

## Public attitudes to congestion and road pricing

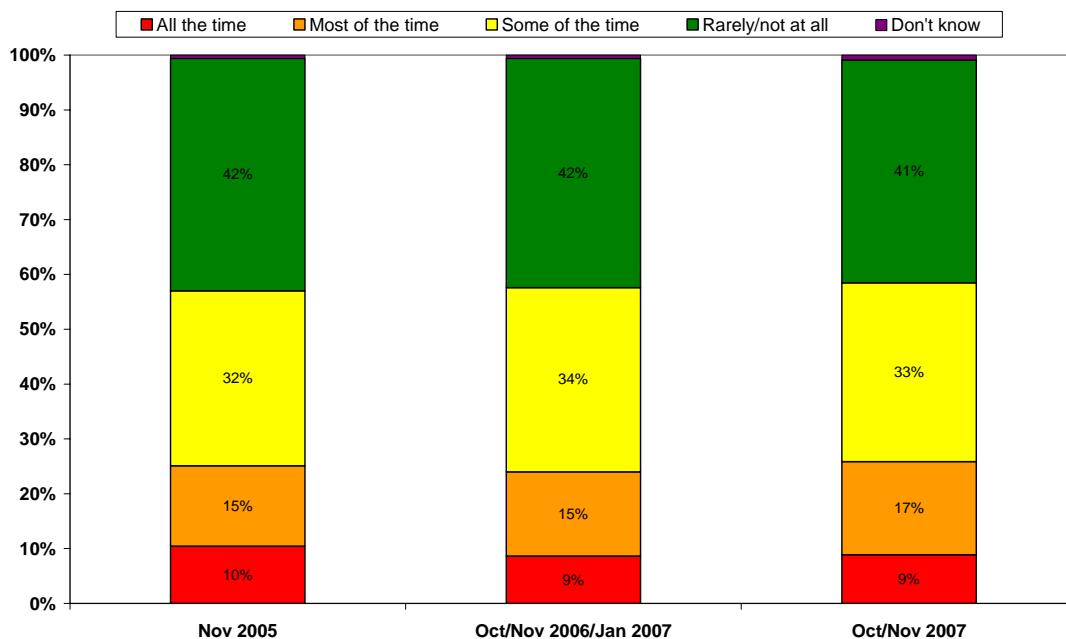
Public attitudes towards congestion and road pricing were collected in the October and November 2007 NS Omnibus Surveys. The same questions were first asked in November 2005 and then again in October and November 2006 and January 2007. The key findings are as follows.

### Experiences of and attitudes towards road congestion

Overall, experiences of and attitudes towards congestion have remained mostly stable between the 2005, 2006/07 and 2007 surveys. There have however been some small changes in the perception of how congestion levels have changed in recent years and are likely to change in the future.

- In all three surveys, around a quarter of adults said that they experienced congestion on their most frequent journey most or all of the time (25 per cent in 2005, 24 per cent in 2006/07 and 26 per cent in 2007).

**Figure 1 Congestion a problem on most frequent journey.**

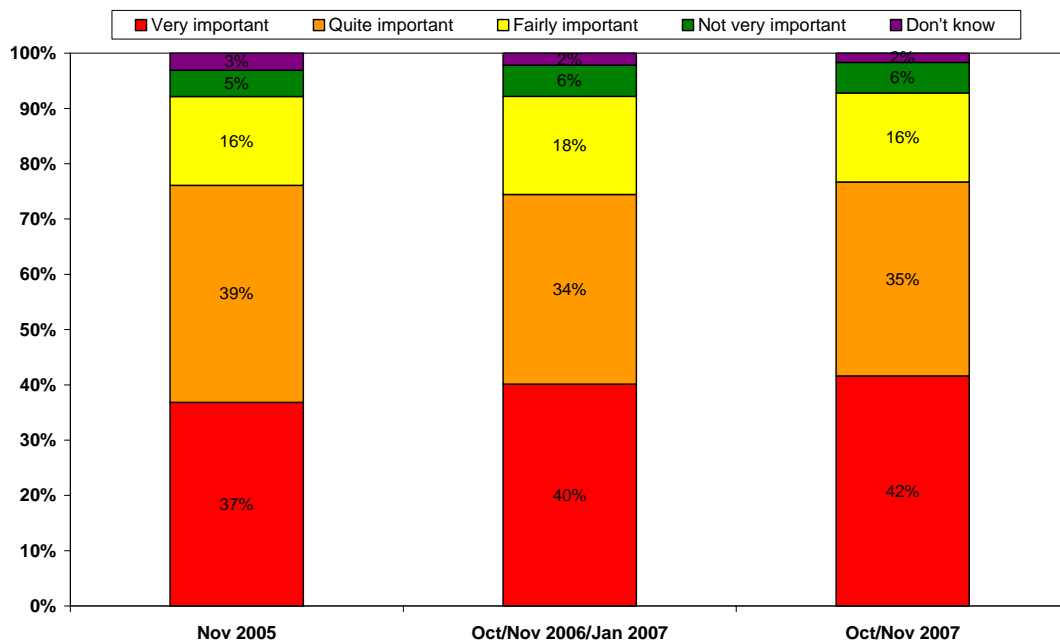


Source: November 2005, October/November 2006/January 2007 and October/November 2007 NS Omnibus Survey. Base numbers: 1070, 3279 and 2127.

- Similarly, across all three surveys, 23 per cent of adults said that congestion was a problem most or all of the time on their general road journeys (other than their most frequent journey).
- In 2007 the large majority of adults (87 per cent) believed congestion to be a very serious or serious problem in this country. This percentage was similar in both 2006/07 (85 per cent) and 2005 (87 per cent).

- Drivers were more likely than non-drivers to be concerned about the level of congestion that affects both them personally and the country as a whole. In 2007, 28 per cent of drivers experienced congestion on their most frequent journey all or most of the time compared with 22 per cent of non-drivers. Ninety per cent of drivers consider congestion to be serious or very serious problem in this country, compared with 81 per cent of non-drivers.
- Thirty nine per cent of adults said they thought that there is a lot more congestion now than there was two years ago. This is a fall from 43 per cent in 2006/07 when the question was first asked. In both surveys, only 1 per cent of respondents said that they thought there was less congestion now than two years ago.
- Similarly, 38 per cent of adults believed that there will be a lot more congestion in two years time. This is a fall from 41 per cent in the 2006/07 survey.
- Around three-quarters (77 per cent) of adults believed it to be very or quite important for the government to tackle congestion in relation to its other responsibilities. This percentage has remained stable over the three surveys. Drivers are no more likely to believe that congestion is an important issue for the government to tackle than non-drivers.

**Figure 2** How important is it for the government to tackle road congestion in relation to its other responsibilities?



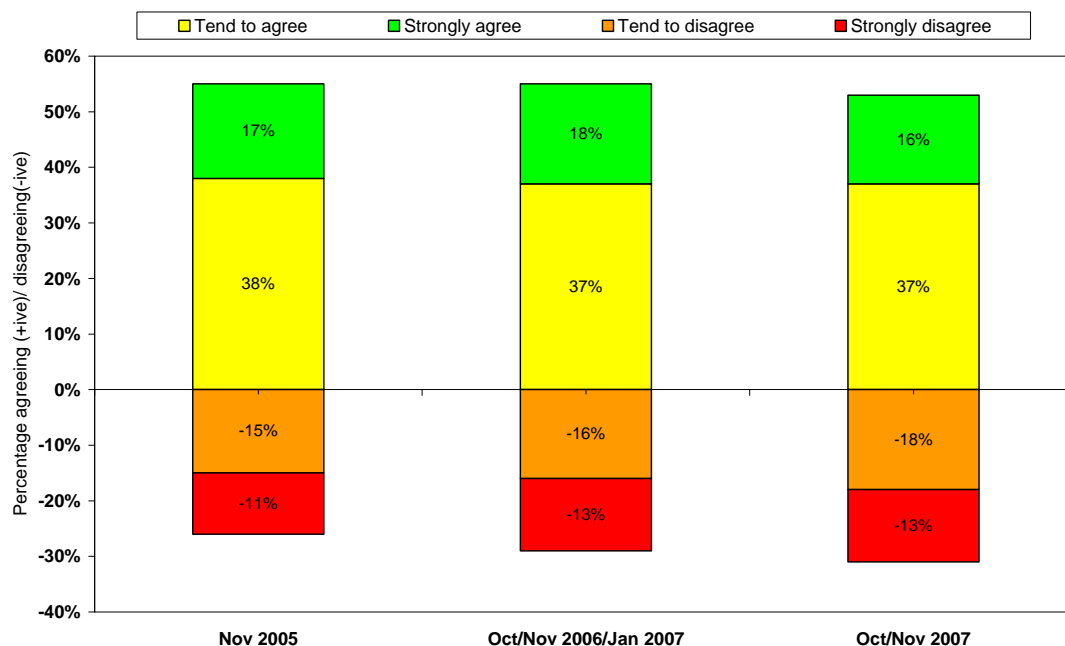
Source: November 2005, October/November 2006/January 2007 and October/November 2007 NS Omnibus Survey. Base numbers: 1137, 3525 and 2279.

## Levels of support for road pricing

Attitudes towards road pricing have remained mostly stable between the 2005, 2006/07 and 2007 surveys. There have however been some small changes in respondent's agreement to certain aspects of road pricing. In response to the questions in this section, respondents had the opportunity to answer that they *neither agreed nor disagreed* or *did not know* how to answer the question. Therefore additions of *agree* and *disagree* do not total 100 per cent.

- In 2007 53 per cent of adults agreed that *'the current system of paying for road use should be changed so that the amount people pay relates more closely to how often, when and where they use the roads'*; 31 per cent disagreed, an increase from 26 per cent in 2005 and 29 per cent in 2006/07. The level of agreement was the same for both drivers and non-drivers. However drivers were more likely to disagree (35 per cent compared with 25 per cent of non-drivers) and non-drivers were more likely to have no opinion.

**Figure 3** Levels of agreement/disagreement towards changing the system for paying for road use so it relates more closely to how often, when and where people use roads.



Source: November 2005, October/November 2006/January 2007 and October/November 2007 NS Omnibus Survey. Base numbers: 1137, 3525 and 2279.

- Twenty five per cent of adults agreed that *'People who drive on busy roads should pay more to use the roads than people who drive on quiet roads'*; 58 per cent disagreed.
- Twenty three per cent of adults agreed that *'People who drive at the busiest time should pay more to use the roads than people who drive at quiet times'*; 60 per cent disagreed.

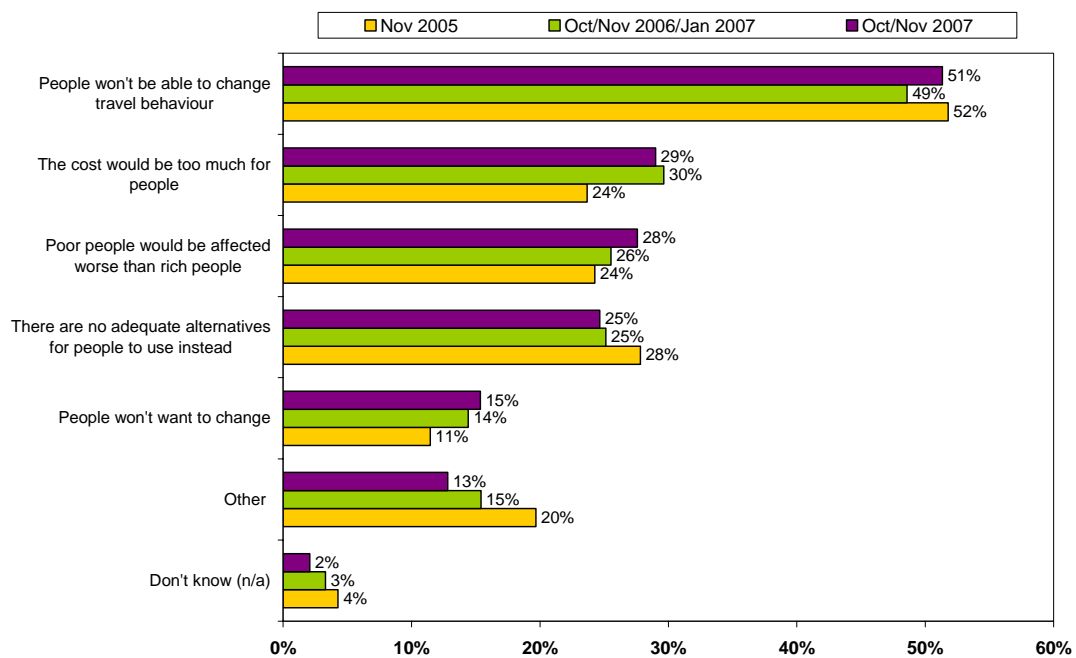
- Some 69 per cent of adults agreed that *'People who drive cars that do less damage to the environment (e.g., hydrogen/battery/fuel cell/electric cars) should pay less tax than other drivers'*; 19 per cent disagreed. This has changed from 2005 when 63 per cent agreed and 22 per cent disagreed.
- Asked how money raised through road pricing should be spent, 48 per cent of adults thought it should be spent only on roads and transport and 20 per cent thought it should be spent on a range of public services. These are similar to the 2006 results (49 per cent and 22 per cent).

### Concerns about road pricing

Key concerns about road pricing relate to the perceived unfairness and concerns about the administration of such a system.

- In the 2007 survey, 29 per cent of adults said that road pricing would be a fair way of charging for road use. This is less than the 32 per cent reported in the previous two surveys. However, the percentage of adults who said that they would need to know more about it before they could decide increased from 9 per cent in the previous two surveys to 13 per cent in 2007.
- Fifty two per cent of adults believe that road pricing would be unfair. Drivers were far more likely to consider a road pricing system unfair (58 per cent) compared with non-drivers (39 per cent).
- The main reason given as to why road pricing would be considered unfair was that people *won't be able to change their travel behaviour*.

**Figure 4** Reasons why road pricing is not considered fair



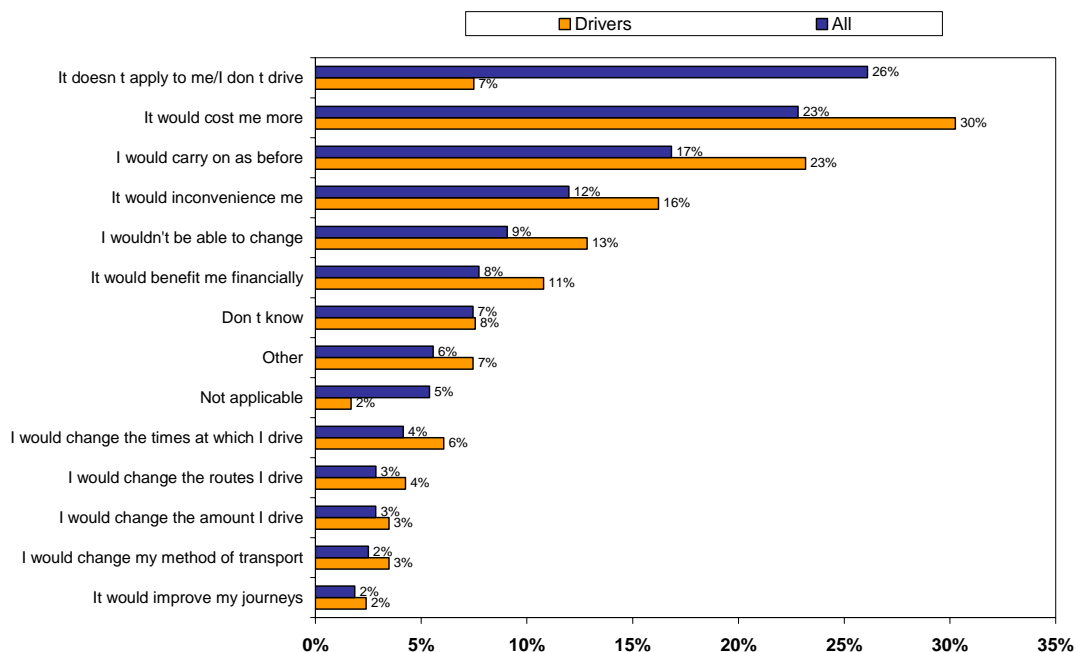
Source: November 2005, October/November 2006/January 2007 and October/November 2007 NS Omnibus Survey. Base numbers: 569, 1764 and 1155.

- Thirty nine per cent of adults agreed that an itemised bill would reassure them of the accuracy of a road pricing system, 37 per cent disagreed.
- Views on the holding of data appear to be reasonably balanced and have changed little over the three surveys. In 2007, 45 per cent of adults agreed with the holding of data *'as long as there were laws preventing the data being used for any other purpose or disclosed to anyone else'*; 39 per cent disagreed.

### Effectiveness of road pricing

- In 2007, 30 per cent of adults believed that road pricing would be effective in reducing congestion and 52 per cent thought it would be ineffective. In 2006/07 these percentages were 33 and 49 per cent respectively. Key reasons given for the perceived ineffectiveness were the inability and unwillingness of people to change their behaviour.
- Asked how road pricing would affect them personally, 13 per cent of drivers said that they would change their travel behaviour in some way. Thirty per cent of drivers believed that road pricing would end up costing them more; where as 11 per cent believed it would benefit them financially.
- Twenty six per cent of adults said that road pricing would not apply to them personally, including 7 per cent of drivers.

**Figure 5 Impact of road pricing on individuals**



Source: October/November 2007 NS Omnibus Survey. Base numbers: 2277 all, 1529 drivers.

Data tables covering the responses of all adults across three surveys are presented in Annex A. Annex B provides a breakdown of the results from the October/November 2007 survey for drivers and non-drivers. Annex C shows the socio demographic profile of the respondents.