

2025 WTA Community Perception Survey

March 2026



Agenda



- WTA Community Perception Survey Project Overview
- Sampling Plan and Recruitment
- Weighting
- Summary of Data and Results
 - Demographics
 - Travel Profiles
 - Satisfaction
 - Early transit-related results from the WCOG HTS



Project Overview



Goal: Evaluate and track public attitudes toward WTA and its services.

- The 2025 survey creates a baseline for future tracking efforts
- The methodology collected statistically valid data from both urban and rural residents within WTA's Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA).
- Recruitment leveraged Address-Based Sampling (ABS) methodology and an online survey instrument.



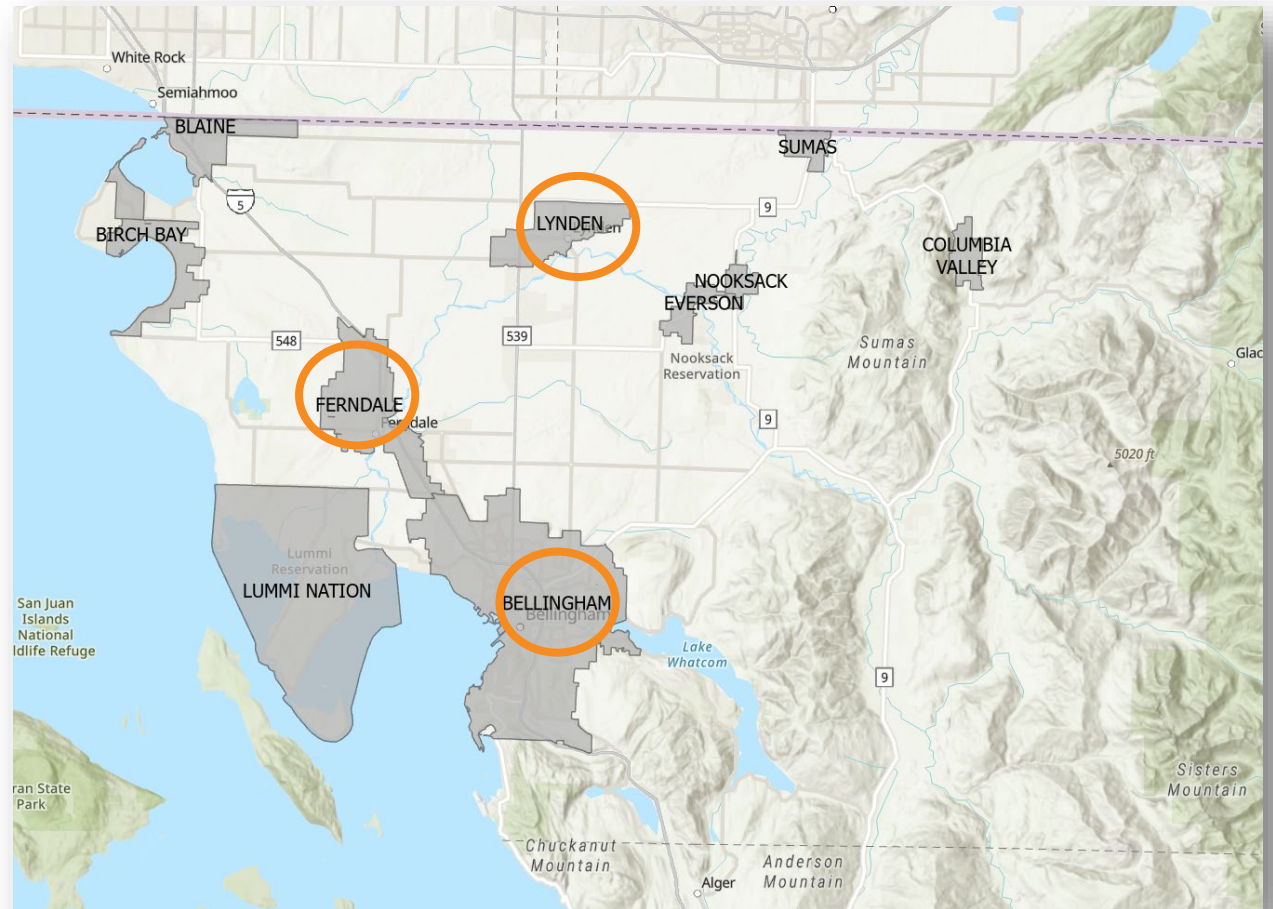
Sampling Plan and Recruitment

Sampling Plan Overview



- Bellingham
- Ferndale & Lynden
- Rural/Remainder of County

Rural/Remainder of County consists of all areas outside of Bellingham, Ferndale, or Lynden (not just highlighted areas).



Sampling and Recruitment Summary



Residential Survey Sampling Frames:

Recruitment Method	ABS Only - OVERALL	Bellingham	Ferndale & Lynden	Remainder of County
Number of Unique Addresses	53,000	26,500	7,950	18,550
Number of Postcards Sent (2 postcards per address)	106,000	53,000	15,900	37,100
Targeted Completes	800	400	120	280
Expected Response Rate	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%	1.5%
Margin of Error	±3 ppt	±5 ppt	± 9 ppt	±6 ppt
Actual Completes	1,753	1,089	205	459
Actual Response Rate	3.3%	4.1%	2.6%	2.5%



Weighting

Weighting Categories

RSG used the following ACS variables in the weighting process:

ACS Source	ACS Vintage	Weighting Variable	ACS Variable Name (from ACS metadata)
5-year estimates	2023	Household income	Household Income in the Past 12 Months (in 2019 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)
		Household vehicles	Tenure by Vehicles Available
		Age	Sex by Age
		American Indian or Alaska Native	American Indian and Alaska Native Alone or in Combination with One or More Other Races
		Hispanic or Latino	Hispanic or Latino Origin by Race
		Asian	Asian Alone or in Combination with One or More Other Races



Summary of Results: Demographics

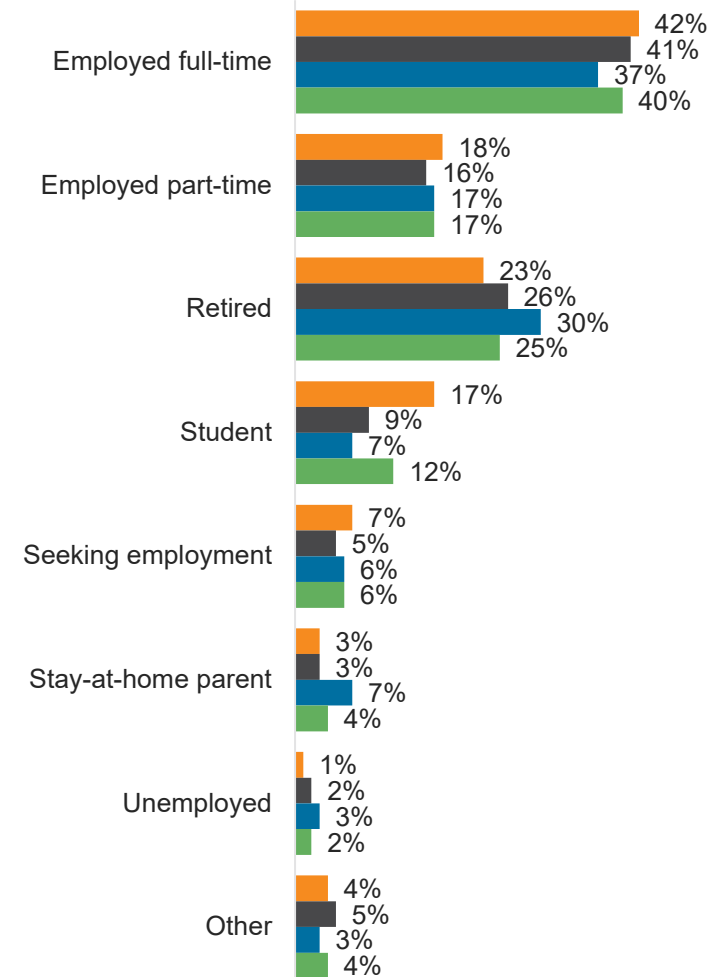
Summary of Data: Demographics – Employment Status

The plurality of residents across all three geographic divisions were employed full-time, with retired residents making up the second-largest segment of respondents.

Rural residents were the most likely to be retired (30%) and had the greatest share of stay-at-home parents (7%).

Bellingham residents were by far the most likely to be students (17%).

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES YOUR EMPLOYMENT STATUS?



■ Bellingham ■ Ferndale & Lynden ■ Rural ■ Total
Overall, n = 1,753; Bellingham, n = 1,089; Ferndale & Lynden, n = 205; Rural, n = 459

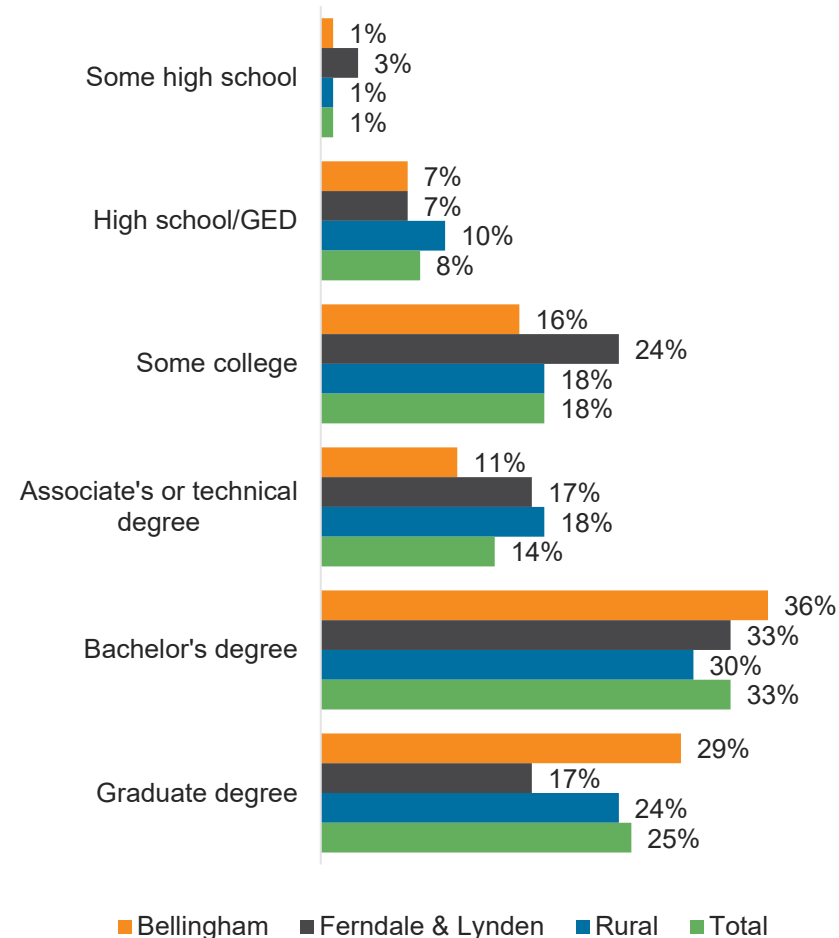
Summary of Data: Demographics – Educational Attainment

More than half of respondents reported having a bachelor's degree (59%) or further education, with a quarter (25%) of all respondents holding an advanced degree.

Bellingham residents tended to have higher levels of education attainment than residents of other areas.

Ferndale & Lynden residents were the least likely to have attained an advanced degree.

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION YOU HAVE ACHIEVED?



Overall, n = 1,753; Bellingham, n = 1,089; Ferndale & Lynden, n = 205; Rural, n = 459

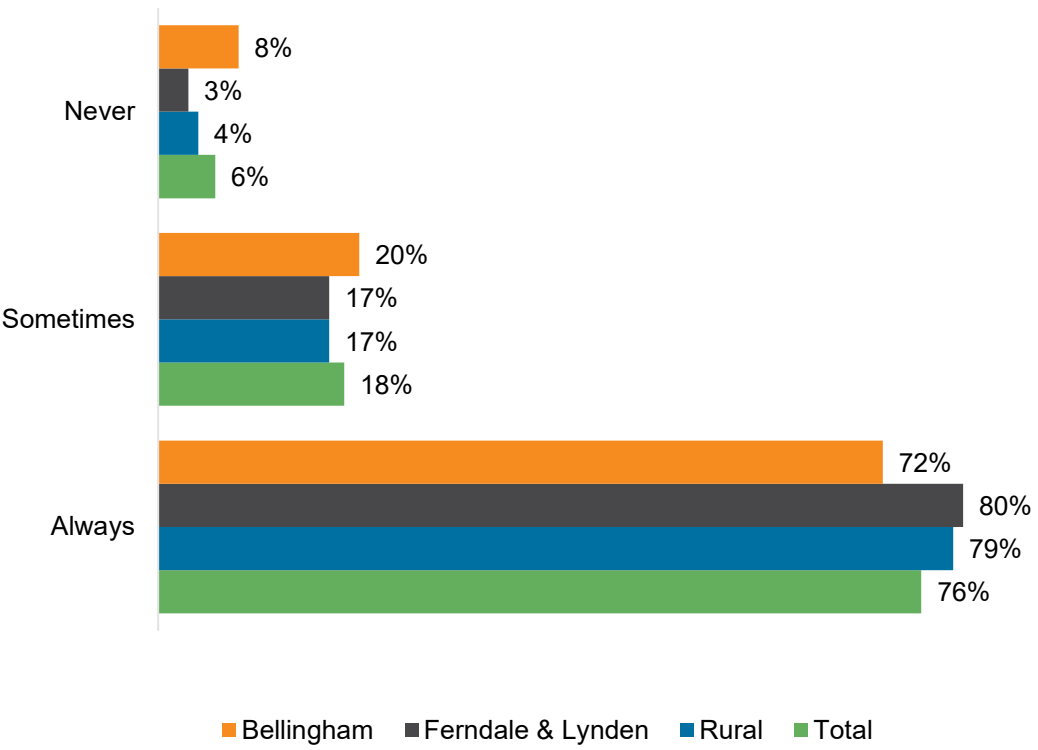
Summary of Data: Demographics – Car Access

Most respondents (76%) always have access to a car

Bellingham residents were the most likely to never have access to a car (8%)



HOW OFTEN DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO A CAR FOR PERSONAL TRANSPORTATION?



Overall, n = 1,753; Bellingham, n = 1,089; Ferndale & Lynden, n = 205; Rural, n = 459



Summary of Results: Travel Profiles

Summary of Data: Travel Profiles – Pressing Issues

WHAT DO YOU FEEL ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FACING YOUR COMMUNITY?
(PLEASE PICK YOUR TOP TWO)

Issue	Ferndale			Total
	Bellingham	& Lynden	Rural	
Making housing more affordable	71%	58%	58%	65%
Protecting air quality and the environment	32%	19%	31%	29%
Improving public transportation	25%	20%	21%	23%
Reducing crime	15%	22%	21%	18%
Reducing local taxes	10%	24%	22%	16%
Improving schools	13%	17%	14%	14%
Expanding bike lanes and sidewalks	14%	9%	13%	13%
Improving roads and bridges	11%	18%	15%	13%

Overall, n = 1,753; Bellingham, n = 1,089; Ferndale & Lynden, n = 205; Rural, n = 459

The majority of respondents reported that making housing more affordable was a pressing issue.

Seven out of ten (71%) Bellingham respondents selected “housing affordability” as one of the two issues of greatest concern for them.

One-fifth or more of respondents across all three geographies identified “improving public transportation” as a personally important issue.

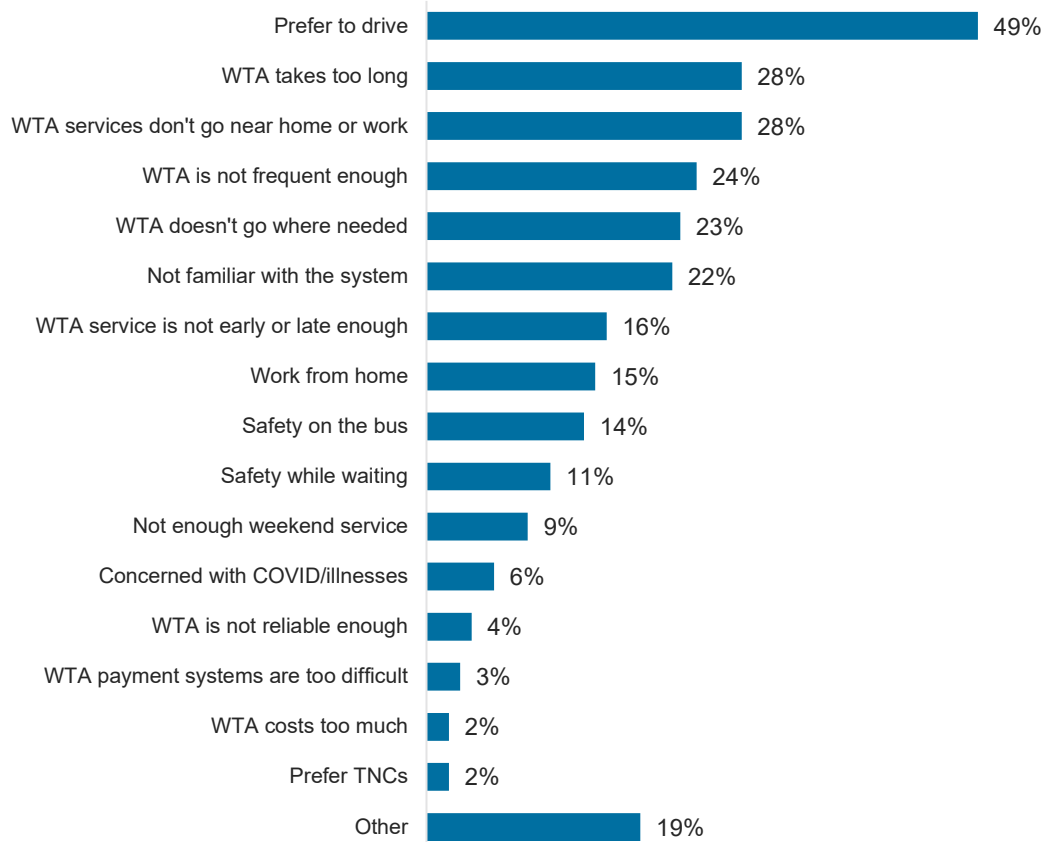
Summary of Data: Travel Profiles – Reasons Respondents Do Not Use WTA

The top four reasons respondents said they do not use WTA are:

1. Preference for driving
2. WTA takes too long
3. Lack of services near home or work
4. Infrequent service

Only 14% of non-riders reported concerns about safety keep them from using WTA services.

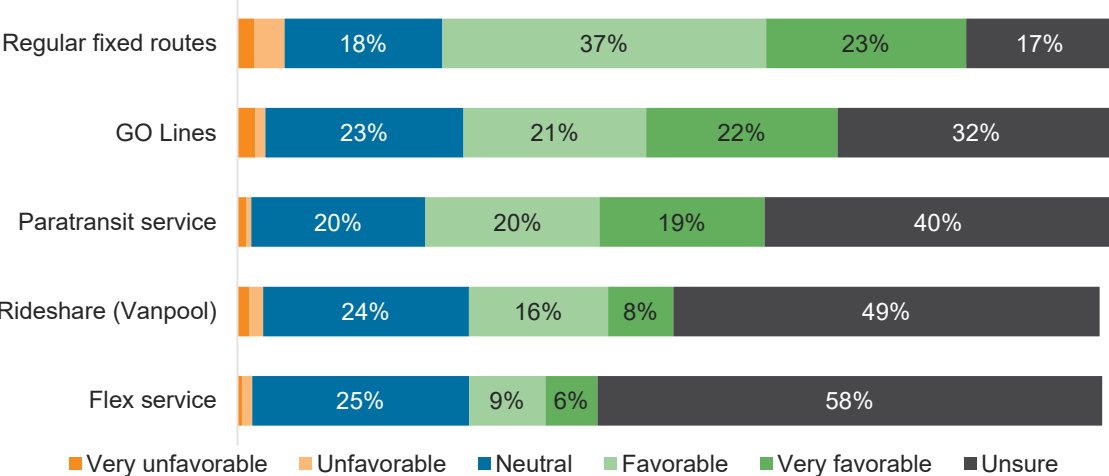
Why Do You Not Use WTA?



n= 984

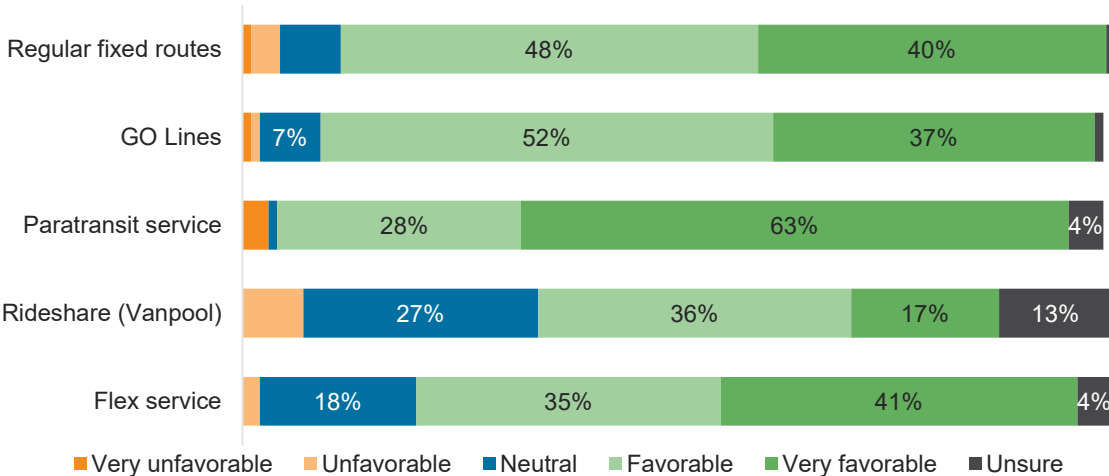
Summary of Data: Travel Profiles – Opinion on WTA Services

WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF THE FOLLOWING WTA SERVICES?



Sample, n = 1,753

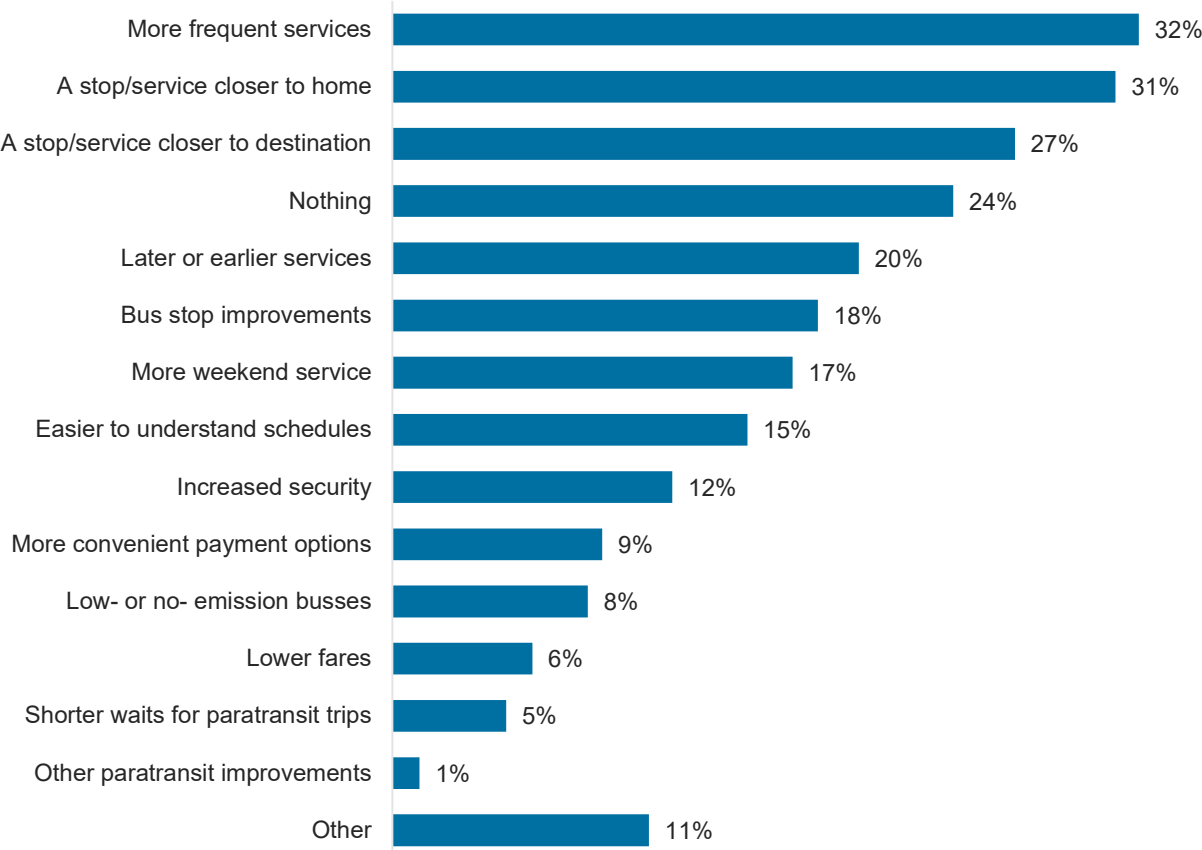
OPINION ON WTA SERVICES, FILTERED BY USERS IN PAST 5 YEARS



Sample, n = 4 to 582

Summary of Data: Travel Profiles – What Would Increase Your WTA Use?

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING FACTORS MIGHT INCREASE YOUR USE OF WTA SERVICES?



More frequent service and a stop closer to home are the most desired changes overall.

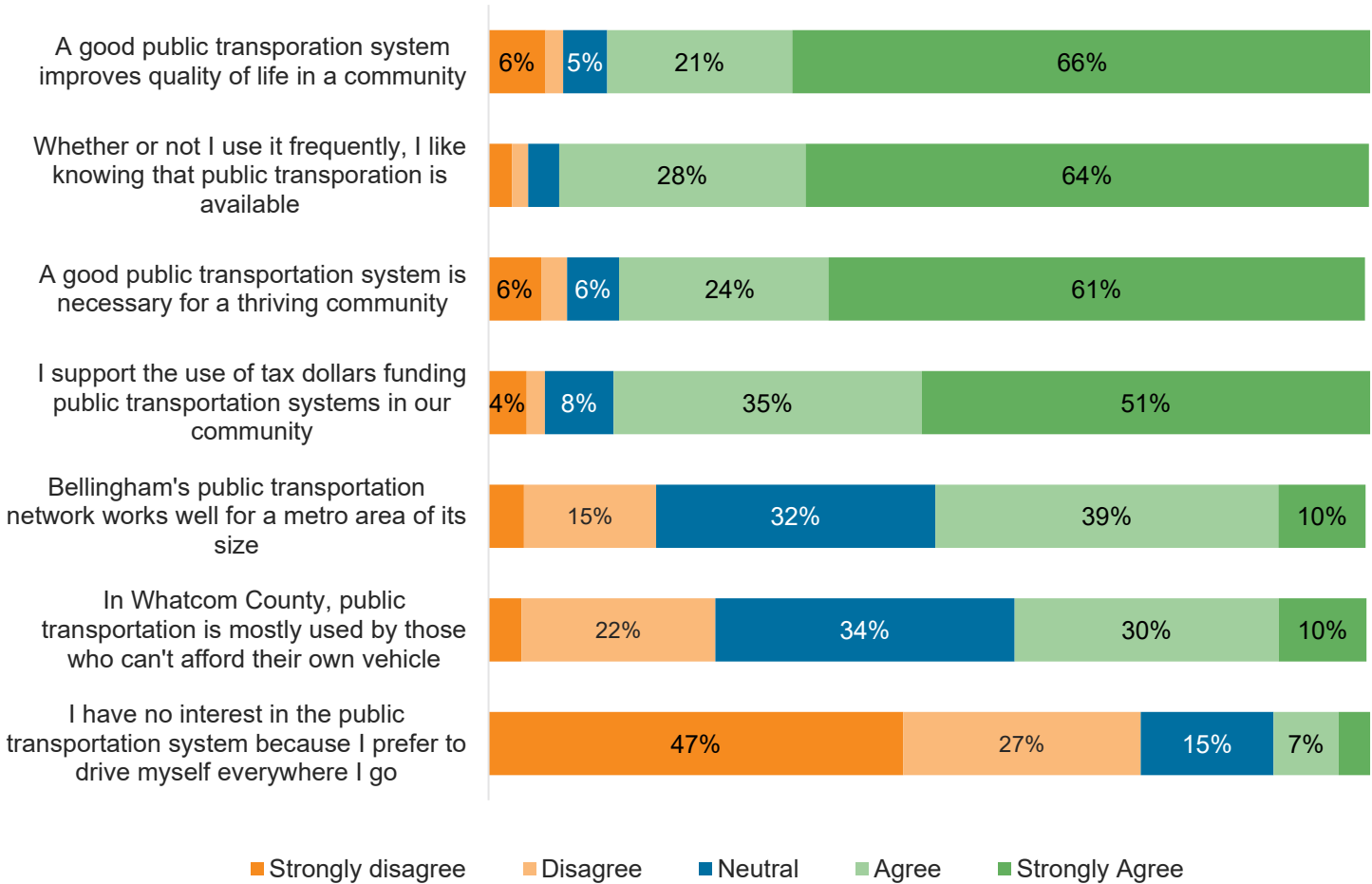
Sample, n = 984



Note: Respondents selected all that applied; only respondents who did not use WTA in the prior six months answered

Summary of Data: Travel Profiles – Beliefs Regarding Public Transportation

INDICATE HOW MUCH OR LITTLE YOU PERSONALLY AGREE WITH EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS.



Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that they like knowing that public transportation is available, regardless of whether they use it or not.

Most respondents also agreed good public transportation improves the quality of life in community.

Agreement was also widespread, though less intense, on statements regarding public transportation’s role in a thriving community and on the use of taxes to fund it.



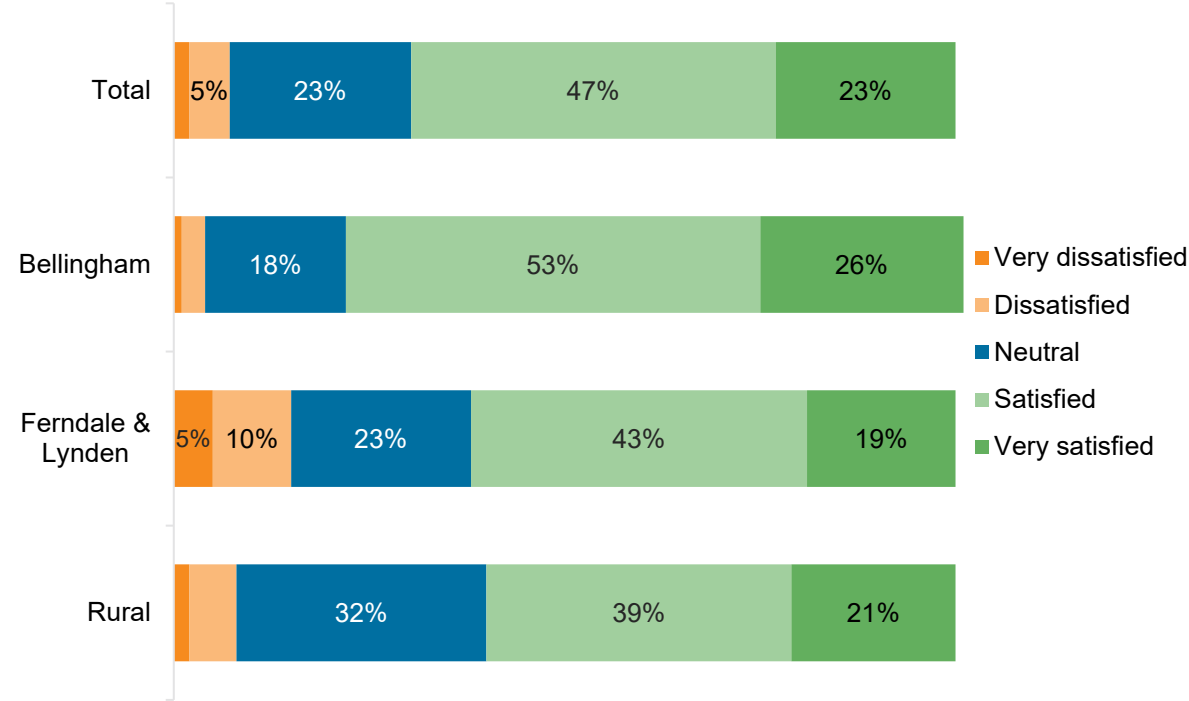
Sample. n = 1,753



Summary of Results: Satisfaction

Summary of Data: Satisfaction – Overall WTA Satisfaction

WHETHER YOU USE THEM OR NOT, HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH WTA SERVICES OVERALL?



Sample, n = 1,753

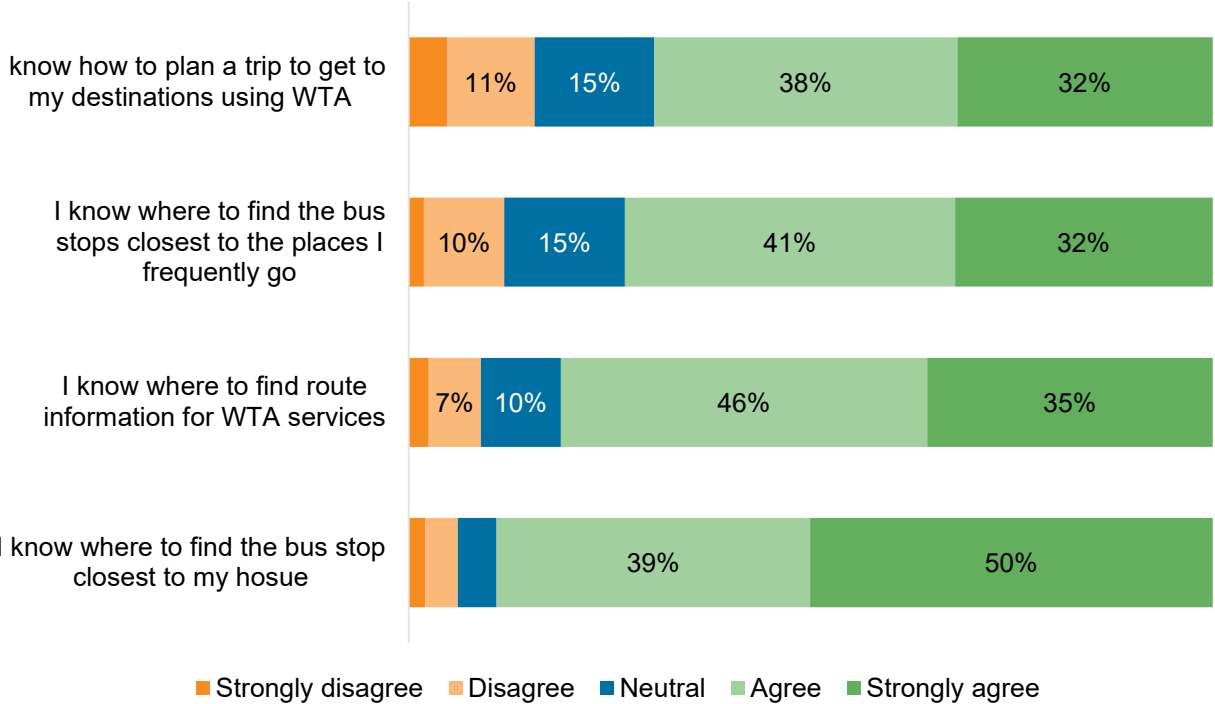
Overall, satisfaction is strong (70%).

Bellingham respondents were more likely to be satisfied than those from other sub-geographies (79%).

Ferndale & Lynden residents reported the highest levels of dissatisfaction (15%).

Summary of Data: Satisfaction – Overall WTA Knowledge

HOW MUCH WOULD YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?



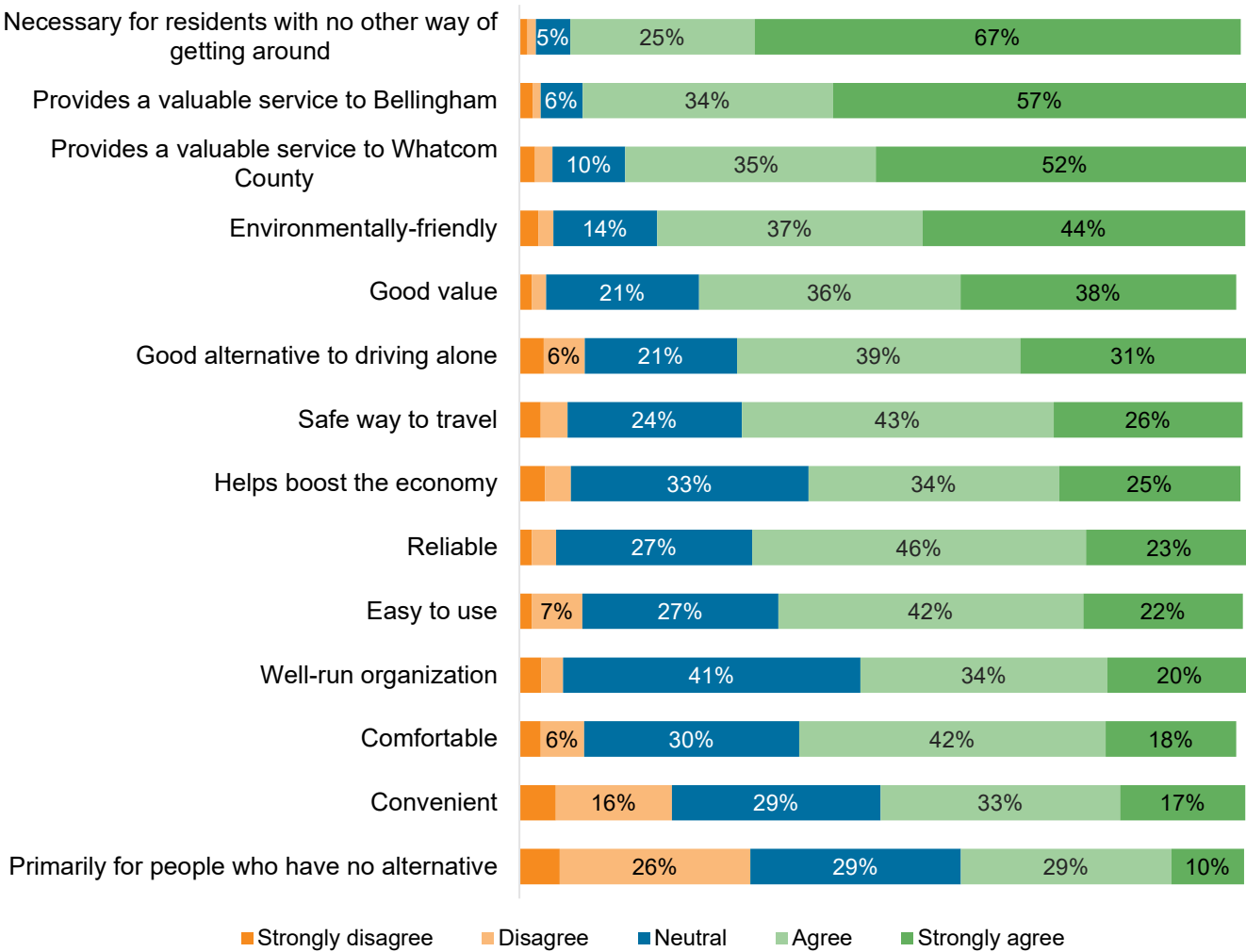
Sample, n = 1,753

Respondents expressed high levels of confidence in their ability to both navigate WTA services and to find any information they might need for WTA trips.

Respondents were most confident in their ability to find the bus stop closest to their house (89% strongly agree or agree) and least confident in their ability to plan a trip to their destination using WTA.

Summary of Data: Satisfaction – Overall WTA Perception

HOW MUCH WOULD YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE THAT WTA CAN BE DESCRIBED BY EACH OF THE FOLLOWING?
WHATCOM TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY:



A vast majority of respondents agreed that

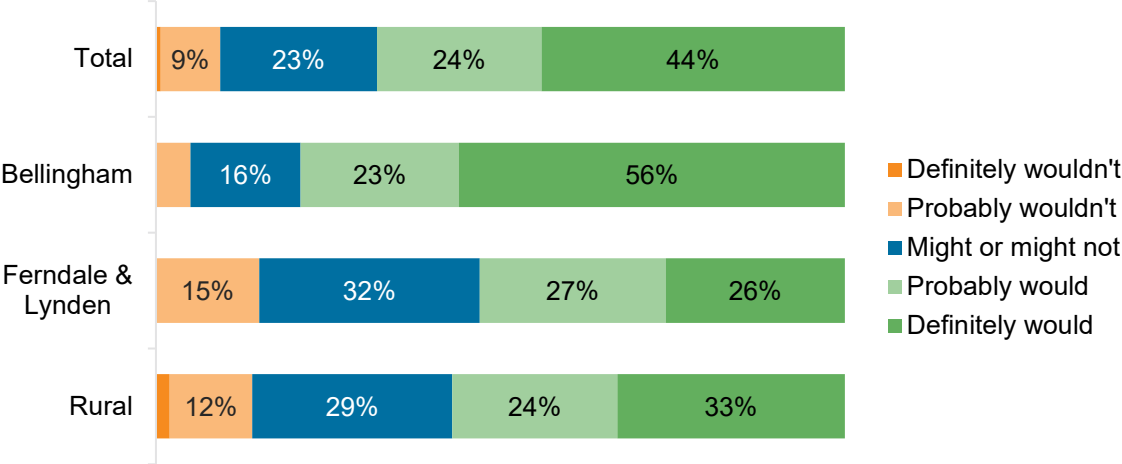
- ✓ WTA services are necessary for residents with no other way of getting around (92%)
- ✓ WTA services are valuable for Bellingham (91%)
- ✓ WTA services are valuable for Whatcom County (87%)



Sample, n = 1,753

Summary of Data: Satisfaction – Likelihood to Use WTA in the Future

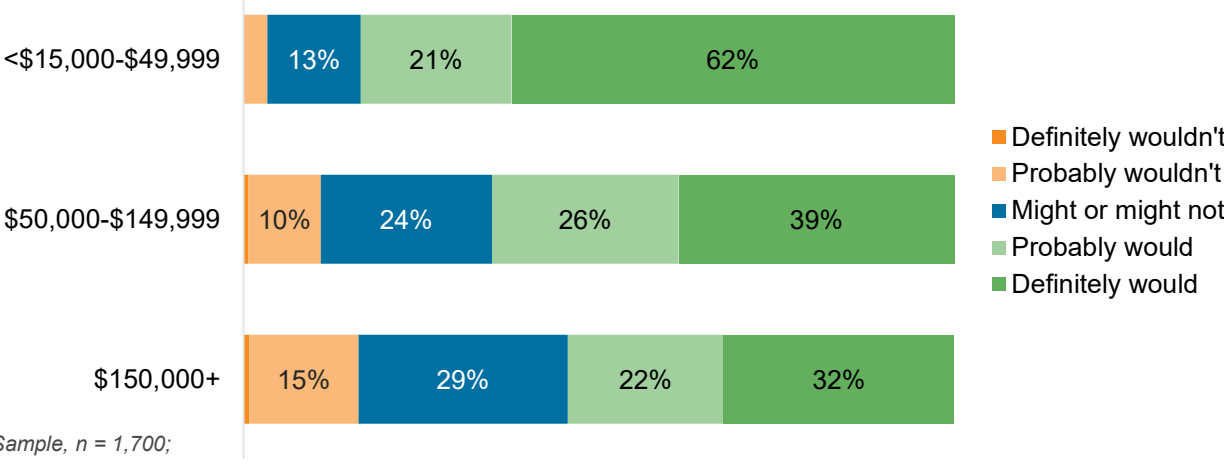
HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO CONSIDER WTA SERVICES FOR FUTURE PERSONAL TRAVEL? (BY GEOGRAPHY)



Overall, n = 1,700; Bellingham, n = 1,078; Ferndale & Lynden, n = 192; Rural, n = 430

Bellingham residents were the most likely to consider using WTA services in the future (79% definite or probable).

HOW LIKELY ARE YOU TO CONSIDER WTA SERVICES FOR FUTURE PERSONAL TRAVEL? (BY INCOME)



Sample, n = 1,700;

Respondents from low-income households were almost twice as likely to report that they “definitely would” use WTA services in the future compared to middle- and high-income respondents.

Summary of Data: Satisfaction – Allocation by Category

Respondents were asked, hypothetically, how they would allocate \$100 to ten different potential improvement areas in WTA.

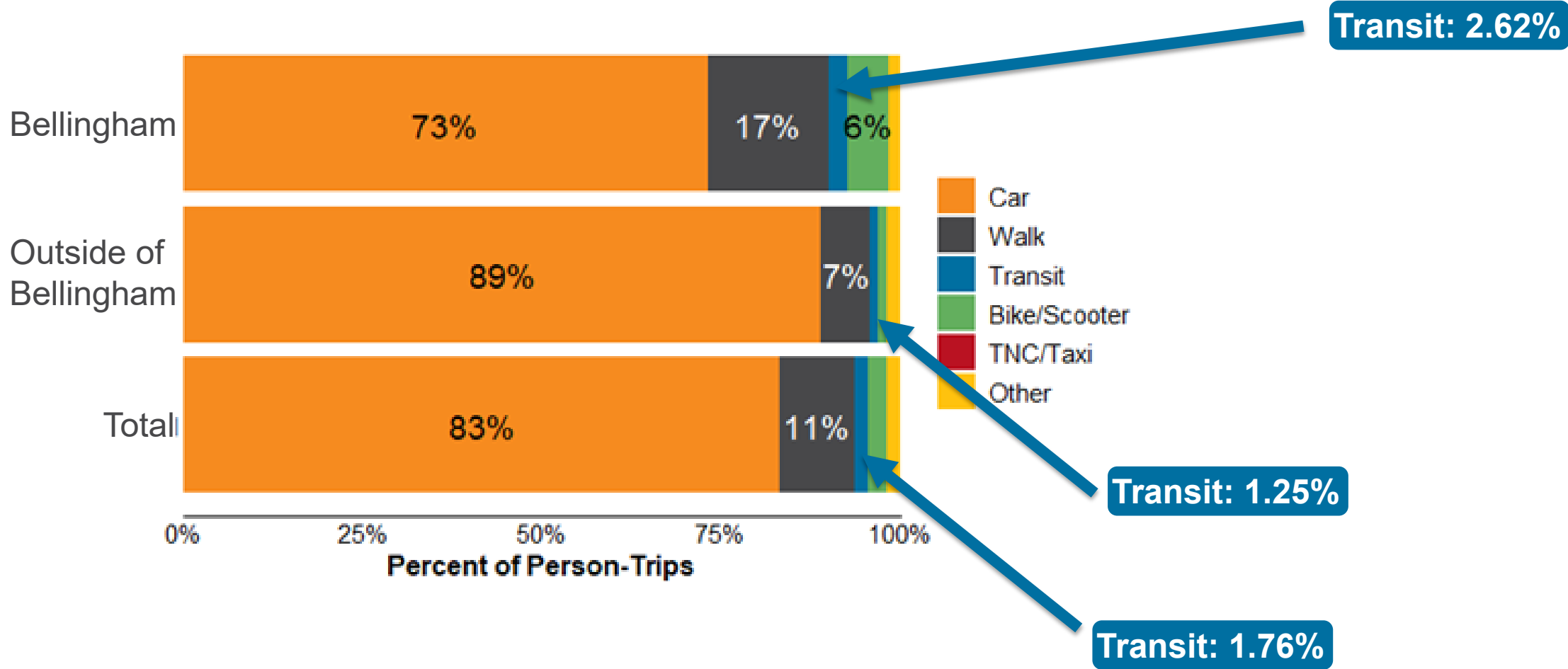
Improvement Area	Mean	Median	75th Percentile	Share of \$0	Share of \$100
More frequent busses	\$15.70	\$10	\$25	40%	2%
Extend service area of bus service	\$15.50	\$10	\$25	43%	2%
Extend service hours of bus service	\$14.90	\$10	\$25	39%	1%
Shared/smaller/on-demand services	\$12.40	\$2	\$15	49%	4%
Invest in low- or no-emission busses	\$11.00	\$3	\$20	47%	2%
Enhanced transit safety	\$7.90	\$0	\$10	60%	1%
Bus rapid transit corridors	\$7.60	\$0	\$10	62%	0.4%
Improved transit shelters	\$6.30	\$0	\$10	60%	0.5%
Make buses more comfortable	\$4.40	\$0	\$5	71%	0.5%
Improved maintenance at stops and stations	\$4.30	\$0	\$5	67%	2%

Sample, n = 1,753



Early Transit Insights From WCOG's Household Transportation Survey

WCOG's Household Transportation Survey: Mode Share



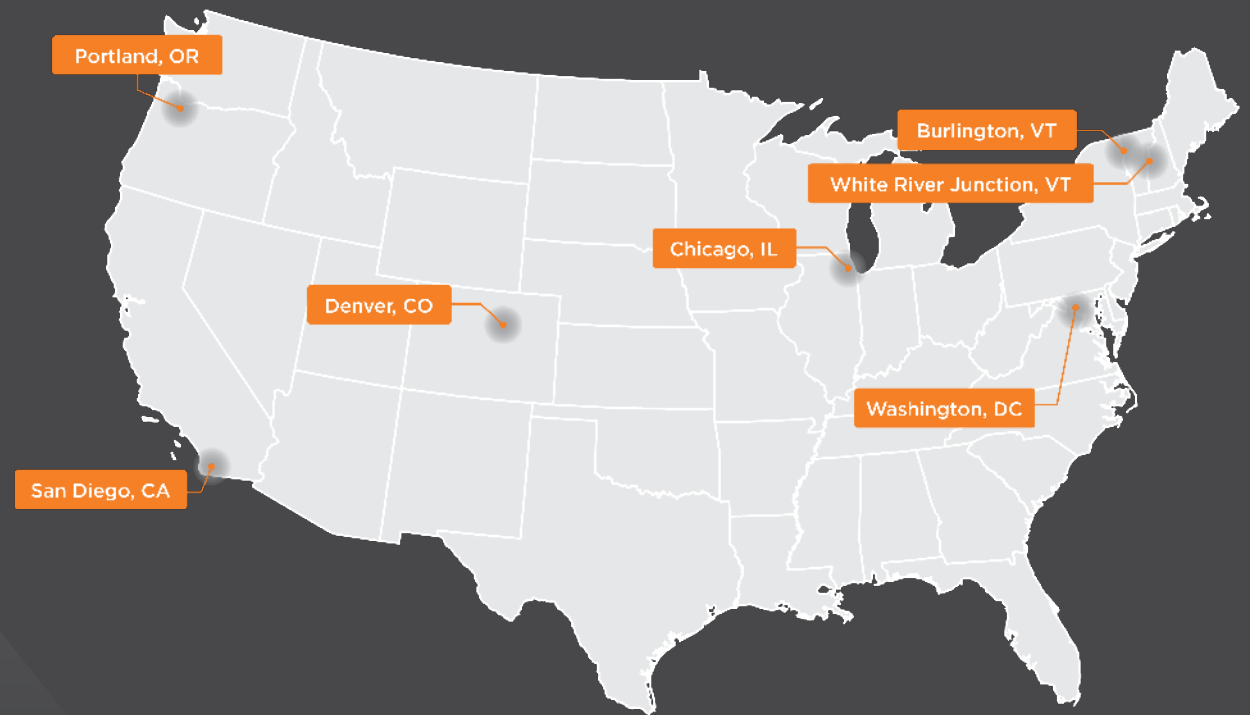


Contacts

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Community perceptions of WTA are positive



A majority of respondents expressed trust in the agency's commitment to serving the needs of Whatcom County residents.



Respondents praised WTA's efforts to promote environmental sustainability, support economic development, and increase accessibility for all people.



Satisfaction with WTA's services is highest among regular riders, who cite reliability, route coverage, and courteous drivers as significant strengths.



Satisfaction with WTA services was strongest among respondents in Bellingham, but the survey results suggest that there is demand for more services in Ferndale and Lynden.



The survey results emphasize that Whatcom County residents care about transit, and, while there is room for usage and awareness of WTA services to grow, that growth will likely be accompanied by growth in satisfaction with WTA services.

Recommendations from the survey



Results indicate strong support for increased frequency, expanded service hours, and enhancing connections between outlying areas and major destinations.



There remains a portion of the population of Whatcom County that is either unaware of WTA's full range of services or unclear about how to access them.



The results underscore a desire for continued investments in service expansion by time, geography, and service type.



Future survey efforts can be used to track changes among residents' attitudes and help WTA respond to these changes to maintain high levels of support among the community it serves.

Weighting Process Results

Lower income households and households with no vehicle or one vehicle were overrepresented in the unweighted dataset

The 18 to 34 age group was underrepresented and 65 or older age group was overrepresented in the unweighted dataset

HOUSEHOLD INCOME WEIGHTING SUMMARY

Household Income	Unweighted %	Weighted %	Target %
Less than \$15k	8.8%	8.0%	8.0%
\$15k–\$34,999	16.0%	11.7%	11.7%
\$35k–\$49,999	11.1%	10.6%	10.6%
\$50k–\$74,999	18.7%	16.8%	16.8%
\$75k–\$99,999	12.6%	13.3%	13.4%
\$100k–\$149,999	18.9%	19.8%	19.8%
\$150k or more	14.0%	19.8%	19.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

HOUSEHOLD VEHICLES WEIGHTING SUMMARY

Household Vehicles	Unweighted %	Weighted %	Target %
No vehicles	9.9%	6.3%	6.4%
1 vehicle	37.8%	28.8%	29.0%
2 vehicles	36.5%	35.9%	35.9%
3 or more vehicles	15.8%	28.9%	28.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

AGE GROUP WEIGHTING SUMMARY

Age Group	Unweighted %	Weighted %	Target %
18–34	16.9%	33.2%	33.2%
35–64	39.2%	44.0%	44.0%
65+	43.9%	22.8%	22.8%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Weighting Process Results

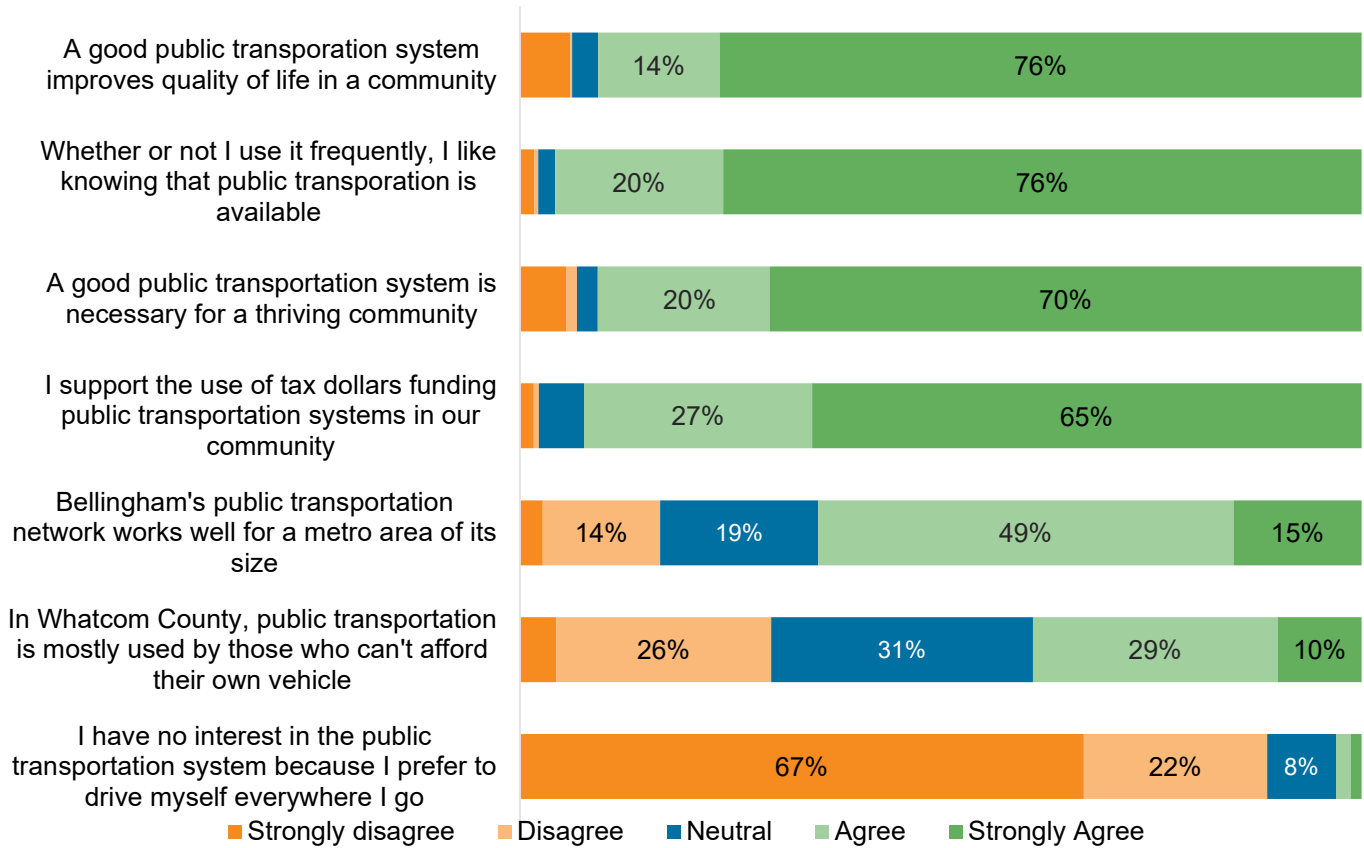
Native American, Hispanic, and Asian ethnicities were underrepresented in the unweighted dataset.

RACE/ETHNICITY WEIGHTING SUMMARY

Race/Ethnicity Category	Unweighted %	Weighted %	Target %
Native American	2.1%	4.0%	4.0%
Non-Native	97.9%	96.0%	96.0%
Hispanic	4.2%	10.3%	10.4%
Non-Hispanic	95.8%	89.7%	89.6%
Asian	4.6%	6.8%	6.7%
Non-Asian	95.4%	93.2%	93.3%

Summary of Data: Travel Profiles – Beliefs Regarding Public Transportation

BELIEFS REGARDING PUBLIC TRANSIT BY RIDERSHIP IN LAST 60 DAYS



Riders tended to have more positive beliefs regarding public transit than the pooled respondents.

Majorities of respondents from across the county place a high value on public transportation for the community.

Sample, n = 769



Even accounting for the fact that respondents are likely among WTA's more enthusiastic supporters, these beliefs demonstrate strong support for public transportation across Whatcom County.

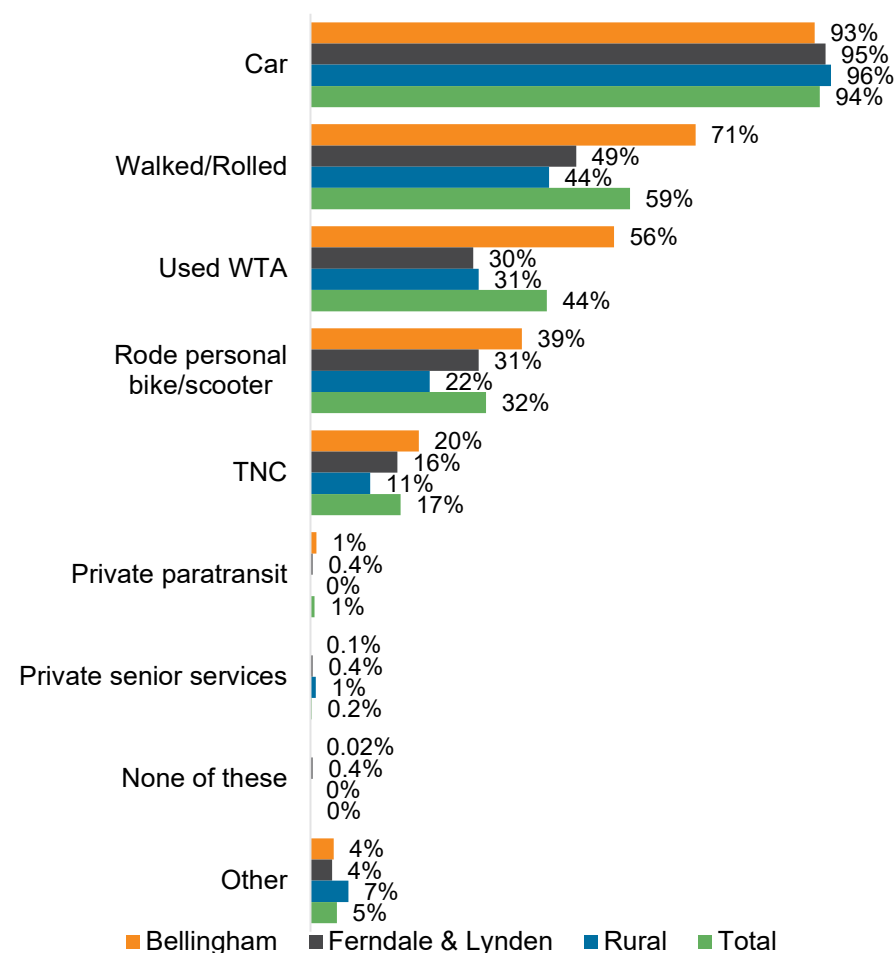
Summary of Data: Travel Profiles – Transportation Used in Last 60 Days

Bellingham residents were more likely to report utilizing a diversity of transportation modes than those in other regions.

While 71% of Bellingham respondents walked or rolled in the last 60 days, less than half of Ferndale & Lynden and rural respondents reported walking or rolling.

Over half (56%) of Bellingham respondents used WTA services, compared to a third of Ferndale & Lynden residents (30%) and of rural residents (31%).

TYPES OF TRANSPORTATION USED IN THE LAST 60 DAYS



Overall, n = 1,753; Bellingham, n = 1,089; Ferndale & Lynden, n = 205; Rural, n = 459