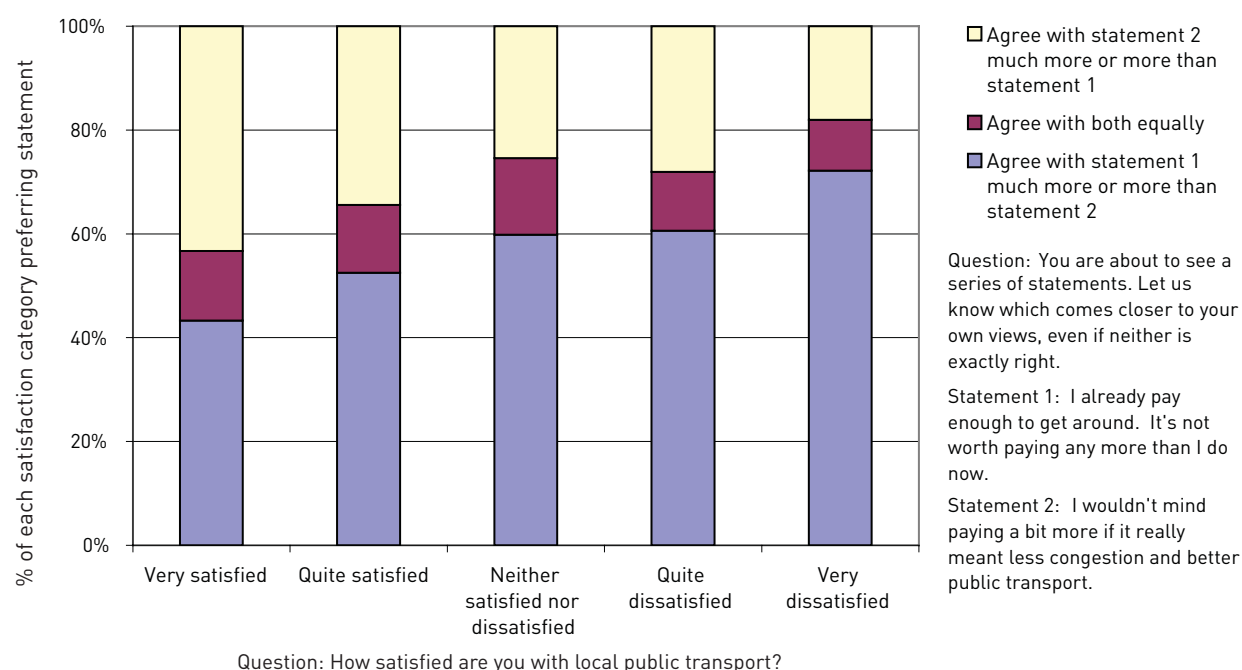
Unsure that road pricing is even capable of tackling congestion, it is easy for people to fit it into the 'stealth tax' narrative that all participants were aware of and some were immersed in. The concept of a 'stealth tax' is somewhat vague but highly resonant. Clearly, there is nothing very stealthy about a charge for motoring levied via a monthly bill or on a pay-as-you-go basis. However, the point of this particular accusation of stealth is that the perceived real intent of road pricing is being hidden. The assumption is that, while road pricing is presented as if it is for some palatable purpose (to tackle congestion, protect the environment, or increase investment in transport) it actually only exists to raise money.

Any revenue raising function for road pricing is heavily resented. People believe that British motorists are very heavily taxed already, and any additional taxation cannot be justified. Road taxes are believed to be a cash cow for the Government, used to fund a range of other projects. There is a strong sense that a great deal of it is wasted, and much of the money that is not wasted is used for purposes that suit the Government but not 'the people'. This perception undermines arguments that there is a need to raise more money to fund better public transport or roads. Instead, people want existing revenue to be used more efficiently.

This concern operates primarily at the individual level, not the collective. People do not believe that there is a justification for raising the road taxes they personally pay. Concerns about the overall tax take are primarily proxies for concerns about what individuals themselves pay.

In the poll, concerns over increasing the cost of getting about were particularly acute for people who were not satisfied with public transport, as Figure 4.2 shows. However, the pattern was different in the

**Figure 4.2 Perceptions of public transport and attitudes to the cost of road pricing**



deliberative workshops. In Somerset and Canterbury, there was a strong desire for better public transport and, to a lesser extent, roads; and some acceptance that greater revenue might be needed to fund those improvements. The difference between the workshops and the poll is probably because the workshop participants could explain the highly conditional nature of their acceptance of increasing costs, while participants in the poll could not.

Unsurprisingly, concerns about cost are most acute where road pricing is presented in addition to VED and fuel duty. Where it replaces one or other or both of these taxes, these concerns are lessened (see section 6).

Concerns about price overlapped with concerns about the effectiveness of road pricing. Because people thought it was primarily a revenue-raising scheme, they discounted arguments that sought to show how road pricing could deal with congestion. However plausible these arguments might be when considered alone, when set in the context of changes to the tax system, they come across to be false, because the point of change 'has' to be raising revenue, not cutting congestion. Equally, people were so sure that journeys were largely non-discretionary – that they are unavoidable and the time and mode cannot be altered – that the only way they could see road pricing having an impact on driving patterns was if the prices were very high. This formed a sort of catch-22 that made both high and low prices objectionable:

- Low prices would have no impact on congestion. Road pricing is unacceptable if it has no impact on congestion.
- High prices might have an impact on congestion, but road pricing is unacceptable if it involves high prices

The first limb was neatly expressed by one participant in Newcastle:

'The only way it can reduce congestion is by stopping people driving. The only way you could do that is by punitive pricing and that's not going to happen with £2 per week. It's not worth trying.'

### Road pricing is an attack on freedom (to drive wherever you like without paying)

'It is freedom of choice – I never took my test because I couldn't afford it – my kids all drive. My husband needs to drive and I want to drive – it is a choice thing.' Workshop participant, Newcastle

'It's "them" telling us when we can move and charging us for it.' Workshop participant, Canterbury

'But what about those who have to drive everyday? Why should they pay more when's it's necessary?' Workshop participant, Newcastle

'It's this feeling of not being able to do what you want to do or having to answer to somebody.' Workshop participant, North East Somerset

'We're all being told what we can't do and nobody wants that.' Workshop participant, North East Somerset

Road pricing was seen by some as a constriction on freedom. They argued that it limits when and where they can drive. The peculiar thing about this concern was that it sat alongside the belief that road pricing would not actually significantly affect driving habits, and the belief that it was not really designed to do this, but instead to raise money. People appear to believe both that it will stop them driving when they want to, and that it won't.

However, it is wrong to see this issue as a rational practical concern about actual mobility. Instead it is a far more emotive response to the concept of road pricing. People feel uncomfortable with such an overt attempt by government to regulate something as fundamental and day-to-day as movement. Convinced that public transport does not provide a realistic alternative to the car, and that most journeys are compulsory, people feel that a basic choice is being squeezed.

This perception is exacerbated by feelings of exclusion from the decision-making process. People felt that road pricing would be imposed by people from outside the area who did not really understand or much care about its impact locally.

### Other concerns

There were several other concerns with road pricing. These were not as fundamental as those described

above, but they did have a significant impact. It appeared that once people had formed broadly negative attitudes to road pricing, their deliberations were biased so as to confirm their fears: concerns that had initially seemed relatively minor took on greater resonance, and it became harder for more positive conceptions of road pricing to take root. Worryingly, this was the direction of travel for the majority of participants and for all the focus groups and workshops except the deliberative workshop in Bath. This is probably, to some extent, a function of group discussion methodology; however, great care was taken to avoid either 'selling' or undermining road pricing. It is interesting that eight out of nine groups in different parts of the country all followed the same trajectory. The more people think about road pricing, the more anti-arguments they think of, and the more plausible those arguments seem. At the same time, deliberative discussions lead people to become more open to the view that if it worked, it would be worth it.

Below we run through the concerns.

#### *Evasion of charges*

'I'm sure this system would be open to abuse. People who avoid car tax, they could get fake chips.'

Focus group participant Sale

'How will they ensure people have a box [monitoring device]?'

Workshop participant, Canterbury

'Those in the know will find a way round it, like mileage on a car... Put everything on petrol. Even car thieves have to pay for petrol.'

Focus group participant, Harlow

'It will turn out like speed cameras – drivers will say it wasn't me driving.'

Focus group participant, Harlow

'Those who don't pay road taxes etc., now won't pay for this. Why should we pay?'

Focus group participant, Sale

This concern was widespread and tapped into a deep sense of unfairness. People felt put upon. While they paid VED, had insurance and so on, others were flouting the rules without adverse consequences. This was seen to be part of a wider pattern where honest, hardworking, decent people are systematically disadvantaged by the failure of 'the system' to enforce its rules. This was considered deeply unfair and made people doubt the wisdom of their instinctive desire to stay within rules. There was also an element of risk: people were concerned about the possibility of having a car crash with someone who is uninsured. This concern became attached to concerns about evasion of road-pricing, as people expected the same people to avoid both. Whatever technology is used, people felt that road pricing would be relatively straightforward to evade for people with the know-how and dedication to find ways round it.

#### *The cost of introducing and running the scheme*

'I don't like waste. I think we'll be paying a hell of a lot of money for another Whitehall office.'

Workshop participant, North East Somerset

'I worry that 40 to 50 per cent will go on admin.'

Workshop participant, Newcastle

'There's so much inefficiency in the Government. Look at education and health.'

Focus group participant, Sale

'It'll be like the agency brought in to seize money from criminals. It cost 60 million and got six million back.'

Focus group participant, Harlow

'Are they going to employ lots of pen pushers to send out bills?'

Workshop participant, Newcastle

There was a strong consensus that the scheme would be extremely expensive to introduce and run, in terms of the technology involved, which was perceived to be highly complex. And the sheer scale of the project seemed daunting. These concerns were exacerbated by knowledge of government IT projects that were deemed somewhat less than successful. There was discussion of IT projects at the Child Support Agency, the NHS, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) and elsewhere that had over-run and wasted significant amounts of taxpayers' money.

There was particular concern about the cost of installing monitoring devices into cars and where that cost would fall. People assumed the technology would be expensive to install, particularly if it is Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) technology, and they did not want to have to cover the cost of a 'black box'. This linked to concerns about ID cards, which focused on the cost of the cards.

As well as concerns about the set-up costs, people were worried about the running costs, with armies of bureaucrats imagined to be involved in processing bills.

In the deliberative workshops we spent some time discussing the relative merits of a government-run or privately-run scheme. Unsurprisingly, this somewhat arcane topic was not at the heart of people's concerns, but they had little difficulty forming a view on it. There was strong consensus against any form of road pricing that effectively meant privatising roads. People wanted the body that set charge levels to be democratically accountable. However, there was disagreement over who should be administering the scheme, with two main opposing considerations emerging. The first view was that the public sector is likely to be bloated and wasteful. The second was that the private sector would necessarily make profits from administering the scheme, and this meant less money being reinvested into the system. People were, by and large, pragmatic on this issue. They wanted the most efficient option to be pursued, whichever that was.

#### *Diversion of traffic onto residential streets*

'We're all very wary of traffic being pushed on to quiet roads, because of safety in particular – residential streets with kids playing.'

Focus group participant, Birmingham

'The problem is people would use diversions.'

Focus group participant, Harlow

'You'd find alternative routes.'

Workshop participant, Canterbury

'If you get more cars on country roads, city drivers are not going to know the lanes as well. You're going to have more accidents. It's going to be more dangerous having kids in villages.'

Workshop participant, North East Somerset

'Side roads will be damaged by heavy traffic.'

Workshop participant, Newcastle

The most expected behavioural impact of road pricing was diverting drivers onto quieter roads (not change of transport mode or time of journey). This was expected to have two significant negative impacts. First, and most importantly, people thought it would be dangerous. They had visions of quiet residential streets becoming 'rat-runs' with cars and delivery vehicles weaving between children kicking a ball in the street. This concern was particularly powerful for parents. The second, less important, concern was that the side-roads would be damaged by the increased traffic. This would lead to more road works, poorer road surfaces, and ultimately more congestion.

Interestingly, people thought the sort of diversion described above was a failure of road pricing. People considered it to be a way of getting round being charged for using roads, not road pricing being effective in changing behaviour. This reflects the view that road pricing is really designed to raise revenue. Paying a lower price by using a side road is seen as a way of thwarting this avaricious ambition. Moreover, people thought this diversion of vehicles meant that congestion would remain constant, but be more spread out. This view does not appear to be entirely coherent, but it was widespread.

#### *Billing*

'What if you get a big bill and you can't afford it?'

Focus group participant, Birmingham

'Pre-pay would be better. I do everything like that. Gas, phone bill... I like to know where I am so if I have money left I know it is mine and I can give it to the children or whatever. I just like it that way.'

Workshop participant, North East Somerset

There was some concern about how billing would work, particularly from people on low or fixed incomes. The current system aids financial planning. VED is a fixed outlay, and petrol can be paid for in small lumps as people use it. It is not possible to accidentally run up a large petrol bill (except on a credit card, but that

was seen as a separate issue). In contrast, the prospect of receiving a monthly bill was somewhat daunting.

A pay-as-you-go alternative went some way to alleviating these fears; however, that led to another concern. With mobile phones, when you have not got enough credit, you cannot make calls. People were not in favour of a similar system applying to their cars.

#### *Increased cost of goods due to increased transport costs*

'If you've got commercial travellers who would do a lot of driving, the companies would pay their 'tax' and they'd have to recoup it from what their products cost.'

Focus group participant, Sale

'Will it put up the cost of goods? Cost of delivery?'

Workshop participant, Canterbury

'How do you work it with deliveries and buses? Bus fares will go up and goods will be more expensive.'

Workshop participant, Newcastle

Some participants spontaneously raised concerns about the impact of pricing on the cost of goods and services. They expected road pricing to increase overall costs for both small and large shops. These increases would be passed onto the consumer. The claim that haulage companies were largely in favour of road pricing was rationalised by the view that they would merely be passing costs on.

There was also a handful of people across the groups who thought that road pricing would increase the cost of public transport as bus companies raised prices to pay for the charge. However, people found it easy to believe that those organisations would be exempted, which defused this concern.

#### *Privacy and data security*

'It's very intrusive: people watching you if you go out for a meal.'

Workshop participant, Newcastle

'It smacks of Big Brother. I think if we're watched it could cause problems. If you wanted to go to certain places you'd be tagged. '

Workshop participant, North East Somerset

'They know more than we think they do anyway.'

Focus group participant, Harlow

'They'll use [journey data] no matter how they say they won't. I can see the advantage 'cause you can see where people are. But for Joe Public, why are they being monitored?'

Focus group participant, Sale

'It's Big Brother, but if you've got nothing to hide...'

Focus group participant, Sale

'Imagine the arguments – 'where have you been?' The divorce rate would go through the roof.'

Birmingham

There was a lively debate about the impact of road pricing on privacy. There were three initial positions about the impact of road pricing:

- *The pro-liberty view*: it would increase intrusion into private life and this is a problem.
- *The 'nothing to hide' view*: it would increase intrusion into private life and this is not a problem
- *The paranoid view*: it would not increase intrusion because 'they' already know everything

In the deliberative workshops, discussion of the system in Germany led to a fourth position:

- *The legal security view*: it won't increase intrusion because of legal safeguards.

The majority of participants in the workshops and focus groups held either the 'nothing to hide' or the 'paranoid' view. Many in the 'nothing to hide' camp saw the introduction of road pricing as giving significant benefits to the police. For the paranoids, the introduction of road pricing was a continuation of a narrative of surveillance, but it was a low level concern. Road pricing was not going to make much difference.

However, a minority did hold the 'pro-liberty' view. For them, road pricing was a creepy extension of state

power. While people used ‘big brother’ language, their concerns were not rooted in the risk of an emerging dictatorship, or of the power this sort of knowledge would give such a state. Instead the concern was that the existence of this knowledge was in itself a problem. This concern linked strongly to the concern about having freedom to drive. However, the latter concern was more significant for more people than this specific concern about data.

The ‘legal security’ position was somewhat fragile. People found it hard to understand how technology could assure privacy and so their faith rested in legal safeguards. However, they expected these to be breached by security forces on occasion, and by and large were happy for this to happen.

While there was significant disagreement within the groups about whether ‘big brother’ concerns were valid, there were some more prosaic privacy issues that were salient for most participants. Several participants in the workshops and focus groups were aware of the DVLA releasing data to other organisations and were concerned that road pricing data would be used in the same way. They were also concerned about identity theft and people running up bills in their name. A further minor concern came from the prospect of itemised billing. In each focus group, there was spontaneous but jokey concern about spouses looking at the bill and knowing where their partner had been.

### *Fairness*

Concerns about fairness took two different forms. First, there were some concerns about the differing impact of road pricing on different segments of the population. For example, there was significant concern about potential impacts on people with disabilities that prevent them from using public transport. There was also some concern about the impact on poorer people, though at the same time there was strong opposition to linking price levels to income in any way. Second, people often said that road pricing was not ‘fair’ to them. This latter concern was more prevalent than the former and largely related to the factors discussed above. In particular, people often thought it was not ‘fair’ that they were being charged for car journeys that they felt they could not avoid. So although couched in terms of fairness, this was effectively a concern about cost, the provision of alternatives and flexible working.

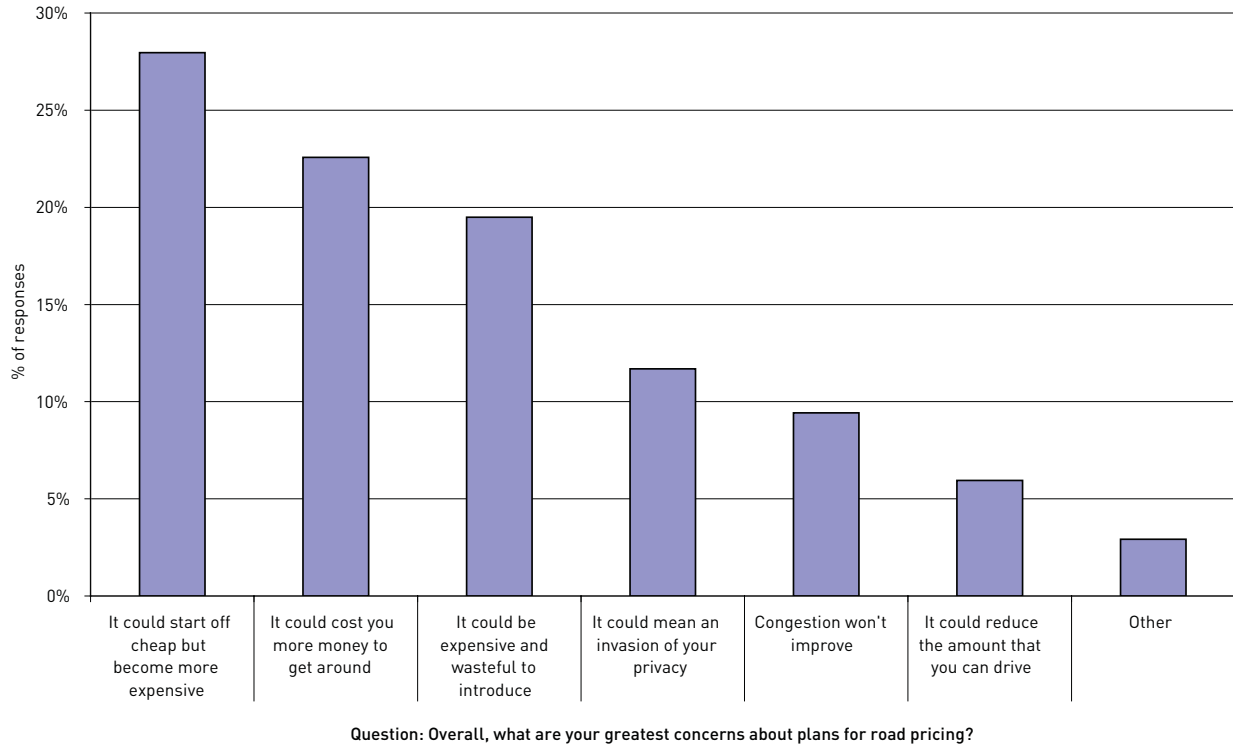
## Overall fears about road pricing

Figure 4.3 (next page) shows people’s responses to a question in the poll asking people about their fears for the introduction of road pricing. In contrast to the question about hopes (discussed in section 3) there seems to be less of a dilemma in deciding whether responses are a result of views about what is plausible or desirable. All the options presented here were seen to be highly probable by most people in the focus groups. Though there is obviously some variation between individuals and items in terms of their plausibility, it seems likely that much of the variation shown in the chart is a result of different valuations of the options. As in the ‘hopes’ question, six discrete options were provided, plus the choice to select ‘other’ and specify what that fear was. The options were randomised, and people were constricted to choosing a maximum of two options.

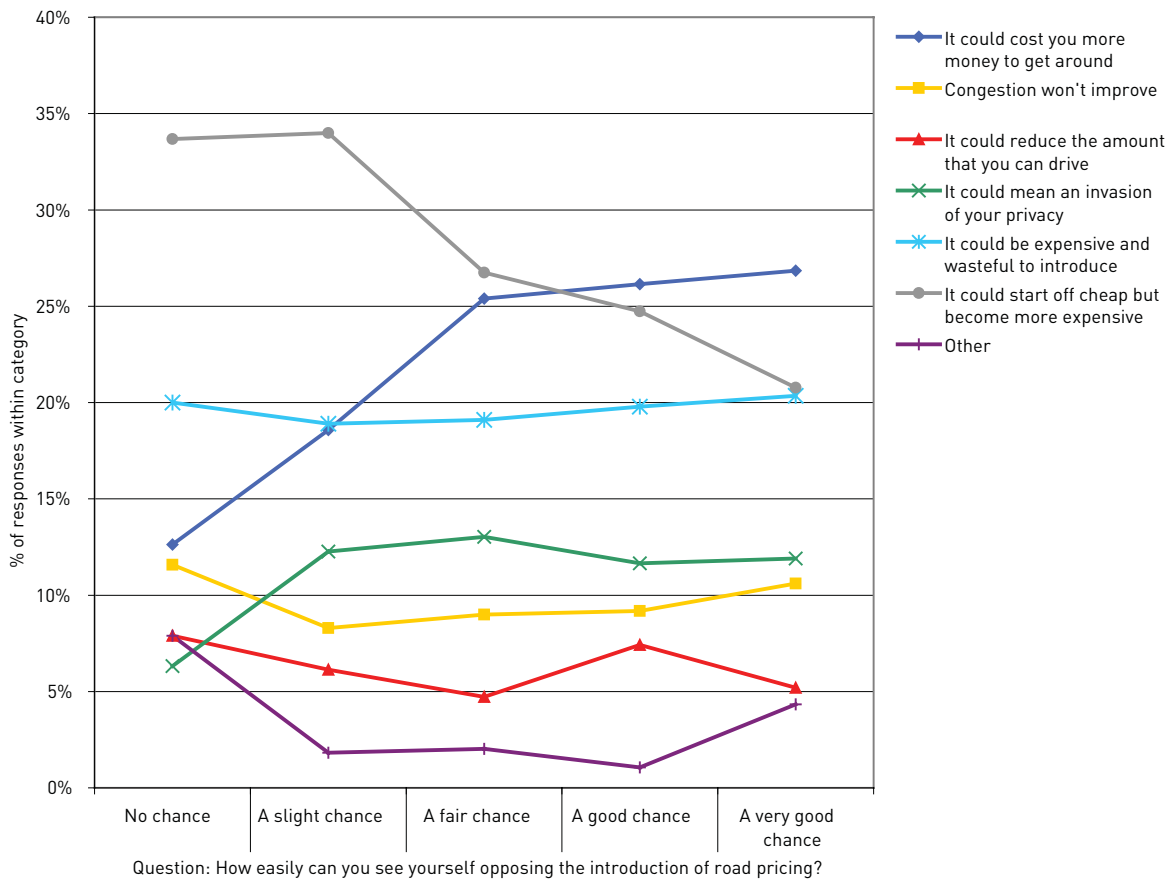
There are three particularly interesting features in Figure 4.3. First, in line with the analysis presented above, the two top concerns are about personal, financial costs. People are more worried about additional money coming out of their pocket than whether the scheme works or not. Second, fears about road pricing limiting ‘the amount you can drive’ are surprisingly unimportant. This reflects the discussion above (‘Road pricing is an attack on freedom’) about this concern. Concerns about freedom are more focused on emotive issues of government encroachment than practical concerns about mobility. Third, in line with the discussion above under ‘Road pricing won’t work’, road pricing being ineffective is not a top-of-mind concern. Compared to increased costs and waste, ineffectiveness is a relatively insignificant consequence of road pricing. However, it is a key part of the way road pricing is framed: it explains why increased cost is seen as such a bad thing. It is because the cost is not expected to deliver value.

Figure 4.4 (next page) shows the different concerns of different opposition groups. Unlike the pattern for hopes, there is relatively little difference between groups. However, it is interesting to note the trends in concerns about price increase and impact on the cost of getting around. Both factors refer to personal costs of road pricing; however, the former accepts that, at least at the start of the scheme, prices might be ‘cheap’. Stronger opponents do not seem prepared to make this concession.

**Figure 4.3 Fears about road pricing**



**Figure 4.4 Fears about road pricing, by opposition group**





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## In summary

This section has shown that:

- The majority of people have a fair chance or better of opposing road pricing.
- This is grounded in concerns that road pricing is a stealth tax, will not work, and will encroach on their freedom.
- There are also concerns about the cost of introduction, privacy, diversion of cars on residential streets, billing, evasion, fairness and data security.

## 5. Who is in which camp?

This section segments opposition to road pricing, identifying who the likely opponents are, and who is less likely to oppose. It picks out car use, public transport use and attitude to public transport as key factors explaining opposition. People who use their cars a lot or make little use of public transport tend to be more hostile, as do people who are dissatisfied with public transport. People who drive for work also appear to be particularly hostile.

Up till now, this report has largely considered public opinion as a single homogenous lump that tips one way or the other. Obviously, reality is not like that: it is far more granular, with variation in opinion at subgroup and individual levels. The opinion poll has helped us look at some of this granularity. The sample and questionnaire design allowed us to segment opinion in a number of ways:

- Socio-demographic variables: age, gender, occupation classification, region
- Transport patterns: car usage, public transport usage, mode of transport to school and work
- Transport attitudes: attitudes to congestion and public transport.

This data set, combined with a regression analysis, has allowed us to draw an interesting picture of proponents and opponents of road pricing, and people in the middle. The regression analysis used an ordered probit model. This form of regression is suitable for studying discrete ordered rankings and reveals whether ranked answers to a given question predict the dependent variables, after controlling for the other variables entered into the model. Two dependent variables were used in separate models: 'expectation of opposition' and temperature score. Two different versions of each model were used, one using all the questions asked in the survey, and the other focusing on just the behavioural questions. The results described below are significant at the 95 per cent confidence level.

As we shall see, the analysis identified three factors as particularly significant in explaining attitudes to road pricing: driving frequency, public transport usage and public transport satisfaction. Below, these factors are considered before moving on to factors that appear to have less impact on attitudes.

### I don't drive, I don't care

The polling showed a strong link between the frequency with which people drive and their acceptance of road pricing. Unsurprisingly, people who do not use the roads much are significantly less hostile to road pricing. Among 'strong opposers' (people who say there is a good or very good chance of them opposing, and a slight or no chance of them supporting the introduction of road pricing), 63 per cent drive 'every day or nearly every day'. Among strong supporters (the opposite group: very likely to support, very unlikely to oppose), the figure is 15 per cent. Among non-drivers, the average thermometer score was 5.0, among people who drive every day it was 3.6. The link was also clear in the regression analysis. Regular car use was a good predictor of temperature (though there was not a significant correlation for irregular car use, i.e. less than once a week). It also predicted opposition likelihood (though again, there was not a significant correlation for irregular car use). The pattern is demonstrated in Figure 5.1 (next page).

This pattern was also evident in the qualitative work. Non-drivers and in particular, infrequent drivers, were more positive about road pricing than regular drivers. Infrequent drivers felt they were more likely to benefit from the removal of VED in favour of a pay-as-you-go tariff. One would not expect this support to persist if pricing supplemented VED or replaced fuel duty rather than VED. In contrast, non-drivers were more likely to be nonplussed by the prospect of road pricing than to support or oppose it. Overall, infrequent drivers seemed more supportive than non-drivers, but both were equally minded not to oppose.

I only do 100 miles a week. I think I might benefit. I'm only pottering. But if I want to go to Wales for the day I'd be thinking 'how much will that cost me'?

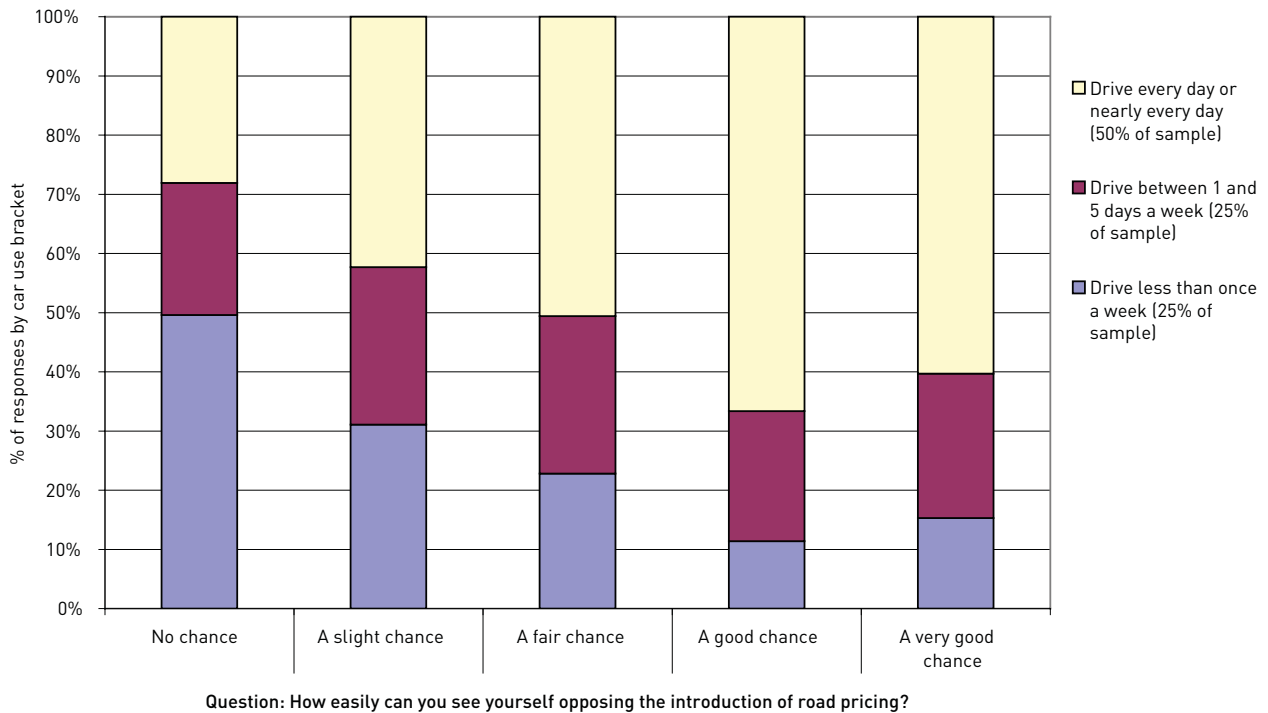
Focus group participant, Sale

I only do 6000 miles a year so that's why I support it [road pricing].

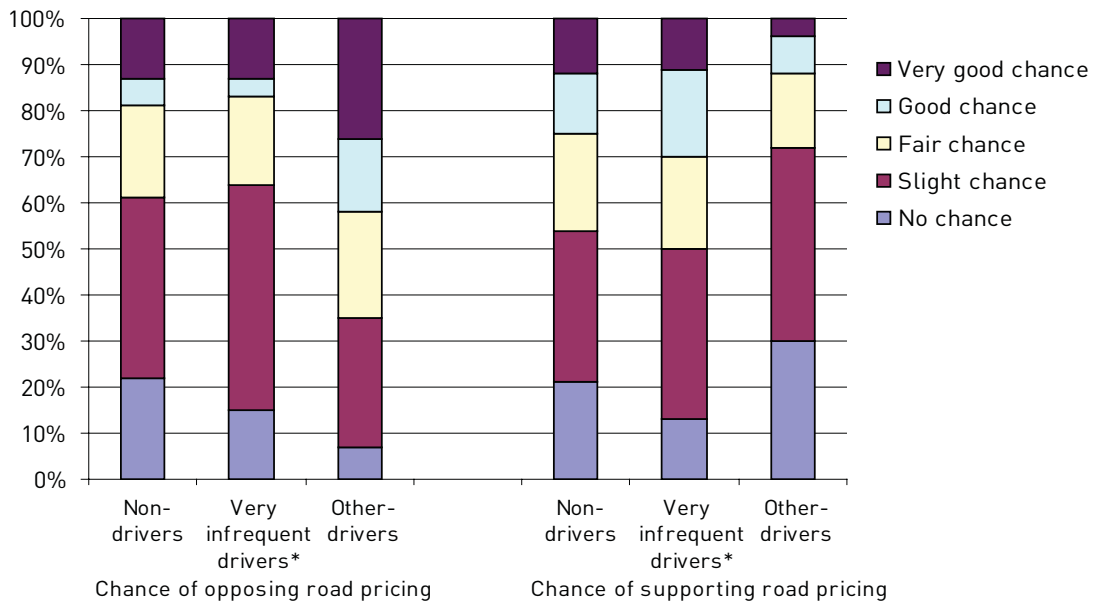
Focus group participant, Harlow

This analysis is offered tentative support in the poll if we contrast the impact of car use on *support* for road pricing, and its impact on *opposition*. As Figure 5.2 shows, opposition-likelihood increases as car use falls. In contrast, support-likelihood is higher for infrequent drivers than non-drivers. It may be that while non-drivers are open to the idea of road pricing, they are less likely to actively support it than similar open-

**Figure 5.1 Opposition to road pricing, by car use**



**Figure 5.2 Support and opposition, by car use**



\* Note: people who drive less than once a week

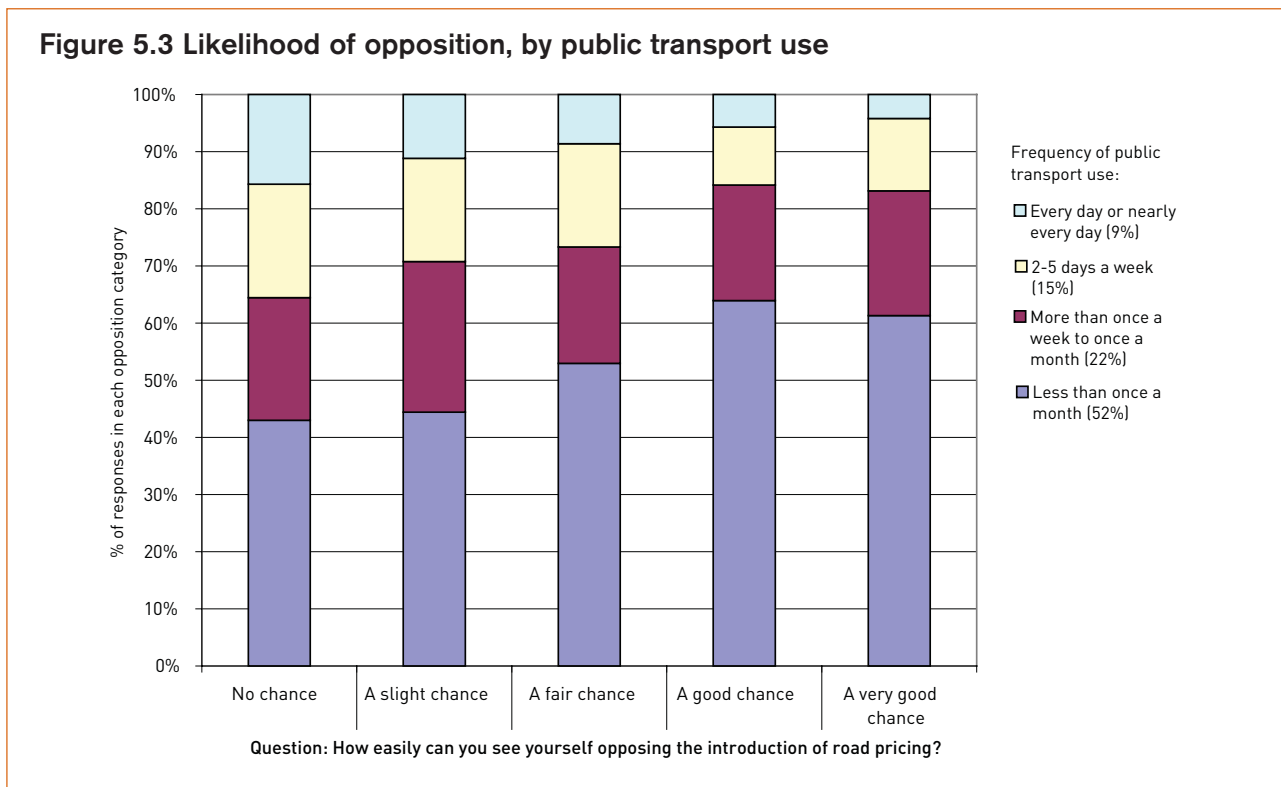
mindful drivers, because they are less likely to experience the benefits. Their support is passive and restricted to non-opposition.

The overall finding that car use and opposition is linked is interesting, but of limited use in seeking to build support for road pricing. This is for two reasons. First, the amount people drive it is not a variable that can be significantly, sensibly and easily influenced directly. Second, most people do drive, and drive often. In our sample, approximately 50 per cent drove every day or nearly every day, 25 per cent drove more than once a week but less than every day, and just 25 per cent were either non-drivers or drove less than once a week.

### Public transport - the impact of having options

The second factor that appeared to have an impact on people's acceptance of road pricing is their use of public transport.

The more people use public transport, the more likely they are to accept the introduction of road pricing. The average thermometer score for people who use public transport every day or nearly every day is 5.3. For people who never use public transport, it is 3.5. The pattern is clear in Figure 5.3, which looks at likelihood of opposing road pricing cut by public transport use. The less opposing categories contain disproportionately high numbers of heavy public transport users. A significant link was also detected in the regression analysis, using temperature score as the dependent variable, where people who never or rarely use public transport had significantly lower temperature scores after controlling for all other behavioural variables (but not in the model that also included attitudinal variables).



Before getting too excited by this pattern, it is worth pointing out three contradictory findings. First, the regression analysis failed to pick out public transport use as significant in either model used for opposition expectation rather than temperature score.

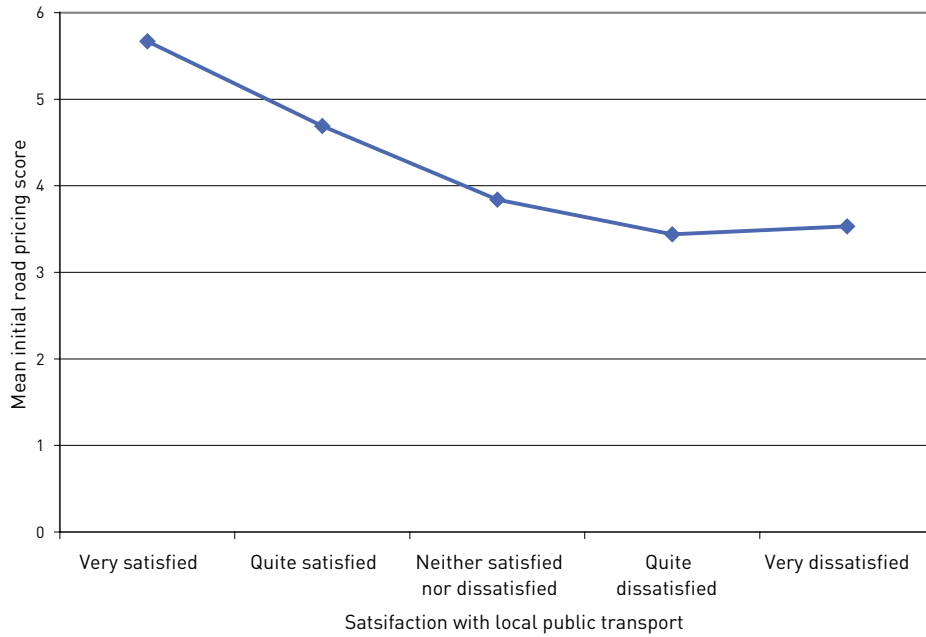
Second, the pattern in Figure 5.3 contrasts somewhat with the views of participants in two of the workshops. A perception of poorer public transport in Canterbury and Somerset seemed to lead to greater acceptance of road pricing. The explanation for this discrepancy is the highly conditional nature of the support offered. The perception that local public transport was extremely poor, combined with high levels of congestion, meant that people wanted dramatic shifts in local transport policy. In line with the poll, most people resisted the idea that road pricing could be that shift, as they did not believe local public transport to be adequate. However, their belief that a step-change in provision was needed, and their intense frustration with local arrangements (particularly for the participants in Canterbury), meant that they were open to road pricing if, and only if, it really did lead to the requisite improvements. Participants in the poll did not have the option of expressing this sort of conditionality when asked about road pricing. Instead participants who were very dissatisfied with local public transport were more likely to respond on the basis of their assessment of the transport system as it is now.

Third, the proportion of people who regularly use public transport is low. In our sample, 52 per cent of people used public transport less than once a month, and just 9 per cent used public transport every day or nearly every day. Shifting these numbers is likely to be a long haul.

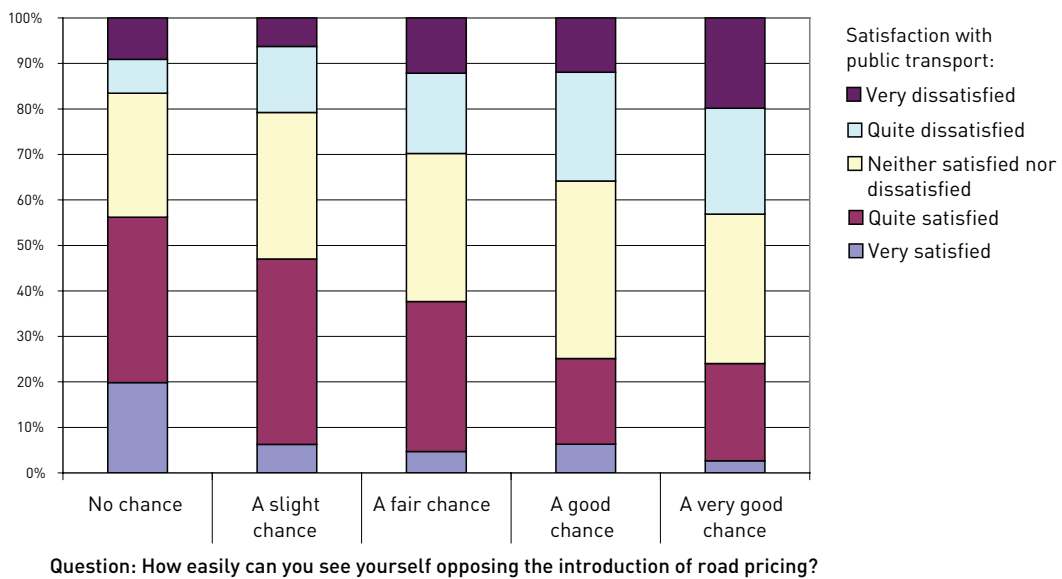
### Public transport – the impact of liking your options

There is an interesting and robust picture around public transport satisfaction. More satisfied people are more open to road pricing. As Figures 5.4 and 5.5 show, the more satisfied people were with public transport, the higher their temperature score and the less likely they were to oppose road pricing. This

**Figure 5.4 Public transport satisfaction and temperature score**



**Figure 5.5 Public transport satisfaction and intention to oppose**



finding was borne out in the regression model. People who were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied were significantly more likely to oppose road pricing, while people who were very satisfied were significantly less likely to oppose. Regression on the temperature score variable also revealed a significant link, but only for people who are 'very satisfied'.

The good news is that far more people are satisfied with public transport than use it regularly. In our sample, 38 per cent were very or quite satisfied with public transport while 29 per cent were quite or very dissatisfied.

This pattern fits with the findings of the workshops and focus groups. People believed that having decent public transport alternatives was essential to their acceptance of road pricing. This finding seems to suggest that these claims are true: more satisfied people are more open to road pricing.

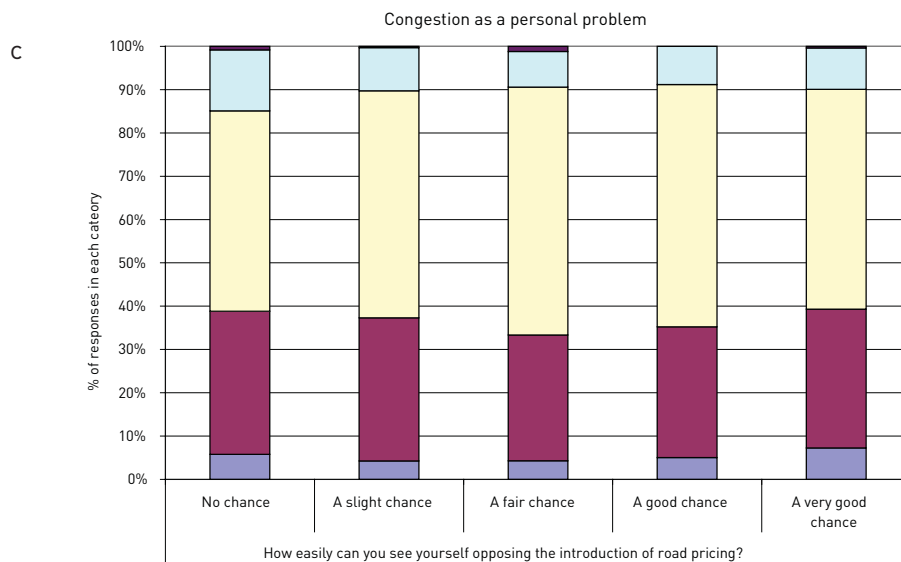
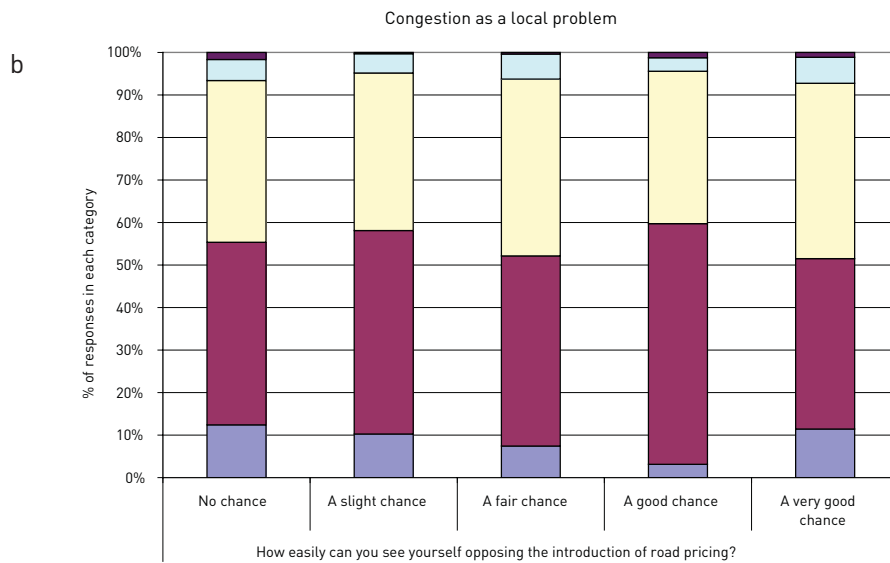
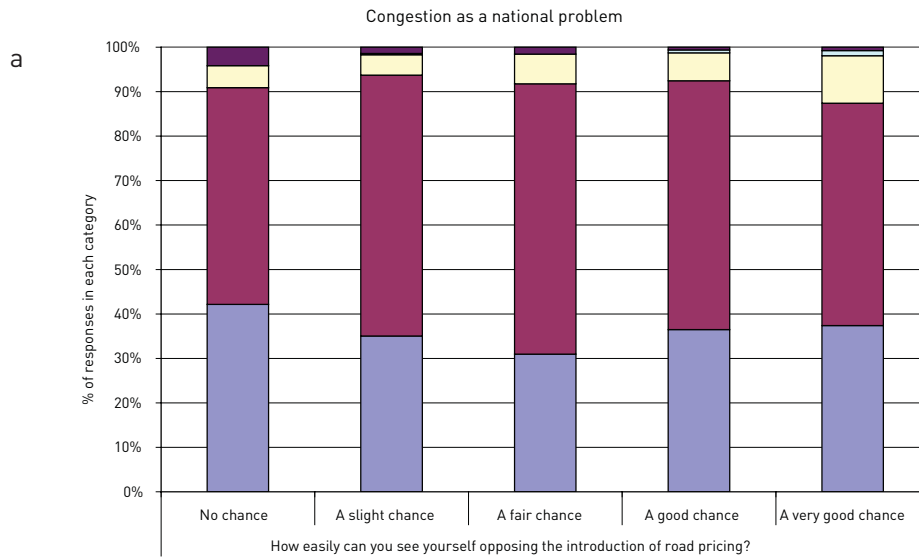
### Factors that don't matter, or don't matter as much

A number of factors that might have been expected to have some link to attitudes to road pricing had little or no impact on the numbers in the poll.

**Figure 5.6 a, b and c. The link between attitudes to congestion and attitudes to road pricing**

Question: How much of a problem do you think congestion on the roads is for the country as a whole/your local area/you personally?

■ Don't know   
 ■ Not a problem at all   
 ■ Not a very serious problem  
■ A quite serious problem   
 ■ A very serious problem



Perhaps the most surprising factor to be unrelated to acceptance of road pricing is attitude to congestion. The poll looked at people's subjective assessment of the extent of local congestion and their assessment of the extent to which congestion is a problem for them personally, for their area, and for the country. The regression analysis failed to identify any interaction between these factors and likelihood of supporting or opposing road pricing. Figure 5.6 above also provides evidence for the lack of a link. This result is rather surprising but is probably explained in the findings of the qualitative research. People do not see road pricing as a practical solution to congestion, so their support for it is not related to their attitude towards congestion.

Our regression model also failed to find any significant interactions with gender, age, class, the number of children a household has, how those children travel to school, or how individuals travel to work.

These findings match the results from the focus groups and workshops with one exception. The need to drive to school or work was often cited as a reason why road pricing is unacceptable. It may be that the measures used in the poll were not sensitive enough to pick out this effect. For example, we did not look at interactions between journey to work and journey to school patterns. In the workshops, it seemed that if either sort of journey was made by car, people tended to believe that they had no option but to travel by car at peak time. Further, our journey to school question did not pick out who is doing the driving.

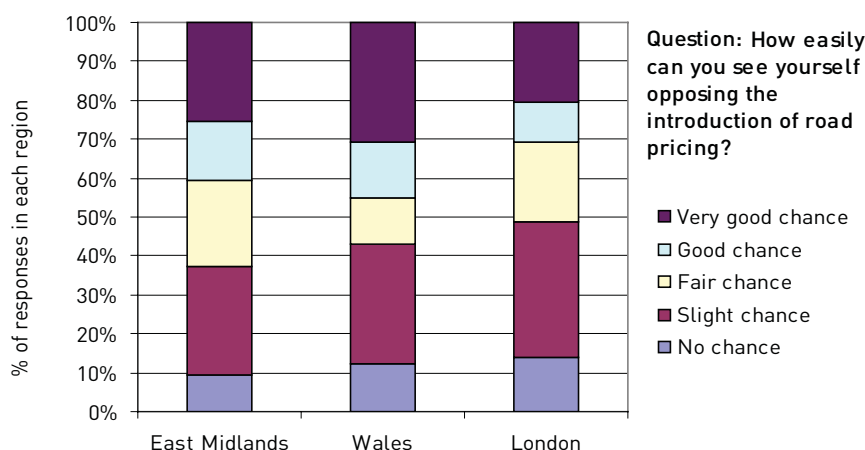
There are also a number of factors not included in the poll, that might be thought to have an impact on attitudes. We did not have direct measures of income, satisfaction with roads (other than measures of perceptions and evaluations of congestion), attitudes to cars (such as the belief that the car you drive says a lot about you as a person), or attitudes to driving (such as whether people enjoyed driving). We also did not have a direct measure of attitudes to climate change, though this was picked up indirectly in two questions.

## Geography and occupation: two factors that seem to matter a bit

### Geography

As Figure 5.7 shows, there were some regional differences, though none that tested as significant in the regression models. Londoners appeared to be the most open to road pricing, with the highest average temperature score (4.63) and a far higher proportion of the population saying that there was only a slight or no chance of them opposing road pricing's introduction than was typical. In contrast, people in the East Midlands were very negative, with a temperature score that was 17 per cent lower than the score in London.

**Figure 5.7 The regional effect**



There are various possible explanations for this pattern. Perhaps the most comforting explanation is that the congestion charge has built acceptance for the concept of road pricing. However, the lack of a significant London effect in the regression after controlling for public transport satisfaction suggests a different explanation. Londoners tend to be more satisfied with public transport than people in other regions. Approximately two-thirds of respondents in London were either very or quite satisfied with public transport, compared to just a third nationally.

Occupation

'It would not help me. I'm a businessman and I drive here there and everywhere.'  
Workshop participant, Newcastle

'It would make me a lot better off. I don't care what the company pays and I only use the car on Friday and Saturday'  
Workshop participant, Newcastle

The regression analysis did not reveal a link between support and occupation, with one conspicuous exception. Unlike all other occupational groups, there was a significant and positive effect on opposition for 'transport and machine operatives' in the regression: they were more opposed than other occupational groups. This is also clear in the raw poll data. While on average 36 per cent of people say there is a good or very good chance of them opposing road pricing, among 'transport and machine operatives', the number is 65 per cent.

**Box 5.1 A simple 3x3 segmentation of the UK population**

**Segmentation categories**

*Car use*

Low: less than once a week  
Mid: one to three times a week  
High: four times a week or more

*Public transport satisfaction*

Low: very or quite dissatisfied  
Mid: neither satisfied nor dissatisfied  
High: very or quite satisfied

**Size of segments – % of population**

		Car use		
		Low	Mid	High
Public transport satisfaction	Low	4%	4%	22%
	Mid	6%	4%	23%
	High	15%	6%	17%

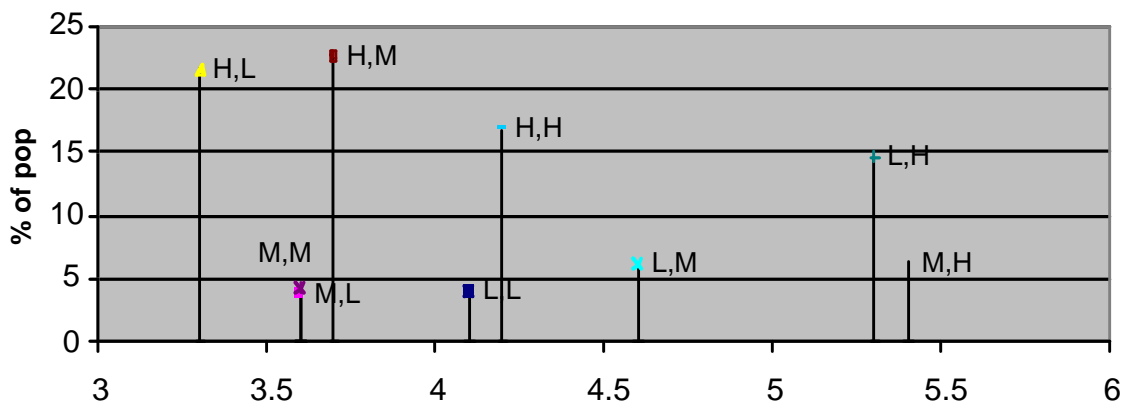
**Mean temperature scores by segment**

		Car use		
		Low	Mid	High
Public transport satisfaction	Low	4.1	3.6	3.3
	Mid	4.6	3.6	3.7
	High	5.3	5.4	4.2

**Mean opposition likelihood by segment (1= no chance, 5 = very good chance)**

		Car use		
		Low	Mid	High
Public transport satisfaction	Low	3.1	3.3	3.6
	Mid	2.7	3.4	3.2
	High	2.3	2.8	3.0

**Population segments size, by car use, public transport satisfaction and mean thermometer score**



Mean thermometer score. Labels are in the order:  
Car use (High, Medium, Low), public transport satisfaction (H,M,L)  
E.g. High car use, low public transport use = H,L



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This was reflected in the focus groups, though in the workshops the pattern was somewhat more mixed. The focus groups all contained at least a couple of people who drove as part of their job, though while some were transport and machine operatives, others worked in sales or elementary occupations. These people were particularly sensitive to the thought of paying more to travel, particularly if they were self-employed and would have to cover the cost out of their own pocket. The workshops offered more time for drivers to think about the potential benefits of road pricing, and where they were confident that additional costs would be borne by their employers, they were reasonably warm to the idea.

## A possible segmentation of the UK population

Combining the data on car use and public transport satisfaction allows for a potentially useful segmentation of the population that discriminates in terms of attitudes to road pricing and relies on fairly standard measures of attitudes. The segmentation is set out in Box 5.1. Segmenting the population in this way helps see the scale of the challenge faced if road pricing is to be introduced. Only two segments, collectively comprising 21 per cent of the population, give road pricing a warm thermometer score, and then it is still below 5.5 on a 1 to 10 scale.

### In summary

- Four groups of people are disproportionately likely to be hostile to road pricing:
- People who use their cars very often
- People who use public transport very rarely
- People who are dissatisfied with public transport
- People who drive for work.
- Discussion in the focus groups and workshops, combined with the regression technique used to find these results, suggests that there is a causal nexus behind these correlations.
- Most people use their cars very often and do not use public transport very much. This may be a problem for introducing road pricing.
- However, more people are satisfied with public transport than are dissatisfied.
- Segmenting the population by car use and public transport satisfaction may be a useful way of identifying and targeting groups who are more or less likely to oppose road pricing.

## 6. Scheme designs that neutralise opposition

During the course of this research we looked at various features of road pricing that could be adjusted, so as to tailor plans to public opinion. This section argues that three factors are particularly relevant: improvement of public transport, hypothecation (ring-fencing) of revenue for transport purposes, and replacing at least one existing motoring tax. Other features, such as legal safeguards to guarantee privacy, or linking up with other policy initiatives to provide a coherent and comprehensive approach, are also important.

It is important to note that we do not necessarily recommend that the most popular course of action is the one that should be followed. For more detail and recommendations, see Bird and Morris (2006).

### Improve public transport first

'I don't think public transport would cope. The nightmare stories you hear.'  
Focus group participant, Sale

'Every time John Prescott says we should be using public transport: how? What public transport?'  
Workshop participant, Canterbury

'Looking at London, how they brought that in, it's fine because there's such a good Underground. But somewhere like Bath, where public transport is not so good, there's no other option but to drive when you've got to go to work. So I'm going to get penalised because I've got no other option.'  
Workshop participant, North East Somerset

'I drive because of the costs of it... costs of using public transport would be nearly double.'  
Focus group participant, Harlow

'Charging before the improvements! That's a nightmare.'  
Focus group participant, Sale

'Public transport has to be improved first.'  
Focus group participant, Birmingham

High quality public transport provision is key to the smooth introduction of road pricing. As we have seen, people who are more satisfied with public transport are more open to road pricing. In the workshops and focus groups, the lack of acceptable alternatives was a key barrier to acceptance of pricing.

People felt that only improving public transport after pricing was introduced would be deeply problematic. This was even true in North East Somerset and Canterbury, where people accepted that road pricing could be used to fund improvements. We looked at this question in the poll by giving participants two statements and asking which they agreed more strongly with:

*Statement 1:* Public transport should be improved BEFORE road pricing is introduced

*Statement 2:* Public transport should be improved AFTER road pricing is introduced

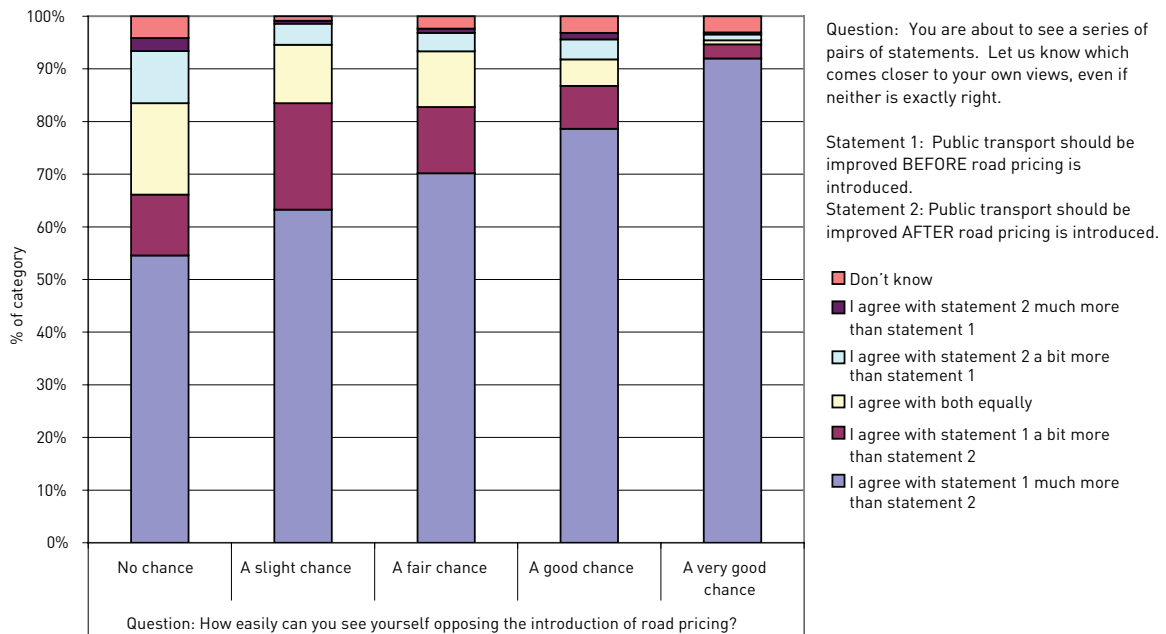
Just 5 per cent of people agreed more with statement 2 than with statement 1, while 73 per cent agreed much more with statement 1 than with statement 2. As Figure 6.1 (next page) shows, the situation is even more extreme for people who expect to oppose road pricing. Older people are also more in favour of improvements coming in before introduction. Sixty per cent of 18- to 24-year-olds strongly agreed that improvements should come first, while 70 per cent of people 65 and over agreed with this.

But what sorts of improvements do people want? The shopping list was dauntingly long, though the focus changed from place to place. In Canterbury, North East Somerset and Harlow, the emphasis was on a service that covered a greater range of destinations with quick, ideally direct, routes. In large urban areas (Birmingham, Sale, Newcastle), cleanliness, security and comfort were more important. Price was significant everywhere.

'Do you want to get on a bus with half a dozen kids giving you gyp? There's many of us who wouldn't use the bus because of that.'  
Focus group participant, Sale

'I'd happily use the bus if it was cheaper'  
Focus group participant, Sale

**Figure 6.1 Public transport phasing by opposition group**



Within the workshops and groups, there was some debate as to whether their expectations could be met. Several participants pointed to the privatisation of buses and trains as a key barrier. They felt that this limited the potential for government to ensure a satisfactory service. A couple of participants were aware of different organisational structures in London and Bristol and thought that these may help the development of a more coherent transport plan.

'Buses and trains are run by one company in Bristol. It's easier and there's no congestion there.'  
Workshop participant, North East Somerset

'It's a vicious circle – the bus services are privatised anyway'  
Workshop participant, Newcastle

### Spend the money on transport and cutting road taxes

'If it's for road use and public transport, it should go there and nowhere else. It's the public's money, not the Government's money.'  
Workshop participant, Newcastle

'Why should the Government get to say all the time what they're spending your money on? You're paying road tax and you're expecting it to go on roads. You pay council tax and expect it to go on police, fire etc. Why should paying for the roads go on building council houses or whatever?'  
Workshop participant, Canterbury

'If money goes back to something then fine: everyone's happy; but if not, then it's just a stealth tax.'  
Workshop participant, Newcastle

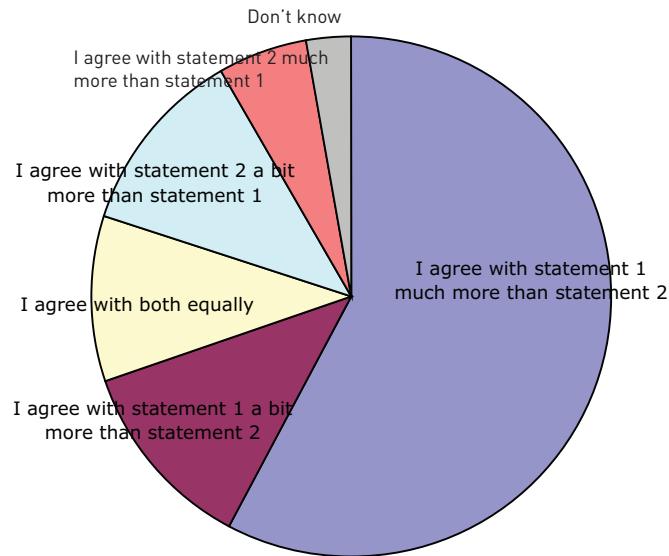
'All the money raised should go on public transport and roads.'  
Workshop participant, North East Somerset

'We couldn't trust our government to put money back into roads.'  
Focus group participant, Harlow

There was a strong consensus that revenue raised through road pricing should not go into the general pot for use as the Government saw fit. Instead, people wanted it used only for one of three specific purposes: improving public transport, improving the roads, or cutting other road taxes.

There were strong views about the 'strength' of hypothecation. It was not enough to say that 'most' of the money would be used for transport improvements and tax cuts. Distrust of government led people to

**Figure 6.2 Attitudes to hypothecation**

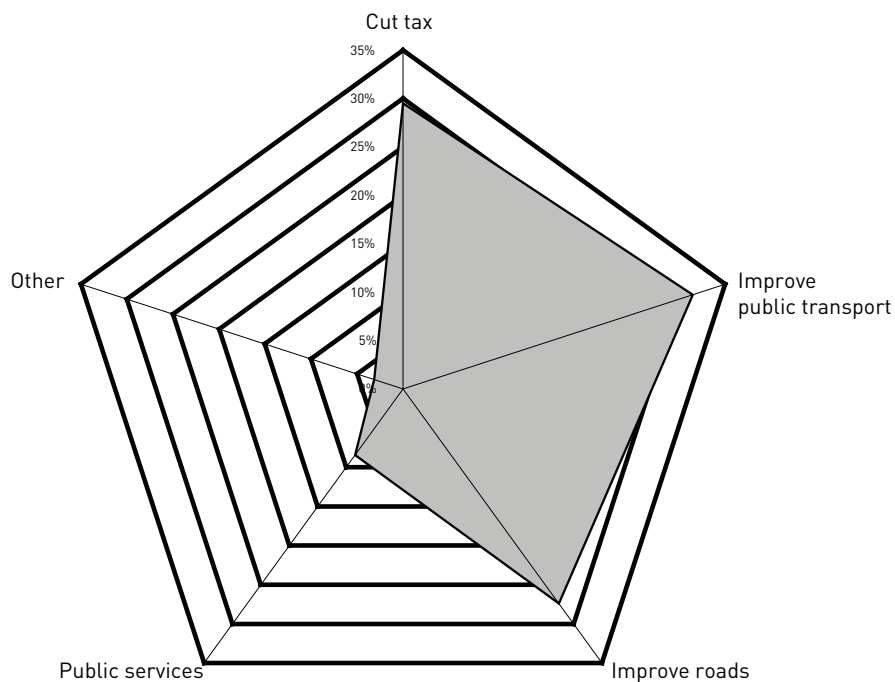


*Question:* Which statement comes closer to your own views, even if neither is exactly right?

**Statement 1:** ALL the money raised from road pricing should be spent on transport and nothing else.

**Statement 2:** MOST of the money raised from road pricing will be spent on transport but some should be used for other public services like police, schools and hospitals.

**Figure 6.3 Where should the money go?**

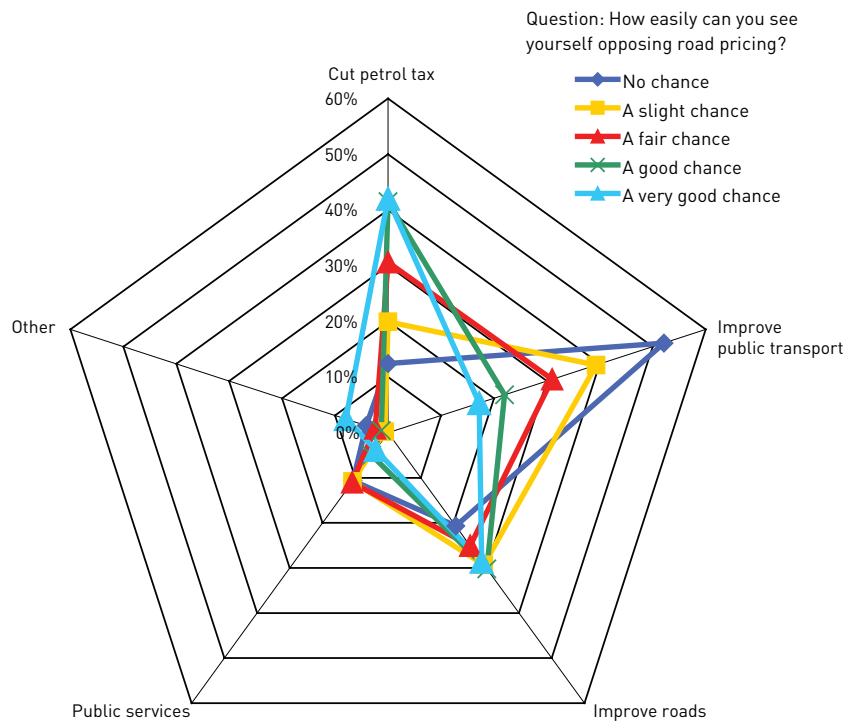


*Question:* The money raised through road pricing could be used in different ways. Which of the following options do you prefer:

- Use any extra money raised to reduce petrol tax
- Use any extra money raised to improve public transport
- Use any extra money to improve the roads
- Use any extra money raised to help improve public services like schools, hospitals and the police
- None of these options

assume that any promise with 'wobble room' would be wiggled out of. This came through in the poll as well as the qualitative work, as Figure 6.2 shows. There was concern that claims about hypothecation would not be borne out in practice, so they wanted a transparent system that allowed them to see that promises were kept.

**Figure 6.4 Scheme design by opposition group**



Interestingly, while there was no pattern when this data is cut by attitude to road pricing, public transport, or congestion, there was a correlation with age. Older people were even more supportive of hypothecation.

The desire for hypothecation was rooted in three factors. First, people felt that money raised through payments for using the roads should be spent on the roads. This seemed to be simple common sense. Second, people felt that improved public transport was essential to reducing congestion (with or without road pricing) and so thought it made sense for some of the money to be used there. Third, people did not trust the government to spend money well. They thought much of the money raised would be wasted on priorities that were the Government's but not theirs. Hypothecation was felt to be a way of stopping this happening as it guaranteed that funds would only go to services they valued.

These lines of reasoning appear to explain the pattern shown in the opinion poll (Figure 6.3, previous page).

Opponents of road pricing had different spending priorities than people who were more sympathetic. As Figure 6.4 shows, the more people opposed road pricing the more they favoured tax cuts and improvements to the roads over improvements to public transport. This presents a significant challenge, as a key cause of their hostility appears to be their poor impression of public transport.

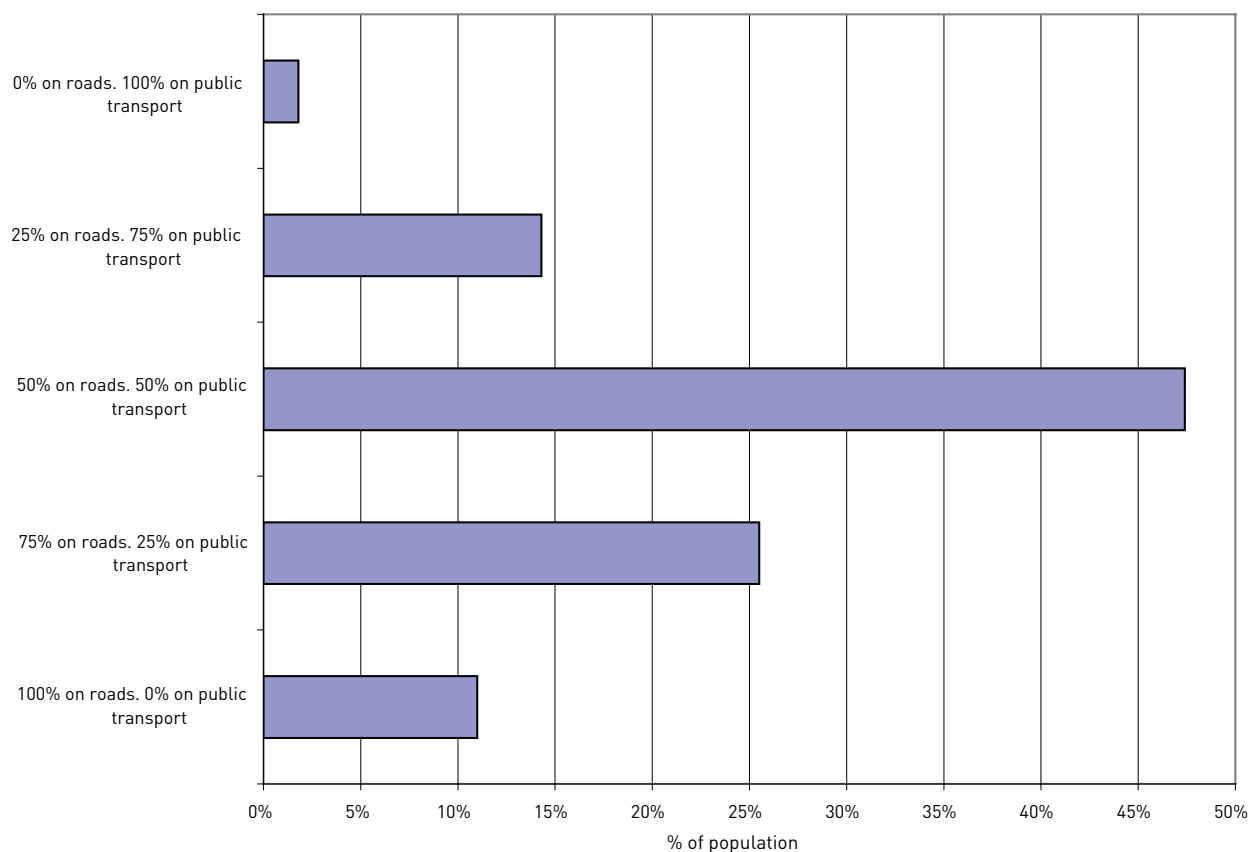
Within the workshops and focus groups, there was no consensus as to how available funds spent on transport should be divided between roads and public transport. The 'common sense' view that money raised from roads should go on roads was traded against an acknowledgement that better public transport was needed.

The poll suggests that for most people, these arguments cancel each other out. As Figure 6.5 shows (next page), most people opted for a 50:50 split between public transport and roads. However, there is a significant difference between different opposition groups. In line with the findings above, those most likely to oppose road pricing were also most in favour of money being focused on the roads. Among people with no chance of opposing road pricing, 2 per cent more favoured a bias in funding towards public transport than favoured a bias towards roads. Among people with a very good chance, 39 per cent preferred a bias towards roads. There is an increase in the proportion preferring a bias towards roads with each step up the likely-to-oppose scale. However, within each opposition category, the modal (most common) response is a 50:50 split.

The view that some money should be spent on the roads was acknowledged by all participants, while the more committed drivers tended to reject the claim of public transport. This was partly because they were less likely to use public transport and so did not value improvements as highly as those who drove less. It was also partly because they did not believe additional money needed to be raised. Instead, they wanted existing revenue to be better spent.

**Figure 6.5 Revenue split**

Question: If all the money was spent on transport, it could be divided in different ways. Which of the following do you prefer:



The bottom line is that there is a strong consensus that money raised from road pricing should be used to fund transport improvements. These improvements should include reducing other costs of motoring through tax cuts, and increasing funding for roads and public transport. The link between money-in and money-out should be as clear as possible, ideally with a clear statement that all money will be used for transport purposes and nothing else.

Clearly, meeting all these requirements has an impact on the price level. If people understood the impact on price that meeting these aims would have, we might have found a different pattern, so we need caution in interpreting these findings. However, they are useful in revealing the need to balance the different possible uses of revenue in any scheme design.

### Replace taxes, don't add to them

'If it replaces car tax and petrol tax it would be fair.'

Workshop participant, Newcastle

'If it was replacing road tax, then it would be a lot fairer.'

Workshop participant, North East Somerset

'It depends if they get rid of the car tax. If it is 'as well as', then it should only be in some areas.'

Workshop participant, North East Somerset

'Why not put fuel duty up and remove [road] tax?'

Workshop participant, Canterbury

'Government already gets huge amount from petrol and road tax. I can't see government getting rid of those.'

Workshop participant, Newcastle

'We need something knocked off.'

Workshop participant, Canterbury

The key point about taxation was that individuals did not want their overall costs to go up. They felt that in Britain drivers were particularly highly taxed and that there was no justification for raising that further. The concept of having peak and off-peak prices was understood in principle. However, a key concern was what the price levels would be. It was difficult to get into a discussion on this due to a lack of fully worked-out road pricing scenarios that specify peak and off-peak prices, the different types of road and times of day on which these prices would apply, and the link to existing taxes.

<b>Scenario</b>	<b>Mean temperature score</b>
Replace VED	4.1
Replace petrol tax	4.7
Replace both	4.4
Replace neither	3.3

However, we did look at how road pricing should relate to existing taxes. We also used a split sample in the poll. In addition to our 1150 participants who were presented road pricing as a replacement for VED, three samples of 100-150 participants were presented with road pricing as a replacement for fuel duty, both taxes, or neither tax. Table 6.1 shows the impact of these different scenarios on the mean temperature scores awarded to road pricing. The temperature score of a road pricing plan that adds to existing taxes is around 25 per cent lower than any other option. As Figure 6.6 (next page) shows, the different options also have a significant impact on people’s likelihood of opposing or supporting road pricing.

Bringing in road pricing in addition to both existing taxes is extremely unpopular. When people were presented with this option, as well as having a significantly lower mean temperature score, the proportion of people with a good or very good chance of opposing introduction is substantially higher, the proportion of people with a very good chance of supporting road pricing halves, and the proportion of people with a good or very good chance falls by a third compared to scenarios where one or more tax is replaced. Removing an existing tax is a key sign that road pricing is not necessarily about raising additional revenue from motorists.

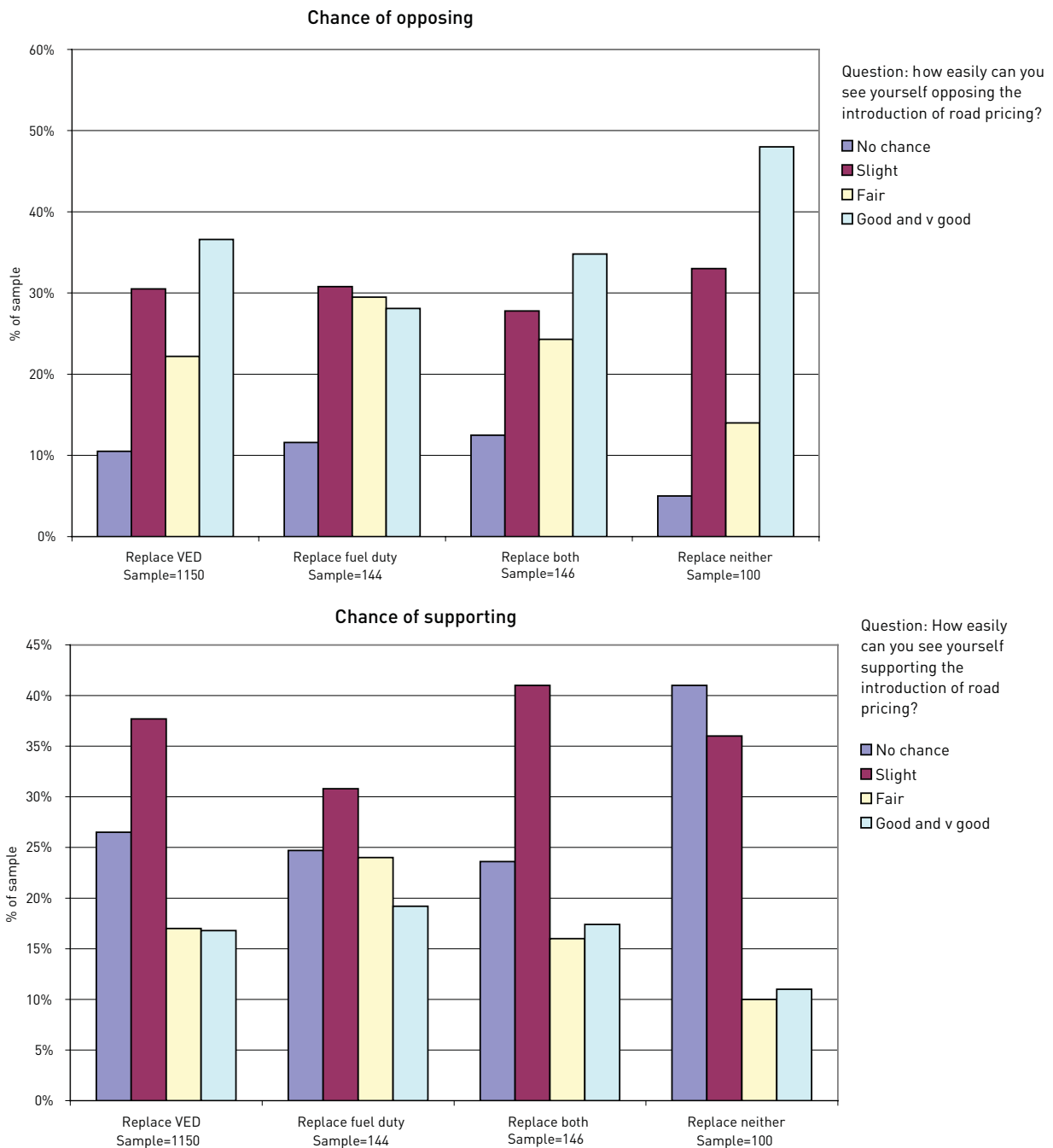
However, beyond this finding, the poll does not reveal dramatic differences between options. Having said that, it may be that replacing just VED is not the most endearing move. The proportion of people with a good or a very good chance of opposing road pricing is 9 per cent lower if it replaces fuel duty rather than VED. Having said that, these people seem to move into the ‘fair chance’ category: they become less likely to oppose, but still not unlikely. This could still be seen as a significant finding if the aim is to minimise unacceptability, however.

The workshops and focus groups revealed complex attitudes as to which tax it made more sense to replace. While people were more hostile to fuel duty than VED, in general, they did not feel it made sense to replace just fuel duty. This was for two key reasons. First, while in principle replacing fuel duty sounded like it had more potential to cut overall costs than cutting VED, people did not think this would happen. They could not believe that a change in taxation would save them money. Second, they were concerned about tax evasion by others, and argued that keeping the bulk of tax on petrol meant that it was impossible to evade the lion’s share of road taxes. This line of argument led some to argue that the aims of road pricing could be better achieved by increasing the cost of petrol. They did not want this to happen, but felt that it had three properties that made it suitable to the aims of road pricing: it is in proportion to use, it is immune to evasion, and the collection infrastructure already exists. The argument that fuel duty is not linked to congestion, but overall usage, cut little ice.

Some argued that it made sense to bring in road pricing to replace both taxes. The reasoning was essentially ‘in for a penny, in for a pound’. They imagined the introduction of road pricing to be extremely expensive, and felt this expense could not be justified to replace VED, which was seen to be far smaller than fuel duty.

The key point on tax is that people did not want their personal outgoings to increase, and the more tax increases, the more hostile they are. This is far more important than the choice of tax that is replaced, though there are links. Introducing road pricing in addition to existing taxes is an extremely strong signal that individual outgoings will rise. Replacing both road and fuel duty is the most radical option. It

**Figure 6.6a and b. Chance of support and opposition by tax scenario**



increases concerns about bureaucracy and waste as the fuel duty system is seen as immune to evasion. However, it also signals a seriousness of intent that just replacing VED fails to do.

### Keep costs low and predictable

‘It all depends. If the new scheme is going to cost more then it is not a good idea.’  
Workshop participant, Newcastle

‘You’d be worried about the bill coming in.’  
Focus group participant, Harlow

‘It depends on the cost.’  
Workshop participant, Newcastle

Perhaps the most obvious way of minimising opposition is to keep price levels low. Of course, there is a trade-off between minimising prices and maximising impacts on congestion and other objectives such as reducing carbon dioxide emissions.



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More importantly, it is not clear what ‘low’ means. People struggled to decode information about cost specified in terms of average price. They can say with certainty that £1.34 a mile is a high price, but are less clear what 5p a mile means. Assessing what counts as ‘low’ can only be achieved in the context of more detailed price schemes than were examined in this research. Initial prices are likely to be important in determining the upper bounds of acceptability over time, as they are likely to set anchor points from which people assess changes.

What was clear from this research is that the way charges are levied is important, alongside the level. People on lower incomes were particularly concerned about variable, and potentially large, bills dropping through their letterbox. They tended to pay for their mobile phones and utilities in advance and were very keen for that option to be available with road pricing. People on all income levels wanted regular feedback about charges accrued.

It was also very important for all participants that the pricing structure was easy to understand and stable.

## Join up with planning policy and policy on work-life balance

‘[Road pricing] won’t work unless a lot of other things happen as well’  
Workshop participant, Canterbury

‘We don’t have a choice over the amount of houses built here – this causes congestion.’  
Workshop participant, Canterbury

‘Kids are not tied to local schools any more. There’s no way my kids could walk to school.’  
Focus group participant, Harlow

‘They’ve put all these retail parks miles away. How else would you get there?’  
Workshop participant, Newcastle

As discussed above, many people struggle to see how road pricing could possibly work. They believe that society forces them into their cars and onto the roads, often at specific times of day. Children go to distant schools that start at fixed times. People work in places that are barely accessible by public transport and they have no choice about when the working day starts. Shopping facilities are provided out of town. Many feel they have to drive their children to school, with many themselves then driving on to work. Road pricing only becomes credible if these concerns are addressed.

Improving public transport is seen as necessary to solving these problems, but several people in the workshops suggested other steps. For example, several people wanted flexi-time to be more easily available and school start times to be staggered or transport to be provided. There was also concern about town planning, and the expansion of out-of-town shopping centres and business parks. In addition, there was concern about other drivers of congestion, such as house-building in already congested areas.

## Privacy

It’s big brother: being monitored.  
Workshop participant, Canterbury

The DVLA passing info on at the moment to companies. That’s bad faith.  
Workshop participant, Newcastle

As discussed above, privacy was a significant issue for a minority, but overall was relatively insignificant when compared to issues around cost and the availability of alternatives. We looked at various aspects of scheme design that might serve to defuse concern. None proved effective with those most concerned about privacy, but for the majority some simple safeguards were enough to assuage their concerns.

The DVLA’s sale of data to private sector organisations was cited frequently as evidence that their data would not be secure. They were in favour of this sort of use of data being illegal. More generally, most people wanted data access for the police and security services, but for no one else.

There were also concerns about cloning of ‘black boxes’ and people running up bills on their behalf. Participants were unsure what could be done about this, but sought reassurance that cloning would be impossible, or at least be very difficult and that any illegitimate costs charged to an account would be waived.

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## In summary

- People have strong preferences about the way pricing schemes are designed.
- Replacing at least one existing road tax helps to minimise opposition.
- Hypothecating revenue to transport uses is also key.
- Dividing revenue between roads and public transport minimises opposition (although the precise split appears less important).
- Improving public transport in advance of introduction is essential to ensuring that people believe that they have choice over transport mode. Planning policy also has a role to play here.
- Flexitime and changes to school starting times and transport are important to ensuring that people believe they have choice over the time of travel.

## 7. Communication priorities

As discussed above, concerns about road pricing can to some extent be met by improving public transport and being clear about how any revenue raised will be used. Clearly, communications can have a role in maximising awareness and understanding of these developments if and when they happen, but are there other messages that can be deployed to further neutralise opposition?

This section looks at a range of potential messages that could be conveyed about road pricing. The messages were developed on the back of the workshops and previous ippr research into road pricing (Grayling et al 2004; Foley and Fergusson 2003). It argues that framing the road pricing debate as being fundamentally about addressing congestion, rather than simply stating that a new tax is being introduced, is key. Messages about climate change have a role to play in galvanising support though may not be particularly salient for most people who oppose road pricing. Road-pricing-focused communications have a limited role to play in neutralising concerns about waste, cost and privacy. Anti-road pricing counter-arguments appear to have significant weight.

### Climate change

'The Government are not interested in climate, they want our money.'

Focus group participant, Sale

'Is what they are saying [re. climate change] true or is it just another way of getting away with this?'

Workshop participant, Newcastle

In the workshops and focus groups, there was deep suspicion of climate change rhetoric in the context of road pricing. People thought it was a smokescreen for a desire to raise taxes. This suspicion was partly rooted in the stealth tax narrative, but it also reflected scepticism about the existence and significance of climate change, and the potential for individual British motorists to have any significant impact.

As Box 7.1 shows, there was a great deal of confusion about what climate change is, what is causing it, and why it is a problem. Many people thought it was connected with the ozone layer. Others thought it meant warmer summers, but little else. Others simply did not believe that it existed. There was wide awareness of counter-arguments, particularly the argument that temperature fluctuations are cyclical and that current changes are not the result of human activity.

#### Box 7.1 What is climate change?

It's something to do with ozone layer getting thinner – a heating up process – floods and all that.

Workshop participant, Newcastle

I'm not sure if they can be accurate. Europe just had coldest winter. I don't fully believe [it].

Workshop participant, North East Somerset

When you hear about it for so long you tend not to believe it anymore.

Workshop participant, Newcastle

I did Geology at university and this is ridiculous. We've only been industrialised for 150 years. It's cycles.

Focus group participant, Birmingham

It's been scientifically proven.

Workshop participant, North East Somerset

I care about the climate for my kids.

Focus group participant, Sale

Amidst this confusion, the consensus was that climate change is occurring. However, this belief was shallow and open to challenge. People often used personal experience to judge whether change had happened – though information from the media and elsewhere helped them interpret the experience. For example, in several of the groups, older people cited memories of 'proper seasons' with more snow and road closures in winter as evidence for warming. In Newcastle, this evidence base collapsed when one person strongly argued that it was a sign of better road clearing equipment, not warmer weather. Another person cited the fact that it still snowed in Canada where her daughter lived as evidence that climate change did not exist.

The fragility of faith in climate change, coupled with ignorance of its consequences made it a fragile base for any argument for road pricing. This was compounded where climate change was presented as a reason for increasing the financial cost of motoring. Even where the existence of climate change was accepted, the practicality and justice of using road pricing to tackle it was often brought into question, as the quotes below show:

‘As a country we have little effect – have a word with the US.’  
Focus group participant, Sale

‘It’s not just driving that’s causing it.’  
Focus group participant, Birmingham

‘Aren’t cars at their most efficient when they are moving at higher speeds than when they are idling?’  
Workshop participant, Canterbury

‘It [the responsibility] should be on car manufacturers.’  
Focus group participant, Sale

There was a strong sense that driving habits were not the right place to start with tackling emissions. People did not want their freedom to drive compromised when other options that were less personally costly, and, they felt, more effective, were available. One common response was to focus on the action of other countries, particularly the US. There was a sense that the US was not doing its bit, and that without its help, efforts to combat climate change were on a hiding to nothing: there was no point in people in Harlow giving up their cars while Americans continue to spew out fumes. A second popular response was to suggest focusing on technology and car manufacturers, forcing them to shift away from the combustion engine.

However, while the majority of people were not particularly concerned about climate change, it was very important to a few people, those who were strong and instinctive supporters of road pricing. Of the people who gave road pricing a thermometer score of 9 or 10, 41 per cent said that the fact that ‘it could reduce greenhouse gas emissions as people drive less’ was one of the top two hopes for road pricing, when presented a list of seven options. The figure is only 15 per cent for people who gave it a score of 1-8, though it does not drop significantly below that for any subgroup of the 1-8s. It seems that climate change can galvanise supporters, but it is peripheral for people minded to oppose road pricing.

In the medium to long term, it may be possible to drive climate change as an issue. Over time it may come to be a powerful argument in favour of reducing vehicle emissions and indirectly congestion. However, this may not come to pass. People were more positive towards an alternative approach that involved reducing emissions through new vehicle technologies. They also doubt that their personal driving habits are significant in influencing the global picture. At the moment, climate change is a strong argument for a small minority, but of little relevance to most.

## Efficiency and waste

During the focus groups, we looked at two contrasting messages on waste:

1. The scheme can be run very efficiently. In Germany and Sweden, £5 out of every £6 raised goes to better roads or public transport.
2. If this scheme comes in, a huge amount of money will be wasted on bureaucracy. In London half of the money raised is used just to run the scheme.

Message 2 was far more convincing and influential than message 1 because it went with the grain of existing opinions. People expected road pricing to be wasteful, and this message provided apparent evidence that it was. The fact that both Germany and Sweden are stereotyped as being ‘efficient’ countries further reduces the salience of that message. People do not expect British systems to be capable of delivering with similar levels of efficiency. Having said that, people were prepared to believe that statement 1 was true of Germany and Sweden, showing that they do not believe road pricing to be necessarily wasteful, just likely to be wasteful here. This suggests that it may be possible to shift that perception.

## Cost

We looked at a variety of messages on cost. They sought to show either that:

1. Costs would not be excessive: 'The average cost will be 5p a mile.'
2. Costs were necessary for success: 'Road pricing would give people a reason to think twice before getting in their cars. That's how it will cut congestion.'
3. Costs were necessary to improve public transport: 'Congestion is a problem and better roads and public transport are part of the solution. But they don't come for free. Road pricing is a sensible way of raising the money to make the improvements most people think we need.'

Essentially, the first message addresses price and seeks to lower cost expectations, while the second and third messages address value and try to reduce concern about cost at any given level of expectation.

None of three messages were particularly successful, but the third route appeared to have more potential.

Message 1 faced two difficulties. First, it ran head-long into the stealth tax narrative. Counter messages, such as 'road pricing will start off cheap but once the Government has us locked in, it will put the prices up' were extremely powerful in counteracting the argument. People did not believe it to be possible that government could decide to reduce overall costs. The second problem is that it is hard for people to understand the vague information about price structure that was presented. The figure of '5p a mile' is not an intuitive way of explaining cost. Converting it to an average annual cost of £600 (on the slightly implausible basis of people driving the average 12,000 miles a year, all at the average price), was slightly more helpful. However, this number is significantly higher than VED, so when VED is the only tax that road pricing replaces, road pricing appears to be a net cost for people who assume they do the average number of more miles a year or more. Perceptions are far more muddled if road pricing is presented as replacing fuel duty as people have very little conception of how much they pay in fuel duty each year; they just know that it is 'a lot'.

This does not mean that messages around price are unimportant, but it shows that general messages about 'overall' costs are unlikely to have much effect. This view was further supported in the workshops where discussions about whether the overall scheme was revenue raising or revenue neutral had little impact.

Message 2 was effective in convincing people that road pricing could reduce congestion, but at a cost in terms of support. People did believe that at some price level, they would have to acquiesce to government demands and leave their cars at home. However, this fed into concerns about government seeking to control their lives and was somewhat counter-productive.

Message 3 marked out the most promising territory, though the specific formulation of the message was not successful. By arguing that the money will be used to fund public transport improvements, it implied that public transport improvements would only come once the revenue was flowing, that is, after road pricing had been introduced. As discussed above, this is too late. However, people were extremely concerned that, once revenue was coming in, it be used to deliver benefits in the transport system.

## Effectiveness

A key concern was that road pricing simply would not deliver improvements in congestion. While people were not worried that this would, in itself, adversely affect them, they did think it undermined the whole point of road pricing and gave credence to stealth tax arguments. As discussed above, the most obvious argument around how road pricing will work (price acts as an incentive) seems to provoke concerns about cost that outweigh benefits in terms of understanding of effectiveness.

A more promising route is to focus messages on case studies of effective schemes. For example, people were willing to believe that congestion charging had worked in London, and other cities. Case studies can increase perceptions of effectiveness.

The problem with the case-study messages we tested was the choice of case study. They were all cities (London, Melbourne, Stockholm, Singapore), and moreover cities believed to be large and to have good public transport. This contrasted them with the areas most participants lived in. With the exception of London they were all in other countries, and this was seen as *prima facie* evidence that they were different and that lessons would not translate. The TIF scheme could help provide more salient case studies.

Messages that pointed out that a small difference in the number of journeys made by car could have a significant impact on congestion were tested in a couple of groups. This argument was counter-intuitive, but is worth exploring further.

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## Privacy

As discussed above, people's attitudes to privacy were relatively immune to variations in the design of road pricing. This pattern carried through into communications. However, messages referring to the German system, where it is illegal for even the police to use road pricing data, provoked a lively debate, with many people concerned that such a law, if implemented, would be over the top. The security benefits of road pricing, by and large outweighed the privacy costs, particularly where people used emotive language about the sorts of criminal that road pricing could help track down.

## Framing

The key finding from research into communications is not about individual messages, but about the overall framing of debates about road pricing. Frames provide 'a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them' (Gameson and Modigliani 1987: 143). They do not provide information, but instead a way of organising information and interpreting messages. There appear to be at least four competing frames:

- The congestion frame: Congestion is a growing problem and road pricing is a way of tackling it.
- The tax frame: The Government always wants more money, and road pricing is a way getting it.
- The green frame: The climate is changing dangerously and road pricing is a way of tackling it.
- The nanny state/privacy frame: The Government is encroaching on people's lives and road pricing is another example of this meddling.

The frame that dominates in people's minds affects the way they interpret information. For example, where the stealth tax frame is uppermost, people interpret messages about revenue neutrality as lies and messages about climate change as smoke-screens. The frame takes revenue-raising as a 'given' and interprets information accordingly.

Of the four frames, the only frame that reliably leads to positive assessments of road pricing when activated is the 'green' frame. The magnitude of the threat of climate change is significantly greater than the magnitude of threat from congestion, so if believed, it appears to increase openness to radical solutions even where they may impose personal costs.

However, as discussed above, the green frame is recessive or absent for most people. They either do not believe climate change is happening, or do not believe it matters much. Tackling these misperceptions – already a key aim for the Government – is likely to help make the case for road pricing.

Even where people do accept the reality and danger of climate change, the green frame does not guarantee support for road pricing as there is a widespread perception that British motorists can make little difference to the problem. This is the 'weak link' in the argument that road-pricing-specific communications may be able to address.

Raising the prominence of a climate change frame is a long-term effort that has to stretch a long way beyond road pricing. Moreover, there is no guarantee of success – though in general public opinion does change in a sensible way in response to major historical changes (Benjamin and Shapiro 1992).

At the moment, the frame that dominates understanding is the tax frame. This guides people's instinctive interpretations of road pricing even in the context of a discussion that focuses on congestion issues. This way of framing debate is extremely damaging to road pricing. Seeing road pricing as a tax immediately activates concerns about stealth taxation, waste and state encroachment. Within this frame claims for benefits from road pricing are fig-leaves, not facts. A key objective for road pricing communications is to reframe the debate away from this losing territory.

In the short and medium term, the most plausible alternative frame is around congestion. People do accept that congestion is a growing problem and that something dramatic and different needs to be done to fix it. As we have seen above, road pricing is generally not people's preferred solution, but at least this frame presents an opportunity for road pricing to be seen as a constructive step rather than a form of theft.

Within the congestion frame, the key issue is demonstrating that road pricing will work. As we have seen above, focusing on how the pricing mechanism will incentivise behaviour raises concern about costs. It shifts discussion back towards a tax frame. In contrast, using case studies of success appears to be a more

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fruitful strategy, provided it is coupled with an emphasis on the provision of alternatives. People were willing to believe that congestion charging had worked in London, but put that down to better provision of public transport. They had a similar response to case studies from Melbourne, Stockholm and Singapore. The TIF schemes may provide an opportunity here, as where successful, they will lead to case studies in places that seem more 'representative' than London.

The privacy/nanny state frame is less powerful and less widespread than the stealth tax frame, though when active it is equally damaging to road pricing. It can either be challenged through a security frame (road pricing will help catch criminals) or by reframing to the congestion or green frame. This latter strategy appears more effective as road pricing appears to be a somewhat excessive response if just motivated by security concerns. Any such benefits are better seen as fortunate side effects than a fundamental motivating force.

## In summary

- The impact of communications is very limited unless it is accompanied by a scheme design that meets people's concerns.
- Climate change messages galvanise support. However, they make little difference to most people because they do not understand the concept of climate change and do not believe that British vehicle emissions make much contribution.
- The fact that so much of the revenue raised in London goes on running the scheme provides a very strong argument that road pricing will be wasteful, despite counter-examples from other countries and justifications of the London experience.
- Messages that road pricing will not be costly are not believed, and messages that cost is key to effectiveness are counter-productive. Messages that the cost represents value for money appear most beneficial, though the waste issue is a key barrier.
- Messages about privacy seem to have little impact.
- A key objective for communications is to avoid the road pricing debate being framed as fundamentally about tax.

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## 8. Conclusion

'It's just another stealth tax.'

Focus group participant, Birmingham

'People won't change'

Workshop participant, Canterbury

Road pricing is clearly not a popular policy. Most people instinctively oppose it because they fear it will cost them money without delivering benefits. They resent efforts to reduce their car use, particularly because, for many regular journeys, they do not believe they have any option other than to go by car.

Not everyone reacts negatively to road pricing. People who use their cars less frequently, people who are happy with public transport, and, it seems, people who are concerned about climate change, tend to have fewer concerns about road pricing. Furthermore, most people want congestion addressed and are open to radical solutions to the problem.

### Key factors to minimising opposition

Three factors appear key to minimising opposition to road pricing. First, the scheme needs to be, and be seen to be, practical and effective. This means that people need to have, and believe they have, the option of not using their car. The public expectation is that this has to be delivered largely through improvements to public transport, but issues around flexibility of people's own timetables are also important, as is town planning. Alternatives to car use need to be seen to exist prior to the introduction of road pricing, not in the years after the revenue comes on stream. In addition, demonstrating effectiveness means demonstrating success in the UK before national introduction. A simple, comprehensible, charging structure is also important to demonstrating that the scheme is practical, as is the provision of pre-pay billing.

Second, the revenue needs to be used well, and be seen to be used well. This means that revenue should be guaranteed to be directed at a mixture of roads or public transport projects and not be absorbed into 'the general pot'. At the same time, running costs need to be kept to a minimum.

Third, the road pricing debate needs to be framed as a debate about congestion or, in time, climate change; not taxation or privacy. This means reinforcing people's desire for radical solutions and ensuring that the Government is perceived as genuinely looking for those solutions, not presenting a tax hiking fait accompli. Replacing at least one existing road tax is central in showing that road pricing is about congestion, not revenue-raising.

So, in conclusion, while road pricing is not instinctively a popular policy, the level of unacceptability could be mitigated through scheme design and the way in which the issue is framed.



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## Annex 1 - Overview of public engagement methodology

This annex discusses the methodology used in the research, running through each of the three stages. Prior to the first stage, a literature review was carried out to survey existing knowledge about attitudes to road pricing (Bird and Vigor 2006).

The discussion below outlines what was done at each stage. The further annexes contain the written stimulus used in phase 1 and 2, and the poll questionnaires.

### Research question

What mixture of scheme design elements, linkages with other policy areas, and communications results in the least unacceptable form of national road pricing?

### Stage 1: Deliberative workshops

Given the low awareness of road pricing and the conflicting messages in the media about what it is, and what it is for, people were unlikely to have well-formed views around its acceptability. Deliberative workshops provided an opportunity for people to consider complex and new ideas and go through the process of deciding whether road pricing is acceptable to them, and what sorts of scheme would be acceptable. They also allowed us to probe issues in considerable depth and fill in some of the information gaps identified in the literature review of knowledge about attitudes to road pricing.

We held three one-day deliberative workshops. Each was on a Saturday, and participants were paid £90 to attend.

#### *Geography*

As road pricing schemes are likely to have different impacts in rural and urban areas, workshops were conducted in three sorts of area:

- A large urban area: Newcastle upon Tyne
- A rural area: North East Somerset
- A small urban area: Canterbury

This selection of research sites also gives us good national coverage, including the North East, the South West and the South East. Newcastle and Bath and North East Somerset are also Transport Innovation Fund (TIF) areas.

#### *Fieldwork dates*

4 March 2006: Canterbury  
18 March 2006: Newcastle  
25 March 2006: Somerset

#### *Recruitment*

Each workshop was purposively recruited using market research recruiters. The participants were selected to be roughly representative of their local area in terms of:

- Gender
- Age
- Car usage
- Ethnicity
- Socio-economic group

We used 2001 census data to determine these proportions. However, no group was allowed to fall below two participants, and there was a minimum of two people in households without a car, two people in households with one car and two people in households with two or more cars. In addition, at least two people had to drive for work.

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## Methodology

All the workshops were run using the same methodology. The discussion guide is presented below:

### 10:00 Introduction

- I work for an independent research company and am here to find out what you think.
- This is part of a project we are doing around the country looking at transport issues and in particular one issue, which we'll spend most of today talking about.
- At the end of the day, what people have said will be written up and when we've finished doing all the research we'll write a report, which we will send to government, local council and anyone else who is interested. Your names won't appear in the report. Everything you say will be completely anonymous.
- We've got 12 people in the room from different backgrounds. We've tried to make it as representative of the population of X as possible. It's important you talk from your point of view. We're talking to lots of different people so for the rest of the day, you only need to worry about what you think.
- The most important thing is that everyone is honest and says what they think.
- No one here is an expert in any of these issues and every view is really important.
- People may well disagree with each other. If you disagree with what someone else says please speak up.
- I've had nothing to do with the stuff I'm going to talk to you about, so don't worry about me. If you think it's great, then I'm happy. If you think it's rubbish, I'm also happy. As long as you are honest about what you think and we have a good discussion.
- I do have a list of things I need to talk about during the day. It may be that I have to stop discussion about other things so I can get through the stuff I need to do. If I cut people off, I'm not being rude, I just need to get through stuff. Also, I need to make sure that I hear from everyone, so I might cut people off to make sure I can do that. Again, I'm not being rude. It's just my job. Finally, you are all receiving £90 which we'll hand out at the end of the day.
- Before we start, it would be good if everyone could introduce themselves: name, job, family, and the best thing about living round here.

### 10:20-11:00 Section 1: transport issues

- What are the key issues facing the transport system? That could be roads, railways, buses, airports, bicycles. Whatever you think of as transport. [Everyone to write down two issues. Can be just a word, definitely not more than a sentence for each.]
- [If not raised: some people have said that pollution is a big issue. What do you think about that? Especially probe carbon.]
- And focusing on the roads. What are the key issues facing the road system?
- [Facilitator compiles list of top 3-4 issues.] What can be done about each?

### 11.10-11.40 Introduction to road pricing

- We've talked about some of the issues with the roads. A possible solution has been suggested. All three political parties have said they think it should happen but no one is quite sure how to do it. Within government and elsewhere there is a discussion about what to do, and today is about informing that discussion and trying to make sure that what is decided suits people.
- The solution they have put forward is called 'road pricing' or 'road user charging'. Has anyone heard of it? [As far as possible just get knowledge, not comment.]
- [Hand out factsheet and ask people to complete.] Discuss findings.
- Who gave it a score below 50? Who gave it a score about 50? Why?
- [Assert that rest of the day is just about this subject. This is an opportunity to make the scheme suit you.]

#### 11.40-12:45 Purposes for the system

- We will talk about how this will happen this afternoon, but I want to talk a bit about what the aims of the system should be. When they are designing the system, what should they aim for?
- Hand out aims factsheets covering congestion, carbon, fairness and privacy. Each has arguments for and against prioritising this aim.
- Prompt discussion of each.
- Prompt hierarchy of aims. [Have five baskets (covered, with a hole in the top) and give everyone 10 chips to spend. Basket with most chips will be priority 1, basket with second most will be priority 2, and so on. Instruction not to worry about what everyone else does.]
- Prompt discussion of results.
- If another aim has arisen in discussion, give it a basket.

#### 13:30-15:00 System building blocks

- We've talked about whether road pricing is a good idea and about what we want out of it. Now I want to talk about how it might happen. As you can imagine, there are lots and lots of different ways, but we've tried to narrow it down to a few of the key choices. For each, I want to know whether you think the choice matters much and which option you prefer.
- [Factsheet for each ]
  - Revenue just spent on specific purposes versus spent in general pot
  - Road pricing increases the overall amount people pay to use the roads versus road pricing just shifts charges so that no money is raised
  - Government runs scheme versus independent organisation runs scheme
  - Records should be completely private versus anyone with a good reason should be able to look at records
  - Charging on congested roads only versus charging on all roads
  - Prepared to pay more for less congestion and pollution versus not prepared to pay more even if it works
- Draw discussion together. Hand out form with all the options and get people to vote for one or the other.

#### 15:15-16:00 Feedback on system

- The aims were prioritised X.
- The most popular system is Y.
- Expert from ippr explains any contradictions and answers technical questions.

#### 16:00-17:00 Communications

- We've discussed road pricing. Understand what people think about it. Now we want to think about how you might talk about it to other people.
- Divide into four groups:
  - Three groups. I want you to think about how you try and persuade people that road pricing is a good idea. Think about everything we've heard today and, most importantly, what you think the best things are. Try to say a bit about how it would work.
  - One group. I want you to think about how you try to persuade people to oppose road pricing. Think about everything we've heard today and, most importantly, what you think the worst things are.
- 20 minutes. Need to pick a spokesperson to report back to the group. No more than 5 minutes each.

16:20-16:40 Each reports back. Anti group go second.

16:40-17:00 What were the strongest arguments?

17:00-17:05 Repeat initial written exercise

17:05 Thanks, pay and leave

The stimulus material used is available in Annex 2.

The workshops were moderated by a single moderator. The majority of sessions were both simultaneously transcribed and recorded to an audio file. The workshop in Newcastle was also recorded by the BBC.

## Stage 2: the opinion poll

The opinion poll was developed in response to the findings in the workshops. The focus was on assessing the scale of opposition and profiling opposers in terms of demographics, transport use and transport attitudes. We also looked at different elements of scheme design

### *The dates of fieldwork*

Fieldwork began at 13:00 on 19 May 2006 and concluded at 10:00 on 26 May 2006. Surveys completed after the fieldwork was closed were not included for analysis.

### *The method of data collection*

Data was collected through an online survey. This used a non-probability sampling approach, drawing participants from a panel of 120,000 people who had indicated their willingness to take part in online surveys in return for payment.

### *The universe effectively represented*

The universe represented was the UK population aged 17 and over, defined by four categories: gender, age, standard occupational classification and UK region of residence. Data relating to the make-up of the UK population was sourced from the Office of National Statistics. A detailed breakdown of the make-up of each of the four categories can be found in the detailed poll methodology, available online at [www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports](http://www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports).

### *The achieved sample size and geographical coverage*

The achieved sample size, defined by the Market Research Society (MRS) as the total number of interviews/surveys actually reported on, across each of the four survey versions, is set out in Table A1.1 out below.

<b>Survey version</b>	<b>Total number of completes</b>
Version A	1150
Version B	100
Version C	146
Version D	144

The poll covered all UK Government Regions. Tables A1.2 to A1.5 set out the number of completed surveys within each region.

**Table A1.2 Survey version A**

Region	Total number of completes
North East	33
North West	120
Yorkshire and the Humber	119
East Midlands	94
West Midlands	96
East of England	76
London	121
South East	221
South West	115
Wales	49
Scotland	82
Northern Ireland	24

**Table A1.3 Survey version B**

Region	Total number of completes
London and the South	40
Midlands and Wales	25
North, Scotland and Northern Ireland	35

**Table A1.4 Survey version C**

Region	Total number of completes
London and the South	59
Midlands and Wales	38
North, Scotland and Northern Ireland	49

**Table A1.5 Survey version D**

Region	Total number of completes
London and the South	60
Midlands and Wales	33
North, Scotland and Northern Ireland	51

### The sampling method and response rate achieved

A sample of contacts was drawn from an online panel of more than 120,000 UK residents. The sample was representative of the UK population (aged over 17) by: age, gender, occupation and region. efeedback used stand alone quotas when selecting contacts to survey. (Note: a standalone quota aims to ache the required number of completes within a single category – in other words, 49 per cent completes from men and 51 per cent from women, and 12.4 per cent from the London area and 13.5 per cent from the South East. More complex projects require interlocking quotas, where completes within a category are related to each other – for example, 8 per cent of completes from men living in London.)

All eligible contacts were identified within the panel and then individual contacts were randomly selected to receive an invitation to participate.

The number of invitations mailed out was based on anticipated participation rates. Samples were selected with the objective of yielding 1000 completes for survey version A and 100 completes for versions B, C and D.

Table A1.6 sets out the total number of invitations that were mailed out for each survey version, the number of responses this yielded and the response rate this represents.

Survey version	Total no. of invitations	Total no. of completes	Response rate
Version A	4221	1150	27.2%
Version B	400	100	25%
Version C	400	146	36.5%
Version D	400	144	36%

## The questionnaire

Questionnaire scripts for each of the four survey versions are presented in Annex 3.

To ensure that participants understood road pricing, a simple comprehension test was used. People were asked whether they would expect to pay more on a country road at night or a city street during rush hour. Less than 1 per cent of participants got this question wrong.

## Weighting procedures

Where the overall number of completes produced too few or too many completes within a given category, efeedback weighted the results back against the target proportions that make the results UK representative.

efeedback calculates the appropriate weight to use for reporting the results for survey version A by dividing the target number of completes (calculated against the relevant proportion of the UK population) by the achieved number of completes.

Table A1.7 shows the breakdown of respondents to survey version A, broken down by gender. The table shows that 579 respondents were male, representing 50.3 per cent of all survey respondents. However, male respondents should have only accounted for 49 per cent of the total number of respondents, which would have been 564. In this example 564 would be divided by 579, providing a weight of 0.97.

Gender	No. of completes	Survey %	Target %	Target no. of completes	Weight
Male	579	50.3	49	564	0.97
Female	571	49.7	51	587	1.03

Weightings have been applied to results of survey version A, reported by: gender, age, occupation and region. Results for versions B, C and D have not been weighted as they did not require breakdowns across respondent categories. All weighting calculations can be found in the detailed poll methodology in Annex 3.

## The research organisation conducting the survey

efeedback Research Ltd (efeedback) conducted the ippr Road Pricing survey. All questions concerning the involvement of efeedback Research in this project should be directed to Chris Watt, Research Director, on 01761 408165.

## Focus groups

Six focus groups were held, two in Sale, Greater Manchester, two in Hall Green, Birmingham, and two in Harlow, Essex. Based on the segmentation presented in this report, the groups were held with people who

used their cars every day or nearly every day. Group 1 in each location was with people who were very or quite satisfied with local public transport. Group 2 was with people who were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. The groups contained an even gender balance, and a roughly even split between socio-economic groups B, C1 and C2.

An abridged discussion guide is below and the stimulus material is available in Annex 4.

	<b>Time</b>	<b>Total time</b>
Introduction	5	5
Names, occupation, family, newspaper	5	10
Transport issues, focus on road. Do we need dramatic change, gentle change or no change?	10	20
What can be done about congestion?	5	25
Introduction to road pricing: written exercise	5	30
First things that came to mind and Will it work? and Who said likely to oppose?	10	40
Aims for road pricing. What problems should road pricing address?	8	48
Tax. Does it make a difference which tax it replaces? What if it didn't replace an existing tax?	5	53
Revenue use: should revenue be spent just on transport? Should more be spent on roads, more on public transport or should there be an even split?	5	58
Test messages and rank them 20 mins on pro messages 5 mins on anti-messages	27	85
Advice to Secretary of State on a postcard	3	90



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## Annex 2: Handouts and stimulus used in the deliberative workshops

### A brief guide to road user charging

When you use electricity, you pay for the amount you use.

When you use the phone, you pay for the number of minutes you use.

When you use a train, you pay for the distance you travel.

For all these services you pay more at peak times than you do at off-peak.

The idea behind road user charging is that the same would apply to roads.

At the moment, everyone pays the same road tax no matter whether they are driving for eight hours a day in the centre of a busy town or for an hour a week on quiet country roads. Petrol tax is the same per gallon whether you are driving on quiet country roads or busy city streets.

Road user charging would change that. Instead of paying a single rate, all round the country people would pay more on busy roads and less on quiet roads.

There are lots of different ways in which this could happen. Over the rest of today we will discuss different ways and see what people think. But first, in the boxes below, please write down your initial reactions.

On a scale of 1-100 where:

0 means I am extremely cold/unfavourable to this idea

50 means I am not particularly warm or cold to this idea

100 means I am extremely warm/favourable to this idea

What number would you say best sums up your view?

You can use any number between 0 and 100.

What do you think are the good things about this idea?

What do you think are the bad things about this idea?

This session is about deciding what the aims for road user charging should be.

We will talk about five different possible objectives, but if any others come up as important, we can talk about those.

The five we will definitely talk about are:

1. reducing congestion
2. reducing greenhouse gasses
3. improving public transport
4. fairness
5. reducing local air pollution

#### *Aim 1: Reduce congestion*

Congestion is a problem. It means that journeys take longer than they need to. It can make it hard to predict what time you will arrive – you never know when you might hit a traffic jam.

Road pricing should change the way people drive so there is less congestion.

To do this it should encourage some people not to use their cars for particular journeys. For example, maybe some people could walk to the local shop rather than drive, or make more long-distance journeys by train.

It should also encourage some people to make their journeys when there is less traffic. For example, if it was cheaper to drive at night rather than in the day, maybe there would be fewer lorries on the roads in rush hour.

*Aim 2: Reduce climate change*

The more we drive, the more we produce carbon dioxide. And carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas which is making the world warm up. If it carries on like this we will have more flooding and more droughts. We need to stop that happening.

Road pricing should try and reduce the greenhouse gas we produce.

To do this, people have to drive less. It won't be good enough to just get people to drive at other times of the day. This means that the cost of driving will need to go up. That's the only way to be sure that people will drive less.

*Aim 3: Improve public transport*

One of the reasons people use cars so much is that public transport is not good enough.

The money from road pricing should be used to improve public transport, particularly buses and trains.

Increasing the amount spent on public transport means that the overall amount of money raised has to go up.

It should also encourage some people to make their journeys when there is less traffic. For example, if it was cheaper to drive at night rather than in the day, maybe there would be fewer lorries on the roads in rush hour.

*Aim 4: Fairness*

Any scheme needs to be fair. That means it should take into account how much people need to drive and how much they can afford to pay.

People who need to drive more, for example people in the countryside or disabled people, should pay less than people who don't need to drive so much. People in places where there is good public transport should pay more to drive than people elsewhere.

Also, richer people tend to have bigger cars – they should pay more than people in smaller cars.

*Aim 5: Air pollution*

Where there is a lot of congestion, the air quality is often really bad. That sort of pollution is bad for everyone, particularly older people, children and people with asthma.

The scheme should improve air quality.

This means the price should change depending on how busy the roads are to try and stop air pollution building up.

*Below are a series of choices. Tick the one that you prefer*

Road charging should raise more money than road taxes do now.	
Road charging should raise the same amount of money as road taxes do now.	
Road charging should raise less money than road taxes do now.	

The prices should be really simple. There should be a peak rate and an off-peak rate and that's it.	
The prices should vary depending on important things. For example, the rate for disabled people or poorer people should be lower.	
All the money should be spent on improving public transport.	
The money should be spent wherever it will help most. For example, it could go to cut taxes or improve schools or the NHS.	
Privacy should be really important. The information should just be used to work out how much people owe and nothing else.	
Government should make the best use of the information. For example, the police could use it to find criminals.	
We should be able to use the information however we want. For example, it could be used to make my insurance premiums match how much I drive, or to work with a Sat Nav in my car.	
I agree with both of the last two statements.	

## Opinions to road pricing at the end of the workshop

On a scale of 0-100 where:

0 means I am extremely cold/unfavourable to plans to introduce road pricing

50 means I am not particularly warm or cold

100 means I am extremely warm/favourable to plans to introduce road pricing

What number would you say best sums up your view? You can use any number between 0 and 100:

If your score is 50 or below, answer this question. Otherwise skip to the next question.

Even though you are not warm to the idea of road pricing, how likely is it that you could be convinced that national road pricing should be introduced:

- A very good chance
- A fair chance
- A small chance
- Just a very slight chance
- No chance at all

If your score was 50 or above, answer this question. Otherwise, ignore it and skip to the next question.

Even though you are warm to the idea of road pricing, how likely is it that you could be convinced that national road pricing should not be introduced:

- A very good chance
- A fair chance
- A small chance
- Just a very slight chance
- No chance at all

If you were to give one piece of advice to people designing this system, what would it be?

# Handouts

While some individual drivers may pay less than they do now and some pay more; the overall amount paid by drivers **should go up**.

While some individual drivers may pay less than they do now and some pay more; the overall amount paid by drivers **should not go up**.

Circle the point on the line that reflects your view in this discussion

Completely agree Neutral Completely agree

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How important is this issue **for you**?

(tick the relevant box)

Not important at all  Not very important  Moderately important  Very important  Extremely important

All the money raised should be set aside for a **specific purpose**.

The money should go into the government's general pot for use on **different purposes**.

Circle the point on the line that reflects **your view** in this discussion

Completely agree Neutral Completely agree

---

How important is this issue **for you**?

(tick the relevant box)

Not important at all  Not very important  Moderately important  Very important  Extremely important

**No one** should be able to look at the payment records. That includes government and private companies.
 

**Anyone** with a good reason to look at the records should be able to. That includes government and private companies.

Circle the point on the line that reflects **your view** in this discussion

Completely agree      Neutral      Completely agree

---

How important is this issue **for you**?  
(tick the relevant box)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not important at all	Not very important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important

Charging should only be introduced in places **where congestion is really bad**.
 

 There should be a charge on **all roads**, though it will be more on busy roads and less on quiet ones.

Circle the point on the line that reflects **your view** in this discussion

Completely agree      Neutral      Completely agree

---

How important is this issue **for you**?  
(tick the relevant box)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not important at all	Not very important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important



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## Annex 3: Detailed poll methodology and questionnaires

Owing to its length, annex 3 has not been included here. It is available to download from [www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports](http://www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports)

## Annex 4: Stimulus used in focus groups

### Description of road pricing

Road pricing would mean changing the way we all pay to use our roads.

**Road taxes would be scrapped and instead you would be charged per mile you drive.**

The charge per mile would be higher at **peak** times than at **off-peak** times. For example, it would cost more to drive during rush hour and less at night. It would also be higher in busy places like city centres than quiet places like country roads or many residential streets. You could avoid or reduce the cost in lots of ways, for example by using public transport or driving at a quieter time of day.

These changes would give people a reason to think twice before getting in their car. Some people argue that this will reduce congestion. Others disagree.

What is the first thing that comes into your mind when you hear this idea?

### Messages tested

Congestion is a growing problem for the country. We can all see more cars on the roads. We need to do something dramatic to solve the problem.

The point of road pricing is to **cut congestion**.

The point of road pricing is to **improve public transport**.

The point of road pricing is to **protect the environment**.

The scheme can be run very efficiently. In Germany and Sweden, £5 out of every £6 raised goes to better roads or public transport.

Road pricing is proved to reduce congestion. In London congestion has fallen by 30% since it was introduced. It has also worked in Melbourne and Singapore amongst other places.

Road pricing allows people to control how much they pay, by choosing when they drive and whether they use busier or quieter roads.

Congestion is a problem and better roads and public transport are part of the solution. But they don't come for free. Road pricing is a sensible way of raising the money to make the improvements most people think we need.

Road pricing will only tackle congestion if there is a decent public transport system for people to use. Public transport will be improved before road pricing comes in.

At the moment road tax and petrol tax are complicated and unfair. Road pricing would change that. You would pay to use the roads in proportion to the amount you use them.

There will be fewer cars on the road and more money spent on public transport, and so it will be easier to get around.

Road pricing will help with climate change and global warming. Fewer cars on the road means fewer greenhouse gases.

Road pricing would give people a reason to think twice before getting in their cars. That's how it will cut congestion.

The average person does 105 miles a week in a car. If you do less than that, you're likely to be better off

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with road pricing.

Britain is a small island. There isn't room for many more roads. So, we need to reduce the amount people use their cars or we'll end up gridlocked.

The price would start off low, but once the government have got us locked in they will put the prices up.

If this scheme comes in, a huge amount of money will be wasted on bureaucracy. In London half of the money raised is used just to run the scheme.

This is just an excuse to bring in another stealth tax. The motorist pays enough already.

Road pricing would be a massive invasion of privacy. The only way they can charge you per mile you drive is if the government knows about every journey you make.